

*Welcome to the*  
COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY  
AND  
SECONDARY EDUCATION  
MEETING

July 23, 2019



# Presentation on the Providence Public School District

**Commissioner Infante-Green**

**Tuesday, July 23, 2019**



**RIDE** Rhode Island  
Department  
of Education

# We are Failing Providence Students

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.

Based on the 2018 Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment (RICAS) results for students in grade 3-8 in English Language Arts.



# We are Failing Providence Students

10%

of students are performing at or above grade level in mathematics.

90%

of students in Providence **cannot** perform at or above grade level in mathematics.

Based on the 2018 Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment (RICAS) results for students in grade 3-8 in mathematics.



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



**1 out of 10**



Students can do mathematics on or above grade level.

Based on the 2018 Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment (RICAS) results for students in grade 3-8 in mathematics.

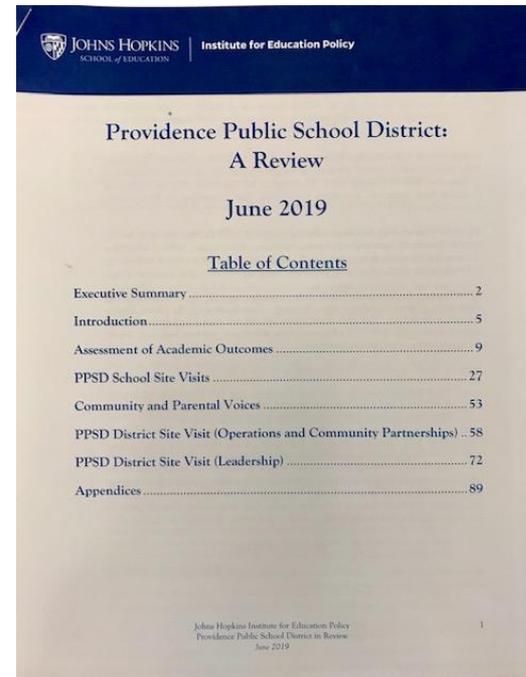
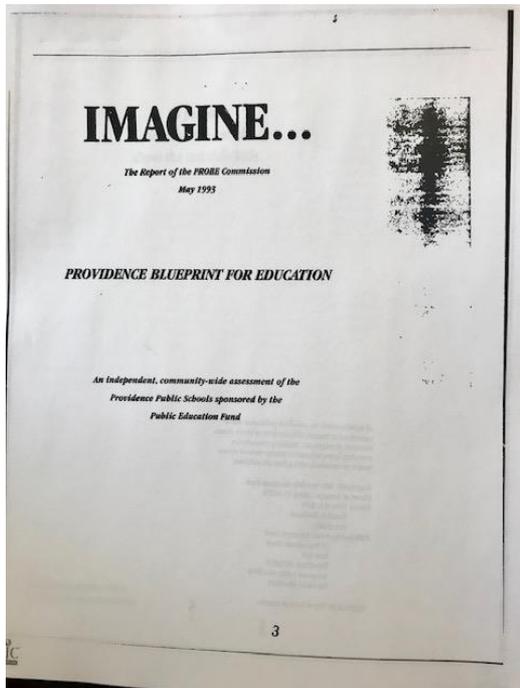


# A generation has gone by.



1993

2019



## Enough is Enough!



# Overview of the Johns Hopkins Review Process

- **April 2019:** 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.
- **May 2019:** Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy, with the support of 20 local and national experts, leads a series of site visits at 30% of Providence Public Schools.
- **June 2019:** Johns Hopkins publishes its report on the state of Providence Public Schools.
- **June & July 2019:** Commissioner Infante-Green and Mayor Elorza host a series of nine community forums.



# The System is Broken



**RIDE** Rhode Island  
Department  
of Education

# Families Feel Silenced

- After meeting with families in April, I realized how critical engaging the community would be to our success.
- It was important for me to hear directly from the community about their experiences and ideas for next steps.
- Families have had enough and are ready for action.



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

## Community Forums By the Numbers:

- 9 public community forums, 2 primarily in Spanish
- Nearly 1,100 attendees, including students, parents, teachers, and community leaders.
- 147 community members provided public comment
- 20+ hours of public comment across the forums



# Key Themes from the Report & Community Forums

- 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 crumbling across the city
- 6 Poor school culture and safety concerns
- 7 System governance gets in the way of student outcomes

# Key Theme #1 | Low level of academic instruction and expectations



“Teachers at my school have to modify their lessons and **set the bar low for students**...students aren’t pushed to do their homework or do well, which in turn leaves students unprepared for the SAT and for college.”

- Providence Student

“I had a 9th grader who didn’t know how to read. How do I support the student and the family members? I’m here anticipating and hopeful that we come together as a community to support our students.”

- Providence Teacher

"The students, teachers, principals, and parents should not have to beg for a good education or a safe place to work and learn. **But we are begging.**"

- Providence Student



*Courtesy of Latino Public Radio*



## Key Theme #2 | Parents feel powerless



“My child, who's in middle school and is brilliant...is reading at a second-grade level. I had to pay out of pocket to get him an evaluation, and not many families have that resource...how many kids are in our schools who have not gotten what they need?”

- Providence Parent

“My child has an IEP. The only reason I know about a 504 plan is because I googled it.”

- Providence Parent



# Key Theme #3 Teachers and staff are demoralized and disenfranchised



"I care so much about my students. I work long days with limited resources. We want the best for them, but there are so many obstacles in the way - discipline, curriculum, and social-emotional. **We're afraid to speak out.** It's hard to feel seen and valued."

– Providence Teacher





"I have seen leaders at every level come and go. **Teachers want real change.** They want to be challenged and to be able to teach students in a calm, clean environment."

– Providence Teacher

## Key Theme #4: Principals and school leaders have no authority



Principals reported that they had “no say” in determining the grade level in which teachers work.

“No subs to be found, no money for PD, and we’re not a community school anymore.”

- Providence Principal



# Key Theme #5 | Schools are crumbling across the city



“The ceiling in my classroom is falling. What does that say to our children?”

- Providence Teacher



“My child’s school does not have any drinking water.”

- Providence Parent



# Broken Dreams



## Key Theme #6 | Poor school culture and safety concerns



“I send my daughter to school to learn and saw that she was bullied. I saw that she was becoming a bully, too, because she said that’s how you survive. **She’s in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.**”

- Providence Parent

“What I’ve witnessed is segregation. Racial segregation. There is no integration in our schools...we are showing them that they are not good enough.”

- Providence Parent

## Key Theme #7

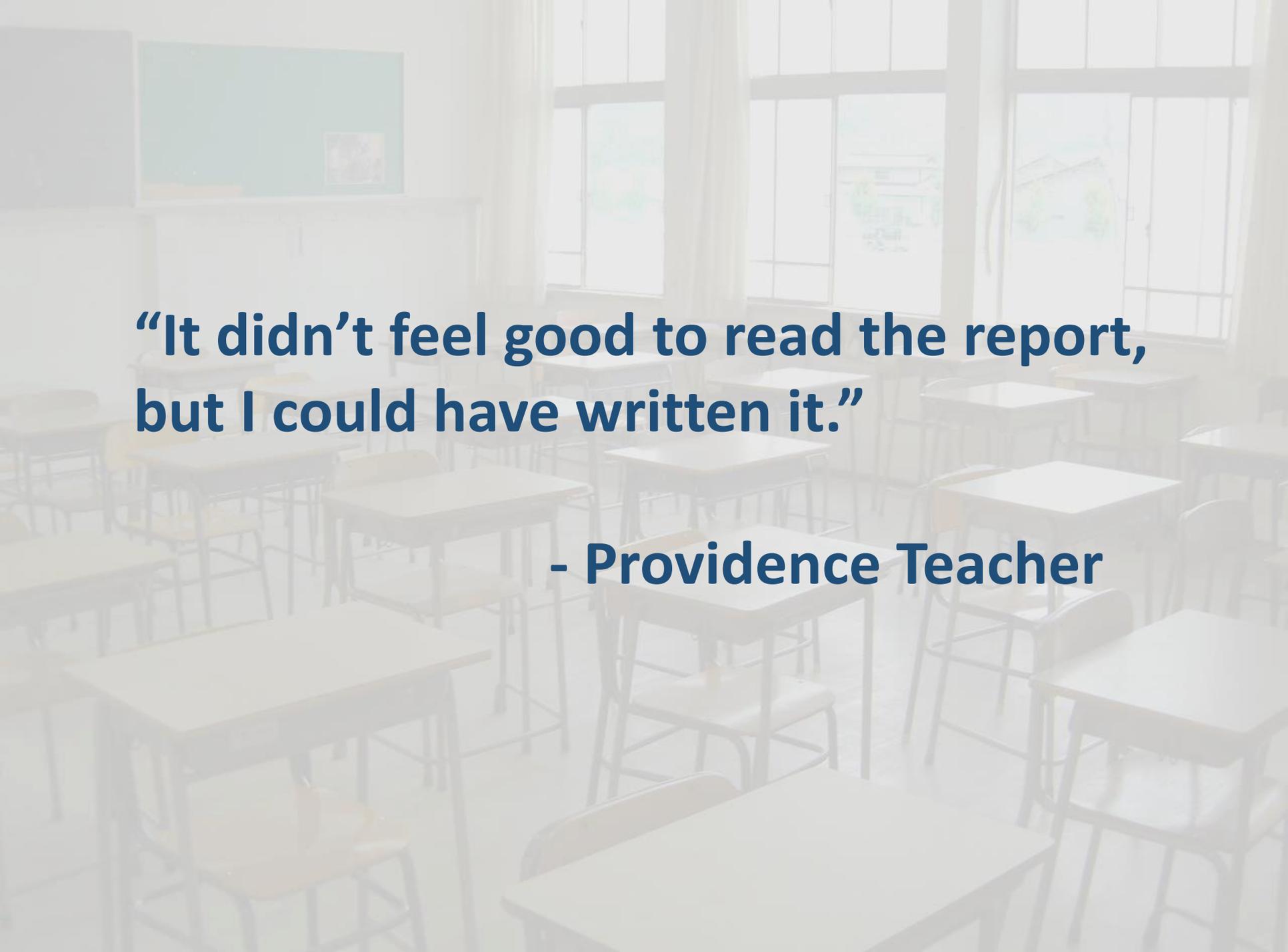
# System governance gets in the way of student outcomes



“The system is broken and needs to be fixed - we all need to work together and hold each other accountable. The changes need to be made without personal agendas.”

- Providence Parent



A blurred photograph of a classroom. In the foreground and middle ground, there are several rows of light-colored wooden desks and chairs. In the background, there is a green chalkboard on the left wall and large windows on the right wall. The text is overlaid on the center of the image.

**“It didn’t feel good to read the report,  
but I could have written it.”**

**- Providence Teacher**

# What Will Be Different?



The community has had enough and demands to be part of a solution.



# A Fundamentally Broken System That Needs to Change

## What we know:

- RIDE's longstanding adoption of progressive support and intervention strategies to improve PPSD.
- The Johns Hopkins report highlighted low levels of academic instruction and expectation, a lack a support for students, teachers and families, poor school culture, and a system that is overburdened with overlapping governance and bureaucracy.
- The community forums deepened our knowledge of the Johns Hopkins core finding that PPSD is a broken system from top to bottom.

# Action Must Be Taken

I recommend that R.I. Gen. Law Section §16-7.1-5 be applied to the Providence Public School District to effectuate its purpose and to adequately address the needs of Providence students and families.

# §16-7.1-5: The Crowley Act

- The Crowley Act, R.I. Gen. Law § 16-7.1-5, authorizes:
  - the Rhode Island Department of Education (“RIDE”) to take control over failing schools and school districts, and
  - the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education (the “Council”) to reconstitute schools within the district, if needed.
- According to the Crowley Act: RIDE shall exercise progressive levels of control “over the school and/or district budget, program, and/or personnel.”
- The Council’s reconstitution responsibilities “may range from restructuring the school’s governance, budget, program, personnel, and/or may include decisions regarding the continued operation of the school.”



# Process Under the Crowley Act

- Following the Council's delegation of authority to me, I will prepare a preliminary order to take control of the district under §16-7.5-1 and an order to show cause as to why that preliminary order should not become final.
- The preliminary order will be given to the Mayor of Providence, the School Board, the Acting/Interim Superintendent, and the City Council. They will be given at least a 30-day period to notify me if they intend to present evidence (witnesses and/or documents) at a show cause hearing.
- After the show cause hearing, I will issue a final order, based on the evidence presented.



# Next Steps: Fall 2019



- The Acting/Interim Superintendent, along with members of the Providence Public School District and the City, will work together to prepare for the first day of school on September 3.
- Per the Crowley Act, RIDE will be following a legal process that will last approximately 90 days to assume control of Providence public schools.
- Until a final Decision and Order is entered, the Providence Public School District will remain under its current governance structure.



# Next Steps: Fall 2019



- RIDE has communicated its expectations to PPSD that schools open as safe and supportive learning environments for kids. I will hold the city and the district accountable to ensure that this happens.
- RIDE will focus on the following statewide initiatives that will also have an impact in Providence:
  - Launching safety zones (starting with Providence)
  - Creating a school culture toolkit
  - Expanding RIDE's attendance tool
  - Identifying professional development opportunities
  - Helping LEAs create cell phone policies



# Commissioner's Request: Council Resolution

**RECOMMENDATION:** THAT, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, pursuant to its powers under R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-60-6 and, specifically, its power to assign the Commissioner certain duties, delegate to the Commissioner the Council's power and authority to take actions consistent with, and in furtherance of, RIDE's intervention in and support of the Providence Public School District, which would include, but not be limited to, assuming control of the District, the reconstitution of the Providence Public Schools and any other power (at law and in equity) available to the Council as may be authorized by law and as may be determined to be necessary and appropriate by the Commissioner.



We are not going to have a third report.  
If adults stand in the way of student progress,  
shame on them and all of us.



# The Path Forward, Together

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

