

# Transforming Education in Rhode Island

*All Rhode Island Students Ready for Success in College, Careers, and Life*

To the Rhode Island community,

*As the newly appointed Commissioner of Education, I would like to share with you a vision of what Rhode Island schools can and will look like in the future. Imagine, three years from now across Rhode Island we will have:*

- *Excellent educators;*
- *Great schools;*
- *World-class standards and assessments;*
- *User-friendly data systems; and*
- *Equitable and effective investments.*

*These are the priorities for transforming education in Rhode Island, and for each I have laid out actions that we must take to turn our schools around and to prepare our students to compete against the best in the world. Education is the most important and effective economic stimulus.*

*Fulfilling this vision will not be easy, but we are responsible for making it happen. Rhode Island is ready. We have brilliant students, we have strong educators, and we have the resources and authority to transform our schools. I am confident that we are ready to do what we must to improve the performance of our students.*

*Over the next two months, I will visit schools in every district in the state, and I will meet with parents, students, teachers, administrators, and civic leaders to discuss a vision for transforming Rhode Island schools. I want to gather information and to hear your views on education reform. I want to know about your successes as well as about the barriers to improvement that you have faced. I will use what I hear and learn to develop an action agenda to transform education in Rhode Island. This agenda will be specific, measurable, and public. I expect you to hold me accountable for results.*

*I need your help; please come to our community hearings, and bring your friends and neighbors. We all must do more – for the future of our children, for the health of our communities, and for the success and economic sustainability of our state. Let us work together to advance learning for all!*

Deborah A. Gist



Rhode Island Department of Education  
Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner  
[www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov)

# Ensure Educator Excellence

Every student must have highly effective teachers.  
Every school must have a highly effective leader.  
We must support educators throughout their careers.

1. Educator preparation programs vigorously recruit, prepare, and mentor talented individuals to become excellent educators.

- Educator preparation programs meet rigorous performance standards and are evaluated for continuous approval.
- Preparation programs accept only the most highly qualified applicants.
- Early-career professionals have access to high-quality programs of induction and mentoring.
- Every educator affirms his/her commitment to a code of professional responsibility.

2. Districts must implement and manage human resource systems that continuously improve student achievement.

- Districts access national recruitment services, as needed, to increase and improve candidate pools.
- Districts select and retain only the most highly effective staff.
- Districts base teacher and administrator assignments on student need.
- Districts provide educators with embedded professional development designed to improve student achievement.
- Districts conduct rigorous annual educator evaluations that emphasize student performance.
- Districts employ educators who meet performance standards.

3. Educators' professional growth and advancement is aligned with student achievement.

- Certification reflects a multistep career ladder that promotes professional growth and effectiveness.
- Every educator pursues a professional development plan designed to improve his/her effectiveness and student achievement.
- Educator salary options are structured to promote improvements in student learning and reward effective educators.
- Leaders base tenure decisions on educator effectiveness.

# Accelerate All Schools Toward Greatness\*

Rhode Island must not allow failing schools to exist.

Leadership must be responsible for quality improvement.

Communities must commit to supporting high-quality schools.

*\*Schools include all learning environments.*

1. Students achieve in schools with excellent leadership, sound management, high-quality teaching, and a persistent focus on student achievement.

- Schools have excellent leaders and teachers with skills necessary to accelerate student achievement.
- School leaders have autonomy to make decisions that positively affect teaching and learning.
- Transformation of underperforming schools is timely, comprehensive, and effective, as measured by improvements in student learning.
- State intervention focuses on building local capacity.

2. Community members, especially parents and students, are engaged in improving schools.

- School-community members have full access to understandable information about school performance and options for school choice.
- Community leaders, including business and higher education, strategically partner with schools and school systems around school improvement and innovation.
- Students, parents, and educators are involved in decisions related to school turnaround.

3. State and local leaders use their authority and influence to establish conditions for high performance in all schools.

- State and local leaders readily identify and address barriers to high performance and act decisively to remedy underperformance.
- Local governance and labor leaders establish contracts that support conditions that accelerate student learning.
- School systems address challenges with innovative programs and strategies, including school choice, alternate pathways, and virtual learning.

## Establish World-Class Standards and Assessments

Standards must be clear, high, and internationally benchmarked.  
We must hold all educators and students to high expectations.  
We must hold schools accountable for student achievement.

1. Rhode Island focuses on international standards to be globally competitive.

- Rhode Island standards in reading and writing and mathematics are aligned to common state standards.
- Rhode Island maintains high academic standards for other content areas, including science and social studies.
- Districts have written, taught, and assessed curriculum aligned to the common state standards.
- Institutions of higher education across New England have educator-preparation programs aligned to the common state standards.

2. Rhode Island has high-quality state assessments aligned to international standards.

- The state assessment system measures internationally benchmarked standards in reading, writing, and mathematics.
- The state assessment system measures high academic standards in science.
- Rhode Islanders understand and support rigorous assessments aligned to internationally benchmarked standards.
- Institutions of higher education across New England use state assessment data to inform entering freshmen's readiness for credit-bearing coursework.

3. Districts have comprehensive local assessment systems based on standards for success.

- Educators use multiple assessments to make real-time adjustments to improve student learning.
- Districts use both local and state assessment data to evaluate programs and instruction, follow student progress, and revise curriculum and instructional practices.

# Develop User-Friendly Data Systems

Everyone must have access to usable data.  
Data must be relevant, timely, and practical.  
Data systems must drive continuous improvement.

1. Data will inform the Rhode Island accountability system and provide families, educators, and the community with usable information.

2. Rhode Island data and technology infrastructure and systems are aligned to integrate resources.

3. Data inform educational and financial decisions at all levels, from the classroom to the State House.

4. The accountability system uses valid and reliable metrics to identify schools and districts in need of support, intervention, enhancement, and improvement.

- The accountability system identifies indicators of high-performing systems for programs, finance, student achievement, and educator effectiveness.
- The accountability system is transparent and reports on indicators that support improvement and decision-making while tracking student growth over time.
- Educators, parents, policymakers, and the general public have access to a data-analysis tool that is easy to use and geared to their specific needs.

- Fully integrated data collection and analysis exists across agencies.
- There are statewide policies with responsibilities and governance structures for data collection and use.
- RIDE coordinates all data collection (quantitative and qualitative), based on one comprehensive list of needed data elements.
- Schools and districts track and report each student's academic trajectory for graduation, from grades Pre-K through 12.

- Data analysis is a critical part of all professional development, technical assistance, and policy development.
- Every school district has the internal capacity to develop its data expertise.
- Educators have access to data to support improvement in student learning, and they have the training to use these data effectively.
- Parents and students have access to data to support choices and options for improved learning.

- Using data and standards, RIDE classifies schools and districts into different levels of need.
- RIDE bases school and district classifications on multiple measures of performance, including growth over time.
- RIDE uses the classification system to make decisions about support, intervention, enhancement, and improvement practices.
- *Schools In Need of Improvement* must use data protocols that enhance learning and inform the effectiveness of the improvement strategies.

## Invest our Resources Wisely

Financing must be adequate, effective, and equitable.

We must use incentives to promote both efficiencies and effectiveness.

We must be capable stewards of the taxpayers' investments.

1. Schools and students are adequately and equitably funded to attain international performance standards.

- RIDE knows the cost of educating all students to international standards.
- State leaders implement an equitable and predictable funding formula applicable to districts and charter schools.
- The state and districts use incentives to improve student achievement, close achievement gaps, support school improvement, and drive efficiencies and innovation.

2. Districts and RIDE use savings from consolidations and other efficiency efforts to improve education results.

- To improve teaching and learning, districts redirect savings from statewide efficiencies, including consolidations of structures, functions, and service provisions.
- The state and districts continuously develop and implement strategies for cost effectiveness.

3. Schools, districts, and RIDE account in a transparent manner for spending and results.

- The state and districts analyze and publish spending patterns and cost-effectiveness results.
- RIDE links expenditure and achievement data to drive cost-effectiveness.
- The state partners with districts to develop strategies for spending to drive results.