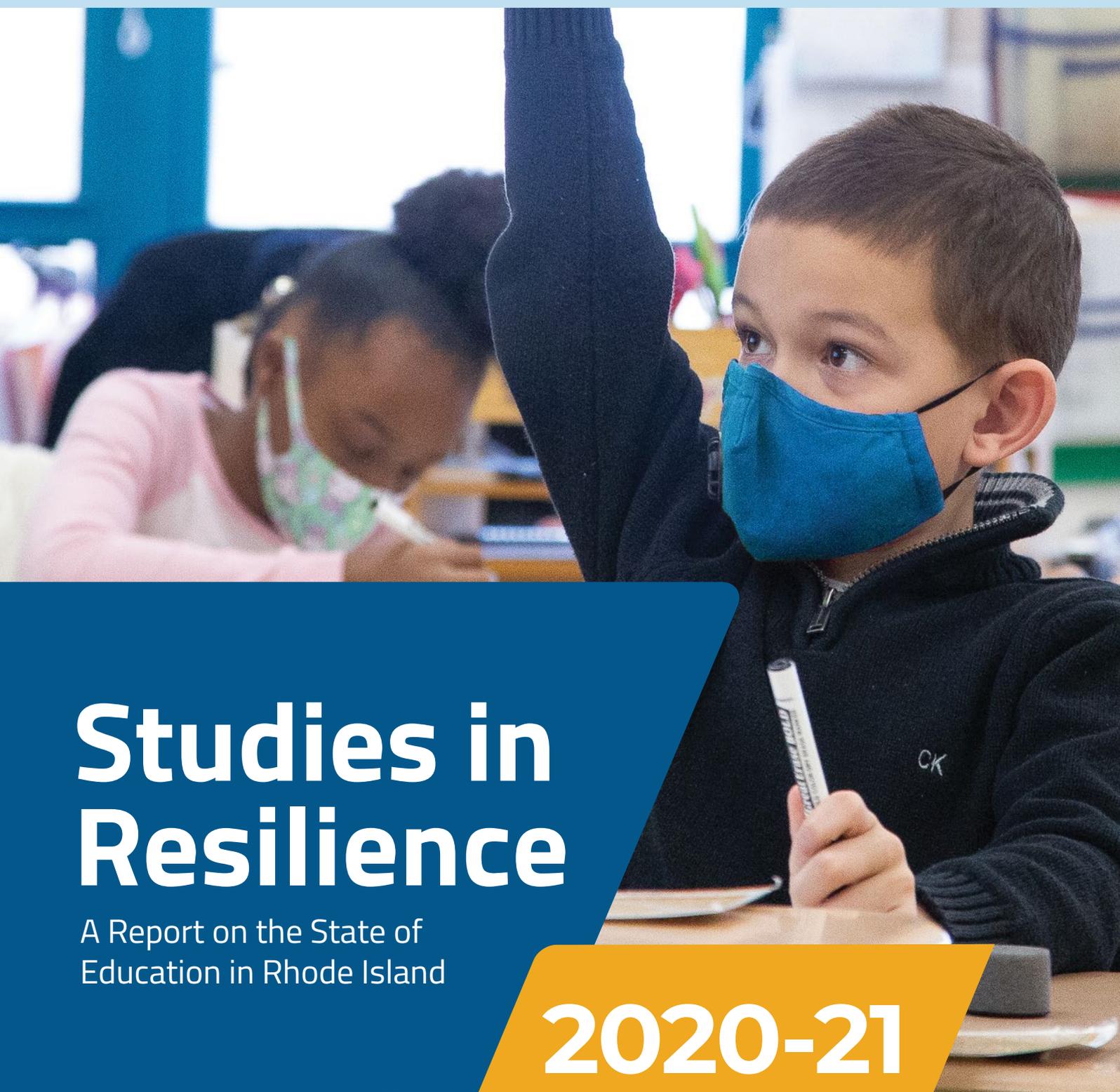




RIDE Rhode Island
Department
of Education



Studies in Resilience

A Report on the State of
Education in Rhode Island

2020-21

School Year



Studies in **Resilience**

A Report on the
State of Education
in Rhode Island



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Introduction:

A Letter From The Commissioner

Dear Rhode Island,

There is a saying that there are decades where nothing happens, and there are years where decades happen. Any educator would already tell you that saying isn't quite true. We would tell you that in education, every year is meaningful. We would tell you that even in the quiet years, the decisions we make in the classroom have sweeping effects on our students' futures. We would tell you that the smallest successes and failures in everyday learning aggregate over time, adjustments of seconds, minutes, and degrees adding up to forever alter the trajectory of their lives. And even in the "easiest" of years, it is a constant, strenuous, and essential endeavor to ensure that we make the right choices and allow our students to rise, ever upwards, ascending above any barriers to their success.

And we don't need to tell you that this was not a quiet year where nothing happened.

The 2020-2021 school year was the most momentous of any of our lives. While we, as a society, attempted to manage a once-in-a-generation pandemic, a national reckoning with the inequities in our justice system, and a global economic crisis, the work of delivering a high-quality education to our students continued on. That work, which in the best of times carries weighty consequences for our students' futures, was made all the more meaningful—and all the more fraught—by the unique and unprecedented circumstances.

I know that not a day has gone by during this pandemic without the heavy consequences of our work weighing on the education community. Delivering a truly enriching educational experience to our students could be the lifeline they need in a difficult time for them and their families; failing to do so could have catastrophic consequences that would follow them for the rest of their lives. Bearing that responsibility, educators put their heads down and pushed forward, providing Rhode Island students with guidance, care, and education when they needed it most. I hold the deepest admiration and gratitude for every teacher, administrator, support staff member, community leader, and family who stepped up this year to help deliver the education that our students needed.

This work has taken many forms over the last year, but Rhode Island has led the nation at every step of the journey. We were able to rapidly respond to the emerging threat of COVID-19 last year and transition our schools to fully remote learning sooner and more successfully than our neighboring states. We built on that success to offer free virtual summer learning across the state. And as other states shied away from the work of reopening schools, Rhode Island tackled the issue head-on.

Our local education agencies worked around the clock, supported by our state's Education Operations Center and health experts, to find innovative ways to keep students safe so we could provide them with the in-person learning experience that we know is crucial to their academic and emotional development. Because of their hard work, on September 14, 2020, schools across the state welcomed students for in-person learning, and now all of Rhode Island's school districts are offering fully in-person learning at every grade level. Over the course of the year, we saw that our students learning in-person were at a lower risk of contracting COVID-19 than their peers learning remotely because of the innovative thinking and dedicated efforts of our school staff. It was never easy, but our education community has defied expectations and created a safe and effective in-person learning experience.

Now, as we close the 2020-2021 school year, I write to you today to say that despite every obstacle that has blocked our path, the educational community of the Ocean State has risen to the challenge. The state of education in Rhode Island is strong and will continue to get stronger.

Overcoming the challenges of the past year has been difficult, but we did it by working together, thinking innovatively, and centering our students' needs above all else. One of the highest honors of my life is that, in this moment of crisis and uncertainty, families trusted RIDE to provide for their children's health and well-being. We never could have earned that trust without the incredible work of our teachers and school staff members, whose deep personal commitment to keeping our schools open safely provided reassurance to the families and students we serve.

We will finish this year as national leaders in the effort to recover from the devastating effects of the pandemic on our educational system. By no means has this been a perfect process. We know that our students have lost academic ground over the last year compared to a normal school year, and we are working hard to identify strategies to not only get them get back up to speed but to move them ahead. Even before the



pandemic, our education system was in desperate need of improvement; we must use this opportunity to focus not on remediation but on acceleration.

The pandemic has been deeply disruptive to learning for all of our students, but for our most vulnerable populations—students of color, multilingual learners, differently-abled students, and economically-disadvantaged students—it has been downright devastating. Knowing that there is no time to waste, we convened educators, community leaders, and experts from across the state to develop our plan for the coming years to address the effects of the pandemic on our students.

That group, which we call the Learning, Equity, & Accelerated Pathways, or LEAP, Task Force has already formulated guiding principles and specific actions that RIDE is taking to help create a more equitable and enriching educational experience for every student in Rhode Island. We are one of the first states in the nation to engage in this work. This strategic road map will be an important guide as we recover from the pandemic, and I am already looking forward to sharing our progress on the LEAP Task Force's recommendations in next year's report.



Knowing that there is no time to waste, we convened educators, community leaders, and experts from across the state to develop our plan for the coming years to address the effects of the pandemic on our students.

And while the pandemic may have been at the forefront of our minds over the last year, it has not pushed aside or stopped our plans for this school year. We have strived to not only meet the challenges of the day for our state, but to lead in many areas and to continue making progress along the five core pillars of our strategic plan developed in 2020.

All the while, we have continued our work to create equity in our educational systems, placing resources where they are needed most and supporting a vibrant and multicultural student community through the Rhode Island Blueprint for Multilingual Learner Success. We have continued to engage with the community, meeting them where they are throughout the pandemic to learn about the challenges they have faced and what support we can provide them. We have focused on ensuring that the curricula and standards used by our schools are aligned to meet the needs of the students and to promote excellence in learning. We have supported our teachers and provided them with new avenues to improve their craft, while also recruiting new teachers to add to the world-class talent present in our schools. And we shifted to becoming an agency of support, not just compliance, for our school districts, redesigning our governance

structures to enable local leaders to meet the unique needs of their students and families.

Even on a more typical year, I would be proud to present to you the progress that RIDE has made in our schools over the last year. This report reflects the work of an educational community, both within the department and outside of it, committed to progress for our students that will be remembered for years to come. It fills me not only with pride but with hope for the future of education in Rhode Island.

As you read through this report, you will see what I have seen: that the will, the talent, and the collaboration needed to improve Rhode Island's schools from the ground up is present in every corner of our great state. The people of our state have proven to be resilient in the face of great danger; to be generous in a time of great scarcity; resolute in a moment of great uncertainty.

And though the worst may be behind us, we have the opportunity now to continue on together and to go further and farther than ever before for our students. It was a global calamity that pushed us all to work as hard and as effectively as we have over the past year, but that spirit of collaboration will not end here. I know that we can continue to work together, from the students and families, to the teachers and administrators, to the staff here at RIDE, and make every year the best that it can be in our schools.

Thank you again to every teacher, administrator, school staff member, community member, family member, and student who made the work detailed in this report possible. I am immensely proud to have the opportunity to join in celebration of our achievements here, and I look forward to working with you in the years to come.



Angélica Infante-Green

Commissioner of Elementary
and Secondary Education

A handwritten signature in orange ink that reads "a. Infante-Green".



The Way Forward:

The State of Education in Rhode Island

The Way Forward:

COVID-19 Response

When we authored our last report to the General Assembly, we were in the earliest, most manic days of the pandemic response; we did not yet even have a clear idea of how the COVID-19 virus spread or how long it would be with us. In response to that threat, we had just made the bold decision to finish the school year in full distance learning for every student. We led the nation in that transition, with an attendance higher than our neighboring states and a unified government response distributing internet access and devices where they were needed the most. Despite that successful pivot, it was already becoming clear to us that our students needed to be back in school. Students were suffering from the lack of social and emotional engagement, teachers were spread thin, and our most vulnerable populations were falling behind. So, we hit the ground running and immediately began planning on what we would need to do to make in-person learning safe for our students, families, and educators.

It was not always clear what the best path forward would be. No decision was ever made lightly as we balanced the safety of our students, school staff, and families against students' need for in-person learning. Despite that initial uncertainty, and as we look towards the end of a difficult school year, I feel confident in saying that we have succeeded in giving our students a high-quality education in spite of the pandemic. And it's not just us who feel that way—media sources like the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal have lauded Rhode Island as a model for education in the pandemic, in large part because of the excellent work of our educators and school districts in resuming in-person learning.

The most important factor in resuming in-person learning was collaboration. None of us could have ever made it through the last year alone, and the education community is no exception. Throughout the summer, we worked hand-in-hand with our local education agencies to learn about their communities' unique needs and to help them create multiple plans for each school that outlined what learning would look like fully in-person, fully remote, and two partial in-person scenarios. Together with our superintendents and the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), we made contingencies for every possibility from snow days to outbreaks. Then, with the plans in place, we turned our focus to getting our schools the resources they needed.



At the same time, we focused on creating summer learning opportunities for our students to create a backstop against learning loss. We quickly brought together the Summer Academy for Interactive Learning (SAIL), a centralized hub for students to register for classes, seminars, and more. In the span of a few weeks, we were able to pull together dozens of virtual classes to keep students engaged safely over the summer. The response was tremendous, with over 14,000 Rhode Island students registering for courses.

We are looking forward to building on the success of that program this upcoming summer through a new, larger program hosted through EnrollRI.org that will provide even greater access to learning and promote equity by allowing students to sign up for the classes that fit them best, even if they are located in another school district. Creating additional summer engagement opportunities for all students was one of the absolute priorities identified by our LEAP Task Force as a way to both accelerate learning and close achievement gaps. The EnrollRI portal not only offers hundreds of summer classes offered by our community partners, but also the classes run by each local education agency. Students in every part of Rhode Island can sign up for those classes, so that they can take the enrichment opportunities that are most relevant to them, not just the ones in their own neighborhood. We are also offering work-based learning, college credit courses, and financial literacy education so that no matter what path our students are taking, they can enrich their learning experience.

There's no one alive who has managed a response to a pandemic like this, but fortunately, we do have a brave and committed group of people who are prepared for anything. Our partners in government like The Rhode Island National Guard have gone above and beyond to coordinate the state's pandemic response, and so it was a natural fit for us to partner with them, along with RIDOH to get our schools the support they needed to reopen. Together, we formed the Education Operations Center (EdOC), the first centralized emergency operations center specifically for reopening schools in the nation. The EdOC was able to provide our

schools with 24/7 logistical support, offer training and resources to educators, track real-time data on positive cases in schools, and deliver crucial supplies like personal protective equipment and HEPA filters to our classrooms. Rhode Island owes a debt of gratitude to the men and women of our National Guard for working with us and RIDOH on this essential operation and keeping our schools safe.

As with every decision RIDE makes, we put data at the center of the process. We worked alongside RIDOH to determine what key metrics each school would need to open, including operational readiness, cleaning procedures, testing capacity, and state and municipal positivity and hospitalization rates. We took no chances in our decision to reopen; to ensure that we had enough time to collect truly accurate data, we pushed the first day of school back by two weeks. Finally, once we were satisfied that we were sending teachers and students alike into a safe environment, we opened our schools on September 14th, 2020, and have been successfully and safely delivering in-person learning across the state for the entire school year.



As we brought students and educators back into the classroom, we needed two final, important programs to ensure their safety: contact tracing and testing. Our colleagues at RIDOH were instrumental in setting up a rapid contact tracing program to keep families informed and to prevent outbreaks in our schools. We also relied on Rhode Island's incredibly dedicated school nurses, who were trained as contact tracers and whose intimate familiarity with their school communities were crucial to effective contact tracing in the early days of our return to school. Although getting the contact tracing program up and running wasn't easy, the hard work and perseverance of our school nurses made it possible.

To fuel our contact tracing efforts and ensure we had an accurate picture of the spread of COVID-19 in our school systems, we worked with RIDOH to develop a testing stream just for our education communities. Through that exclusive channel set aside just for them, our PreK-12 students, as well as their teachers, had access to COVID-19 tests and rapid results even when demand for those tests was surging. And while the test results showed us that we were on the right track and that school was not a significant source of COVID-19 infections, we wanted to keep pushing forward and establish a permanent stream of school-based testing that would give us even more real-time insight into the risk of spread in our schools.

Just before Thanksgiving, we rolled out school-based testing pilots in Central Falls, Lincoln, and Providence. We were especially grateful for the work of the Central Falls School District, who hosted the largest program in the pilot. The City of Central Falls was in a difficult place at the time as the hardest-hit area in the state. At the same time, the students in the district, many of whom are multilingual learners or coming from low-income households, were some of those most in need of in-person learning. Setting up testing at the schools wasn't easy, but because of the hard work of Central Falls Superintendent Stephanie Downey-Toledo and her dedicated team, we were able to get it done.

At the time, we heard from educators and families alike that students, especially our youngest, were scared to get testing at first. Just like they have every day of this crisis, our teachers stepped up to help their students. We have heard so many heartwarming stories from our staff in Central Falls about teachers who volunteered to get tested alongside their students to show them it was safe and easy. Because of their leadership, the pilot program in Central Falls was a success, which allowed us to expand our school-based testing operations across the state at 78 schools.

Though the barriers to safe in-person learning seemed at times insurmountable, we were able to overcome them by banding together in the name of student success. Today, the rate of spread in our schools remains low—so low that for many of our students, being in school all day carries a lower risk of contracting the virus than in distance learning. Under the leadership of Governor Dan McKee, we have offered COVID-19 vaccinations to every educator in the state and as of May 2021 have successfully delivered them to over 85% of educators. This could never have been possible without the hard work of our educators, administrators, local leaders, families, and students.

Though we have returned to school safely and we continue to provide even greater vaccine access to our educators and families, our pandemic response is far from over. While keeping our students safe has been our top priority, just as vital will be catching them up from the academic and social-emotional impact our students have suffered as a result of this disruption. We knew that we could not solve this issue from the top down; it would need to be a community-led effort, grounded in Rhode Island-based data gleaned from proven research. For that reason, we brought together a group of educators, school and community leaders, and education experts to form our Learning, Equity, & Accelerated Pathways (LEAP) Task Force.

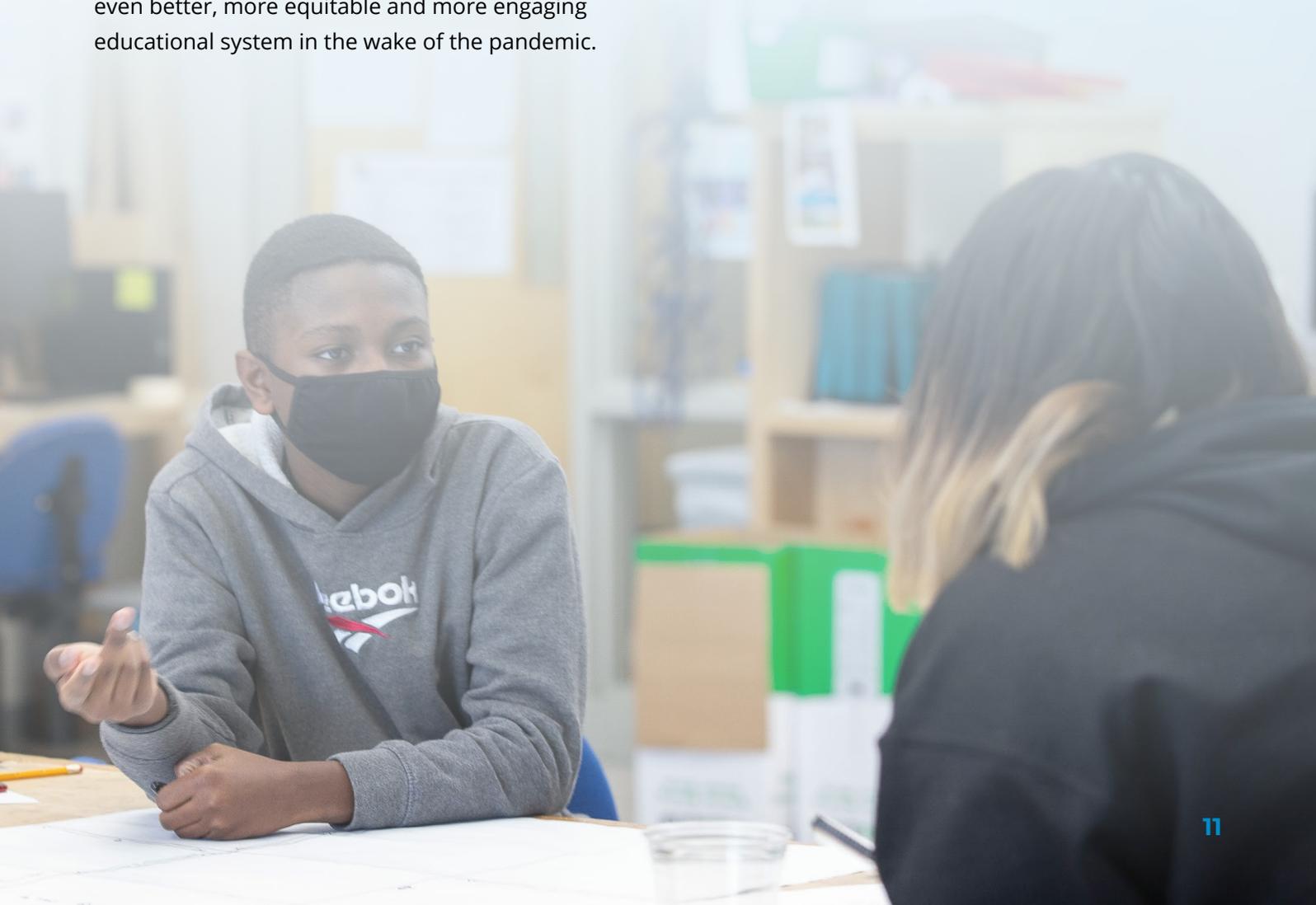
One of the most important aspects of forming the LEAP Task Force was ensuring that we represented every single one of Rhode Island's diverse

communities. While every student's education was upended by the pandemic, it was the historically marginalized student groups that have been most impacted. By bringing leaders who share those students' lived experiences or have worked closely with them to the table, we have centered equity in our plans to move forward. Working hand in hand with these communities, we will rebuild an education system that will give every student the opportunity to succeed, regardless of who they are or where they are from.

The work of our LEAP Task Force has been invaluable in creating our roadmap for catching students back up to speed. The task force met for over two months of rigorous discussion about what our students needed in order to succeed, and has published a series of recommendations that RIDE has committed to taking action on. It certainly will not be an easy task. However, the last year of collaboration and innovation in the face of a pandemic has proven that when we work together, there is no obstacle we cannot overcome. Now, we must press on together to continue to build an even better, more equitable and more engaging educational system in the wake of the pandemic.

Together, we have led the nation in returning to school and will finish this year stronger and safer than any other state. There are still many challenges—COVID-19 has disrupted students' learning across the state, with an outsized effect on many of the students who were already vulnerable. Though we may have succeeded in safely reopening schools, our COVID-19 response is far from over. We will not be finished until every student has had the opportunity to recover from the pandemic's effect on their learning journey.

This is an opportunity to reinvent how we deliver learning. We must use this moment to innovate and redesign so that we can once and for all close the perpetual achievement gap that haunts our education system. It is our chance to lead, create, and innovate with these populations in mind and not just remediate, as we have done for so many years. This is the time to provide a strong foundation and accelerate instruction interwoven with social emotional supports to ensure success for all students.



Progress Through the Year:

COVID-19 Response

- Managed the distribution of unprecedented sums of financial resources. In addition to the typical annual state aid to education of \$1.1 billion and federal aid of \$220 million, as well as \$120 million of CARES ACT funding, RIDE will be responsible for the management and distribution of approximately an additional \$540 million of CARES ACT funding due to ESSER II and ESSER III funding laws. These later funding laws are effective through 2023 and 2024 respectively but it is anticipated the bulk of the funding will be distributed in 2021 and 2022. These new funding sources added to the traditional funding managed by the department brings the total amount of funds entrusted to the finance department for management and distribution to approximately \$2 billion.
- Ensured that school bus transportation was available during the pandemic through Statewide Transportation Program for approximately 2,200 students that attend special education outplacements or require transportation assistance because they are students experiencing homelessness or are placed in foster care.
- Researched statewide distance learning platforms and conducted an RFP for statewide distance learning options in order to create an MPA for LEAs to utilize and selected a statewide distance learning platform for their students who were medically unable to attend school in-person.
- Provided ongoing support to all schools in RI to increase confidence in reopening schools by partnering with experts in the field to provide ongoing technical assistance, work sessions, and webinars. Topics spanned from addressing learning loss to creative scheduling of staff and students.
- Partnered with the RI Department of Building Regulations to conduct 301 School walkthroughs prior to the first day of school, regardless of their reopening status. All LEAs received immediate feedback upon completion of walk through and then follow up from the Education Operations Center within 48 hours to address deficiencies.

Education Operations Center (EdOC)

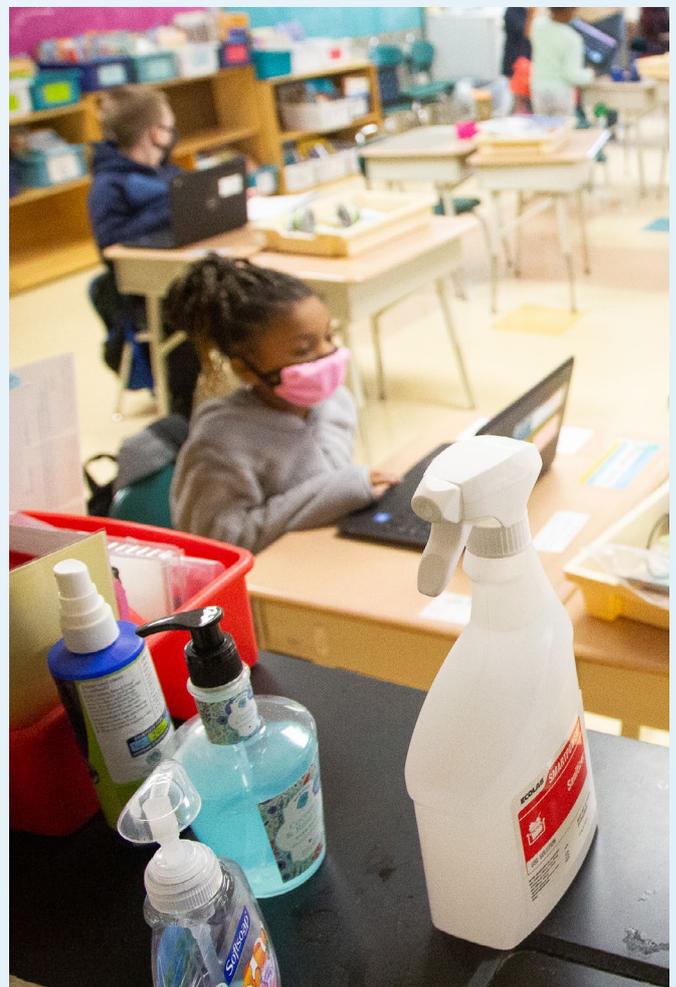
- Established the EdOC in August 2020 to leverage state resources to give schools the assistance needed to provide a safe educational experience for every PreK-12 student in the state during the 2020-2021 school year.
- Provided real-time support in response to emails and calls 24/7. To date, the EdOC has responded to almost 1800 requests for information from 66 LEAs and over 300 schools. Topics include health and safety guidance clarification, questions with case investigation and contact tracing, requests for personal protective equipment (PPE), trainings, and guidance and support around topics such as ventilation, transportation, and staffing challenges.
- Created LEA Assistance Teams that have provided over 500 customized support meetings to LEAs and schools through school site visits and virtual meetings in the areas of implementation of guidance, testing, resiliency and health and safety trainings, and response to positive cases.
- Established a comprehensive data dashboard that shares COVID-19 case numbers down to the individual school level. This system was built to provide educators, families, and communities with real time data on the rate of positive

cases in their schools and municipalities. The dashboard displays positive cases tracked by learning style (in-person, hybrid, or virtual), the number of school-based close contacts, and overall attendance and positive case trends.

- Worked directly with RI Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) to provide all public LEAs with an initial allotment of PPE prior to school opening, as well as additional allocations of 136,000 gloves, 69,000 containers of disinfectant wipes, and 682,000 face masks for staff and students.
- Procured 6,100 Medify MA-112's air filters and delivered them to 47 different LEAs, as well as 250 Blu-Dri Air Scrubbers and 250 Noise Attenuators. These were provided free of cost to the LEA and were available for every classroom that required one.
- Created a statewide asymptomatic testing program that was available to all public and private schools. The program was informed using pilot data from four LEAs. RIDE has conducted training for 76 schools/LEAs to implement their own sentinel testing program using BinaxNOW rapid antigen tests. Currently, 47 public LEAs and 31 private schools participate in this option. Additionally, schools were able to sign up for a RIDOH/EdOC facilitated testing event at one or more of their schools. RIDE has held over 35 of these testing events. Positivity rates from PreK-12 asymptomatic testing events has been tracked weekly and is at less than 1% across staff and students as of May 2021.
- Established a regional pod structure for LEAs and private schools so each pod could be assigned specific EdOC, RIDE, and RIDOH staff to support them around contact tracing, implementing health and safety guidance, and solving COVID-19 specific problems that arise. Held bi-weekly meetings with each pod to share information and respond to questions and concerns.
- Continued to create and refine guidance documents based on updated data and

CDC guidelines, as well as the needs of the field. Specific guidance examples include: Transportation, Ventilation, Health & Safety (revisions to recess, music/theatre, spacing), Outbreak Response Playbook, Asymptomatic Testing Playbook, Spring Events, and Summer Programs.

- Supported PK-12 educator vaccination efforts by assisting with planning and troubleshooting issues that arose while executing the plans.
- Mobilized to support the physical set-up of the EdOC using RIDE resources.
- Created several Tableau Dashboards for the EdOC that reported in real time, student attendance by school by day, educator attendance by school by day and student instruction model by school by day.
- Created two new software applications that allowed the EdOC and schools to track PPE inventories and HVAC equipment.



RIDOH Support

- Created a new software application to allow the COVID-19 contact tracers at RIDOH to identify a student's classmates when a student tested positive for COVID-19. The application allowed the RIDOH contact tracers to search for the student in RIDE's database, then list all of the student's classes.
- Created a new automated data transfer process to RIDOH to be imported into their COVID-19 dashboards. These files listed the numbers of students enrolled in each public school, that were in their school at any point over the last 14 days, and those students that were learning remotely for the two-week period.
- Provided 24/7 support to the RIDOH contact tracers with application issues and account setup.
- Helped organize communications to all the school nurses to train them on how to contact trace, how to report a probable COVID case to RIDOH, and to provide support for the Salesforce application.

RIDE Support

- Mobilized quickly to support the organization in the transition from working at the Shepard Building to working remotely in the matter of a few days. Staff worked tirelessly in March 2020 to configure a new VPN system that would allow for all staff to work from home, deploy Remote Desktop Connections, and troubleshoot problems remote users had with their computers at home.
- Trained staff on the use of cloud-based platform in Microsoft Office 365, how to schedule virtual meetings in Teams, and how to collaborate using SharePoint remotely to continue to support districts and move the educational agenda forward.
- Used DocuSign, a digital document signing platform, to support the Summer Readiness

Project by allowing RIDE to send over 2,000 documents to the parents of students that needed to be signed in order for their child to be able to participate in these course offerings.

- Invested in new equipment to allow RIDE staff to work remotely, including new cameras and headsets for staff members and room-based cameras and microphones for conference rooms to facilitate public meetings.
- Worked with the Division of Capital Asset Management & Maintenance to measure and install plexiglass for the office space at RIDE to allow staff to safely come back.

LEA Support

- Created a new team called the RIDE Resource Center (RRC) at DataSpark to better support schools and districts in their data collection and submission processes. The RRC provides resources and trainings for COVID-related data submission.

School Meal Program

- Worked with schools to plan for multiple potential modes of food service as schools prepared to reopen in fall 2020.
- Successfully applied for and received numerous waivers from the US Department of Agriculture that allowed for a shift in operations to sustain widespread school meal access during school closures related to COVID-19.
- Transitioned over 30 sponsors from the National School Lunch Program to the Summer Food Service Program to be able to offer children access to meals without charge to parents and with reduced administrative burden to LEAs.
- Successfully transitioned program training modules to virtual formats in response to COVID-19.
- Conducted alternate monitoring activities to provide enhanced technical assistance and

support to school, child care and adult care sites in lieu of on-sight compliance visits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Substitute Teacher Initiatives

- Partnered with the Highlander Institute to survey LEA need for substitute teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. 45 LEAs requested 947 additional substitute teachers beyond their current pool to meet the need. The Highlander Institute created a [Substitute Training Program](#) to train and deploy new substitute teachers across Rhode Island for in-person day-to-day substitute teaching needs. 151 individuals completed the course and were deployed to Rhode Island schools for hiring and assignment. 160 additional individuals are in-progress completing the program. At its peak, 110 substitute teachers from this training program were active in Rhode Island.
- Awarded \$2 million in LEA substitute grants to 39 LEAs across Rhode Island. The purpose of these grants was to subsidize additional substitute teacher expenses due to COVID-19. Priority was given to LEAs with high COVID-19 community rates, educator absences, and demonstrate substitute teacher need. To date, \$1,909,166 has been reimbursed to LEAs.



Evaluation

- Worked collaboratively with professional associations to provide evaluation options for the 2020-2021 school year. These options afford LEAs flexibility while also maintaining the integrity of local evaluation systems. Districts were provided information to choose the option that best meets local needs. RIDE also created and shared with the field [Back to School RI: Adapting SY20-21 Evaluation Practices To Support Educators](#) to support evaluators with best practices for virtual evaluation.

Certification

- Issued Temporary Changes flexibilities guidance to the field providing additional time for course work and testing requirements so that educators would not be penalized for COVID-19 impacts. With Council's approval, RIDE amended the temporary changes to allow for educators facing extreme circumstances due to COVID-19 to have additional flexibilities through September 15, 2021.
- Encouraged LEAs to create an Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) COVID-19 Plan to ensure that current candidates receive a comprehensive preparation to effectively serve the students in their future schools and classrooms, while having the necessary flexibility to demonstrate their readiness to teach or lead given the COVID-19 situation. RIDE is granting EPPs the flexibility to modify remaining EPP experiences or revisit previous experiences to respond to the realities of the COVID-19 situation, while ensuring that standards, proficiencies, and competencies are met demonstrating candidates' satisfactory program completion and, thus, eligibility for Rhode Island certification.
- Collaborated with the Office of the Post-Secondary Commissioner and researchers from the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab to

launch an initiative in 2021 that aims to support students from the class of 2020 to enroll in college. Given the impact of COVID, this class has had lower enrollment rates, and through a partnership with Let's Get Ready, students are being offered support around this process.

- Launched Rhode Island's first-ever [summer learning](#) initiative: Summer Academy for Interactive Learning (SAIL), which served over 14,000 students in both in-person and virtual programming. There were over 400 courses available for students to take part of and 130 providers who participated from across the nation. The SAIL program was instrumental in meeting students' academic and social-emotional needs that had significantly increased in the Spring 2020 semester due to COVID—related school closures and shifts to online learning. Students enrolled in the following course types:
 - Advancing Academic Achievement (90 courses)
 - Enrichment and Exploration (241 courses)
 - Physical Fitness (1 course)
 - Supporting MLL and Differently-abled Students (99 courses)
 - Work-based Learning and Summer Youth Employment (4 courses)
- Launched four summer readiness courses for summer 2020: College Math, College ELA, High School Math, and High School ELA through SAIL. 1,686 students participated (6% of students statewide); 10% of rising 9th graders in the state enrolled.
 - Both 9th and 12th grade math students that took both the pre- and post-test increased their score, with the students who started further more behind showing larger growth.
- ELA students showed statistically significant growth on rubrics of reader identity, reading comprehension, and use of metacognitive strategies.
- Reimagined the PrepareRI summer internship program, in collaboration with Skills for RI's Future, to bring nearly 475 high school and college interns together from across Rhode Island for a real-world view into the evolving work landscape. The COVID-19 Innovation Challenge was a paid, virtual internship experience that challenged interns to form their own student-run corporations, collaborate with remote teams and think critically to build viable solutions that addressed the real-world challenges companies and industries are facing as a result of COVID-19.
- Provided timely CTE Reopening Guidance to advise LEAs on how to operate their CTE programs during a COVID-restricted school environment.
- Established the first Rhode Island Statewide Virtual Learning Program in Fall 2020, in partnership with Stride. At launch, the program enrolled over 400 students, prioritizing learners at severe risk of medical illness due to COVID-19, as well as multilingual learners in Providence opting for distance learning.
- Adapted community-based AmeriCorps programs to support student attendance and assignments during distance learning and to support families with basic needs. With the support of AmeriCorps members, the Family Service of Rhode Island Be Safe program served 35,000 Rhode Islanders by collecting and delivering food and COVID-19 supplies, while Farm Fresh Rhode Island AmeriCorps members helped Hope's Harvest deliver 131,750 pounds of fresh produce to food pantries.
- Developed provisional policies and addendum for the identification and placement of students

in English Language Development programs during COVID-19 school closures and distance learning.

- Developed and curated a COVID-19 webpage for MLL students, educators, administrators, and parents with guiding principles for distance learning education for MLLs, and a list of COVID-19 MLL/EL resources that categorizes digital tools by type and supports offered.
- Developed a COVID-19 Special Education Resource page for differently abled students, parents, teachers and administrators with over 90 relevant and timely resources to support differently-abled students through distance learning and in reopening schools.
- Purchased an online early-childhood screening tool for all school districts to complete early

childhood special education screenings virtually. RIDE provided training for all school districts on the tool and its use.

- Provided training for 93 educators in providing virtual job shadow training in order to maintain career exploration activities for students requiring supported employment during distance learning.
- Shifted all face-to-face technical assistance and professional development to virtual platforms and increased the number of convening and interactions with the field for both the USDOE School Climate Transformation Project and SAMHSA Project AWARE. Contributed to the suite of resources to support schools in behavioral health, social emotional learning, health and physical education.



Providence

- Solicited community input on a large scale to prepare for reopening schools this fall through a widely distributed survey reaching over 3,000 stakeholders. PPSD also held over 25 smaller focus groups with students, parents, partners, and community leaders to more clearly define priorities. PPSD also held community forums online to keep families informed and answer the many questions and concerns of the community during this time of uncertainty.
- Launched a number of bilingual and multilingual communications to families to prepare them for a return to school. These included a specially designed reopening website, a parent handbook and fact sheets on key topics such as transportation, health and safety and academics.
- Engaged in a thorough process to prepare safe facilities for students to learn and staff to work. As part of this effort, the district worked with a ventilation engineer to ensure proper air exchanges in buildings with and without existing HVAC systems. This resulted in a school-by-school, classroom-by-classroom approach to ventilation and an investment in over 750+ window fans and 500+ HEPA filters. Additionally, with support from RIDE, the district recently added an additional 1,800+ HEPA filters to support building ventilation in cold weather months, when keeping windows open was not always feasible.
- Increased custodial staff hours dedicated to improving cleaning and the level of cleanliness of all school buildings. The district also created a clear process for the deep cleaning of all spaces. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the district's custodial vendor hired additional temporary staff to augment the full-time team to ensure a safe environment for students and staff. This augmented staff capacity has resulted in an approximately 40 percent increase in custodial hours worked since September 2020 (approximately 12,000 additional custodial hours). Working exclusively during school hours, these extra custodians perform ongoing disinfection of restrooms and high-touch surfaces.
- Procured substantial amounts of PPE for staff members and students, including: 100,000+ reusable masks and 100,000+ disposable masks; 19,000+ bottles of hand sanitizer; and 2,000+ gallon containers of disinfectant spray. In addition, PPSD installed 750+ window fans and 300+ HEPA filters to increase ventilation within the classrooms.
- Procured a new storage system and installed it at the district supply warehouse. This system expanded the amount of usable storage space and allowed staff to better organize inventory.
- Purchased more than 12,000 additional Chromebooks, 1,300 Wi-Fi hotspots, 120 SmartBoards, and 2,000 laptops for teachers and classroom sound amplification systems to clarify voices while teachers wear masks.
- Created a plan through the Providence Virtual Learning Academy (PVLA) to provide a full-time virtual option for students during the pandemic. In this model, elementary school students receive daily synchronous instruction, middle school students receive a combination of synchronous and asynchronous instruction, and high school students follow an asynchronous, "flipped classroom" model where PPSD teachers facilitate student-driven learning.



- Held weekly meetings for PVLA teachers to better understand the needs of their students, as well as cycles of coaching that include observation and feedback to increase their capacity as instructors in an online environment.
- Hosted a PVLA Parent University twice per month as a way to engage parents and provide them with the most up-to-date information. The monthly newsletter and [school website](#) is another resource for parents.
- Launched a door knocking campaign for no-attendance and low-attendance families, where central administration staff visited families throughout the city to engage in conversations and problem-solve barriers to attendance.
- Leveraged available funding to provide a number of supports, including holiday meals for families and winter coats for students, to help PPSD families in need.



The Way Forward:

Equity

Pursuing equity in education is one of RIDE's guiding principles, as well as a cause near to my own heart. However, the events of the past year and renewed conversations both nationally and locally about the effects of structural biases in our institutions has pushed that work into the spotlight. As the pandemic has taken a toll on our students from every walk of life, it has disproportionately affected the students who are already marginalized: students of color, multilingual learners, differently-abled students, and economically-disadvantaged students.

We recognize the urgency with which we have to act to prevent the extant opportunity gap between those groups and their peers from widening, and we are taking action. While we must always push ourselves to do better, I am proud of the work that our department has done throughout the 2020-2021 school year to make our schools more just and inclusive and to empower groups of students who have too often been left behind.

From the moment we began our pandemic response, we made certain to center equity for our students in all of our decision making. In pivoting to full distance learning in March 2020, one of our foremost concerns was providing our economically-disadvantaged students and students in rural communities with devices and internet access.



We took immediate action to get those resources to the students who needed them most. We also strove in those early days to accommodate the needs of our differently-abled students, many of whom needed additional assistance in order to learn remotely.

These were also the factors we took into consideration when we led the nation in resuming in-person learning in the 2020-2021 academic year. It was clear that, for many of our students, full distance learning was not a tenable solution. Far too many of our students lacked the resources and supports at home to get a high-quality education remotely, and many of our differently-abled and multilingual learners needed the support provided by face-to-face interaction with their educators. Those students are entitled to an education that fits their unique needs, and so we have endeavored to provide it for them.

We also have not allowed the immediacy of our pandemic response to prevent us from creating long-term plans to promote equity in our schools. In 2020, RIDE released two documents that will guide our work for the next five years: the Blueprint for Multilingual Learner Success and its associated Strategic Plan. These plans form a framework to providing every multilingual learner in Rhode Island a full, high-quality education by 2025 that helps them achieve full English fluency and prepares them for success beyond our PreK-12 system.

Central to the Blueprint is a commitment to multilingual learning education that does not encourage assimilation, but instead honors the heritage of our multilingual communities and recognizes that speaking multiple languages is a strength, not a shortcoming. Already, we are working to create programs that will bring us closer to that goal. In the spring of 2021, the Rhode Island Foundation, in collaboration with RIDE, issued \$100,000 in grants to Central Falls, Providence,

Westerly, and Woonsocket to support planning for bilingual and dual-language programs in those districts. As we progress with the Blueprint, we will continue to let local education agencies lead the way in supporting both their multilingual students and their English-native counterparts through innovative solutions like dual-language immersion programs.

The last year has highlighted many parts of the education system at home in Rhode Island and across the nation that are broken. But this also presents us with an opportunity to not just build over those faults but to remove them entirely—if we are willing to commit to it. For that reason, RIDE invited leaders from across the state to join the Learning, Equity, & Accelerated Pathways (LEAP) Task Force and to help us identify key strategies to rebuilding a better and more just education system.

As we move forward in our mission to empower every student to succeed, regardless of circumstance, we are committed to continuing to engage directly with all communities and in particular the communities whose children have been most affected by learning loss, listening to their lived experience, and following their recommendations to make our schools a better place for their children.



Progress Through the Year: Equity

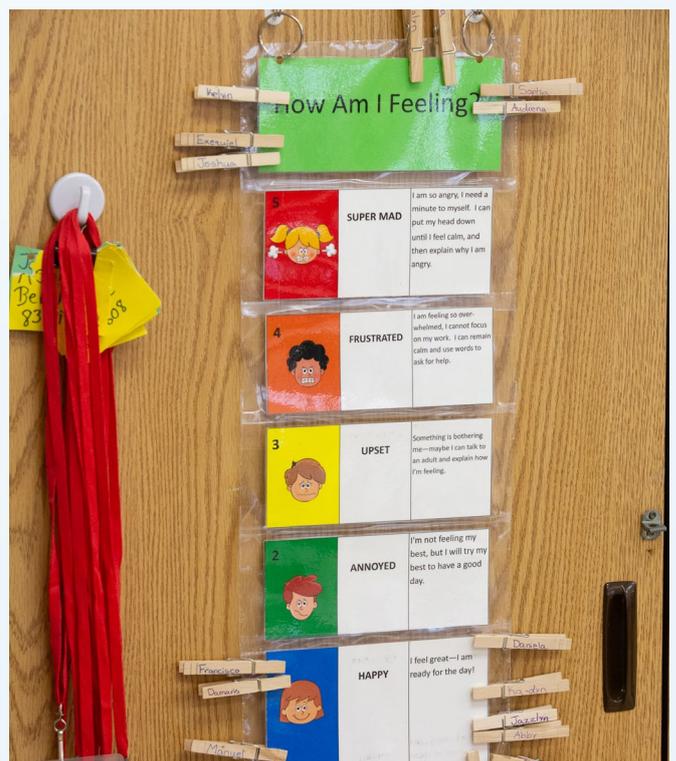
- Redesigned the PrepareRI Youth Apprenticeship program with a focus on equity and building in wraparound supports. The program draws on strong partnerships between students, continuing technical education programs, ApprenticeshipRI, CCRI, and industry employers to support young people in earning wages while they learn and exploring a pathway to Registered Apprenticeship while in high school.
- Provided justice trainings to 58 AmeriCorps volunteers: nine hours of diversity, equity, and inclusion training, built on academic readings and civic reflection of institutional and structural inequities observed during AmeriCorps service. These talks will help AmeriCorps volunteers help the communities they serve in an equitable way.
- Used detailed, district-level financial data to support funding distributions such as High-Cost Special Education funding, CTE funding, and local tuition rates. Using the Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA) data ensures that these funds are distributed equitably to the districts in line with their actual expenditure and enrollments.
- Provided alternative methods of school breakfast service, such as breakfast in the classroom and breakfast after the bell, to ensure that the students who need it most have access to a healthy breakfast to start their school day.

Mental Health

- Sought out, won, and implemented the US Department of Education’s School Climate Transformation grant to provide professional development and coaching to nine LEA teams to increase high and equitable academic and well-being outcomes by using a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework. MTSS is a proactive system that seeks to identify

students with additional academic or emotional needs and the degree of supported needed and provide the appropriate help.

- Partnered with the Center for Leadership and Educational Equity (CLEE) and the State System of Support (SOS) as part of the School Climate Transformation project to provide 72 training and technical assistant events to support the needs of schools with emphasis on the needs of a school identified focal group experiencing disparities in their education experience.
- Contracted with the SOS to expand [BRIDGE-RI](#), a training website for teachers with courses on a wide range of topics related to MTSS.
- Worked with three districts in SAMHSA’s Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education). Trained 1,730 school staff working in the mental health field. Provided 2,691 trainings to school staff who are not working in the mental health field. Conducted 3,057 student screenings, resulting in 442 referrals.



Multilingual Learners (MLLs)

- Convened diverse group of stakeholders to develop, create, obtain Council approval for, and publish the [Blueprint for MLL Success](#). The Blueprint is a policy framework that presents a clear vision for the future of MLL in Rhode Island, including dedicated supports to help them achieve academic success.
- Released a Strategic Plan for MLLs, which delineates high leverage strategies and action steps that RIDE, along with LEAs and stakeholders, will implement in the next five years. This multiyear endeavor ultimately will place all educators in a position to provide high-quality evidence-based instruction for MLLs to be successful in learning English, complete rigorous grade-level content, and graduate high school being college, career, and life ready.
- Began immediately to implement strategies outlined in the MLL Strategic Plan by expanding bilingual and dual language programs in Rhode Island schools. In coordination with the Rhode Island Foundation, RIDE allocated a total of \$100,000 competitive planning grants to expand statewide two-ways dual language programs in alignment with the RI Blueprint for MLL Success. Funding based on project and range allocation was granted to the districts of Central Falls, Providence, Westerly, and Woonsocket.
- Built a comprehensive series of dashboards to monitor outcomes for MLL students. For the first time, the public now has access to how these students have performed in a multitude of academic activities, ranging from state assessments to AP course participation. These visualizations include numerous charts and graphs and were created in collaboration with the MLL Blueprint task force.
- Developed specific guidance as part of RIDE's effort to provide all LEAs with resources for selecting high-quality curricula: [Multilingual Learner \(MLL\) Non-Negotiables for Math Curriculum Selection](#) and for [ELA Curriculum Selection](#).
- Facilitated the creation of the [Social and Emotional Learning Toolkit for MLL Educators](#) in collaboration with the Rhode Island International Charter School.
- Developed Rhode Island's first specific resources on how to meet the needs of Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education (SIFE) students: the [SIFE Practical Approach](#) and [SIFE Webpage](#).

LEAP Task Force

- Convened the Learning, Equity, and Accelerated Pathways (LEAP) Task Force in February 2020 with a membership of 40 stakeholders. The Task Force was charged with developing recommendations that will inform learning strategy, both short-term and long-term, and align resources to achieve equitable and accelerated results for Rhode Island students.
- Engaged LEAP Task Force members in a participatory, evidence-informed, and data-driven process over seven weeks to understand statewide learning during COVID-19 in partnership with educational experts, practitioners, families, students and community members across the State of Rhode Island. Throughout the Task Force meetings, RIDE secured national education leaders, including former Secretary of Education John King, Jr and current Acting Assistant Secretary of Education Ian Rosenblum, to lend their expertise to the Task Force's work.
- Collected and analyzed data to inform the LEAP Task Force's work, including the results of two mid-year assessments and attendance statistics across school districts, and facilitated conversations about root causes, likely effects, and potential solutions to problems identified in that data.
- Issued the full [LEAP Report and Recommendations](#), which summarized the Task Force's findings and its recommended absolute priorities for RIDE's post-pandemic work, as well

as eleven commitments that RIDE is making to support those priorities.

Providence

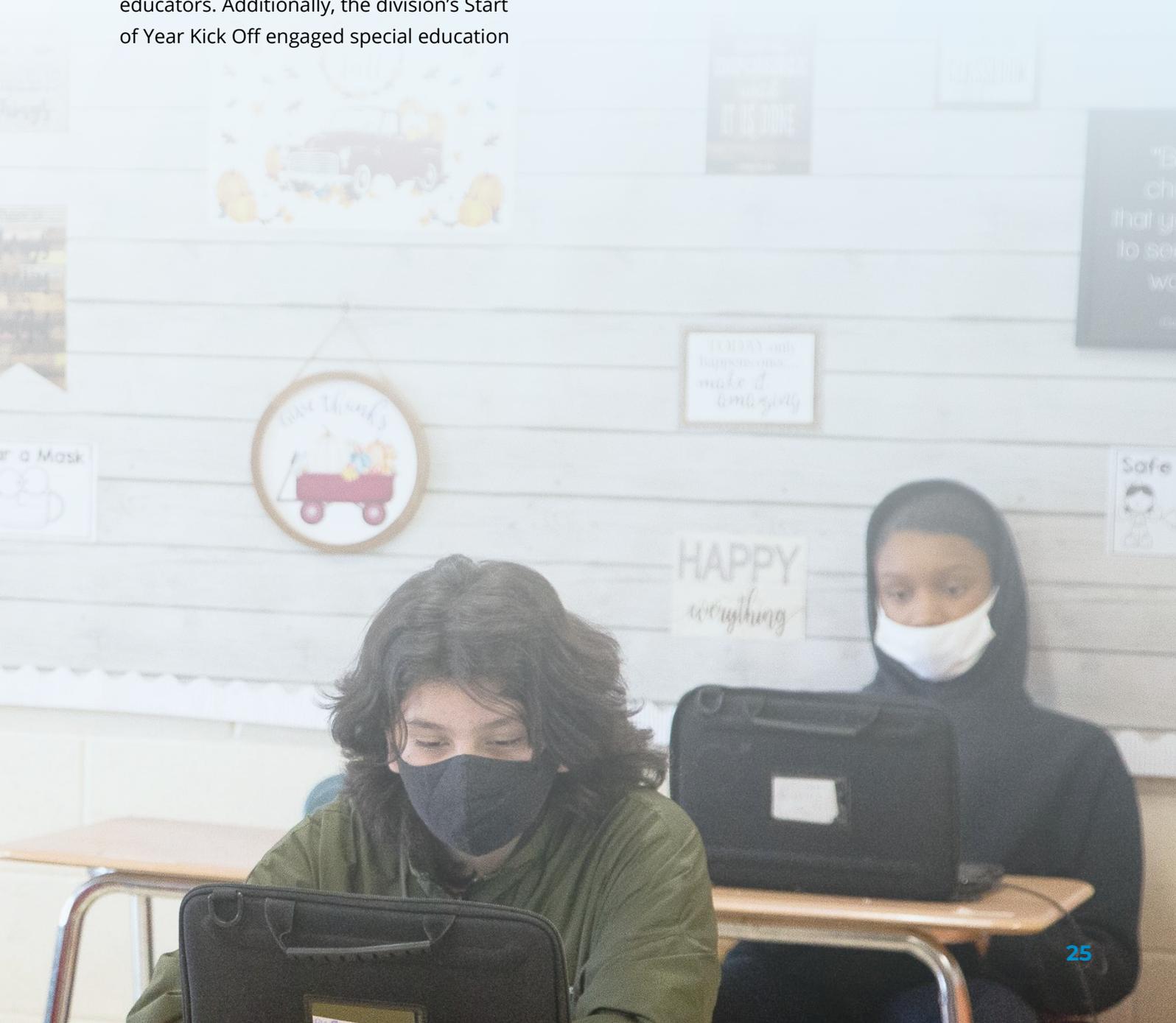
- Revised Providence Public School District (PPSD)'s Culturally Responsive Framework and coaching documents based upon feedback and presented that framework during new teacher onboarding and other venues.
- Expanded PPSD's culturally responsive teaching work to become culturally responsive and sustaining education, which is more inclusive of students, families and community members.
- Expanded professional development initiatives that support teachers in providing a culturally-responsive education.
- Issued an RFP for a review of specialized service programs to improve delivery and continue to seek efficiencies.
- Launched equity-focused professional development and people development efforts. Sessions are now required for all teachers and staff on Fundamentals of Diversity, Equity and Belonging. The Office of Diversity and Equity also provides equity office hours to the community.
- Launched a Diversity, Equity and Belonging Virtual day of learning that consisted of 16 professional development offerings with five community partners and engaged over 800 PPSD educators.
- Partnered with national equity and diversity leaders to launch the "Say Their Names" toolkit in response to national unrest after the death of George Floyd and in support of students, families and educators.
- Worked with local partners to continue to curate resources for educators and leaders to continue to engage in critical conversations about race, justice and civic engagement in the classroom.
- Developed and delivered the "Collaboration for Equity" learning series for Community Advisory Boards (CAB) in order to leverage collective expertise and decision-making for equitable outcomes. Over 30 CAB members attended across two sessions.
- Launched, through the PPSD Secondary School Network a series of Professional Learning Experiences held monthly with school support personnel focused on collaborative problem solving around addressing school culture needs that are rooted in Restorative Justice Practices and Positive Behavior Supports.
- Developed a plan to implement a multi-year, multi-million-dollar grant to establish a richer, more inspiring school climate and culture for eighth-grade students, elevate student voice, and improve the eighth-to-ninth-grade transition experience.
- Identified school culture priorities in PPSD secondary schools and developed and implemented Student Support Plans embedded with goals, resources and objectives to address school culture and equity concerns.
- Developed a plan to use a federal School Climate and Transformation grant to support social and emotional learning initiatives and training staff.
- Expanded student social emotional learning (SEL) work this past year, including offering five days of SEL lessons for teachers; adoption of SEL competencies and the codifying and scaling of classroom-level SEL practices. PPSD also launched an SEL resource site for educators and school leaders.
- Hired a Director of Student Support Services to directly oversee the implementation of social-emotional learning and multi-tiered systems of support in the district.
- Implemented the School-Based Mental Health Collaborative, which has supported the expansion of 36 schools with a clinician (social

worker or school psychologist) in each building to support site based social emotional health.

- Piloted the Cross Agency Collaborative Group in partnership with local child, family and youth support agencies to discuss wraparound supports for students.
- Began hosting innovative Smart Clinics at two PPSD schools in early 2021. The clinics are designed to improve academic performance by providing physical and mental health supports to students, their families and school staff where they already spend time.
- Convened the Division of Specialized Instruction and Supports quarterly to engage, set direction, encourage and empower over 800 PPSD educators. Additionally, the division's Start of Year Kick Off engaged special education

teachers, related service providers, teacher assistants and early childhood educators in shared vision for the start of the school year.

- Repurposed a position to serve as a liaison to families of students who receive Special Education Services. The liaison communicates with families directly using a two-way texting application.



The Way Forward:

Engaged Communities

Engaging openly and honestly with our school communities is a fundamental step in promoting learning and encouraging growth for our students. First and foremost, it is an opportunity to learn and to hear from the people who know our students best about what is working and what is not. By lifting up the voices of parents and students and letting their lived experience guide our efforts, we create a more enriching environment that promotes lifelong learning.

Staying active and engaged with community members is also the only way to ensure that children's education expands beyond the classroom. We rely on family members to be our partners in education; while we might see our students for 35 hours a week, their families get them for the other 133. If we cannot clearly explain to the community our plans to improve schools and earn their trust and support in that work, that partnership crumbles and our students suffer.

Never has that been more true than during the pandemic, during which we needed to distribute the most up-to-date safety guidance while competing with misinformation and confusion. Had we not spent the last several years working face-to-face with communities across Rhode Island, there is no telling how far afield our school year could have gone. However, because we have invested heavily in fostering an open relationship between the department, our local education agencies, and families, we were able to quickly and clearly get the word out about our plans for the 2020-2021 school year, including our return to school.

At every step of our COVID-19 response, we have continued to center community engagement and feedback on all of our programs. We immediately pivoted to virtual meetings of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education to ensure that all business before the Council was transparent and accessible to the public. This was especially

important because, even as the pandemic upended our vision of the 2020-2021 school year, our Council meetings were often focused on the future of education in Rhode Island.

In those meetings, we were able to present to the public Together Through Opportunity, our strategic plan for education in Rhode Island for the next five years, as well as our Blueprint for Multilingual Learner Success for the same time period. Both of those plans were tremendously strengthened by having a full public consideration, and we are grateful to the Rhode Islanders who joined those meetings to give us feedback and help craft plans that reflect the needs and desires of the communities we serve.

At the same time, we also needed to reach out directly to the community to ensure that they were getting the latest news on COVID-19. We started an unprecedented engagement campaign along several mediums to meet our community members where they were. We spent the summer staging a series of engagement sessions with students, families, and other stakeholders to help prepare both us and them for the return to school in the fall. We especially worked to reach out to students, with our Engagement team creating another series of virtual meetings specifically to hear about their thoughts on distance learning, their physical and mental health needs, and where they felt we could improve our education system.

In addition to direct outreach, we also strove to get our COVID-19 health and safety messaging out through print, broadcast, radio, and social media. In the lead-up to the reopening of schools last fall, RIDE used its social media accounts and website to disseminate information about safe school reopening protocols and share guidance that we developed for both families and educators. At the same time, I joined the Governor's Office for a weekly series of Facebook Live events aimed

at interviewing public health experts, spreading information about school safety, and assuaging the concerns we were hearing from members of the public around school reopening. These events were translated into Spanish, but to ensure that we reached our state's large Spanish-speaking populations, we also held two virtual Latino town halls with the Governor's Office which were carried live by local Spanish broadcast and radio networks.

In addition to that series of public engagement, we also went to great lengths to hear from stakeholders within the state's education system. Between June and October, we meet weekly with local education leaders from across the state to discuss their outlook on schools. This open and honest communication with our local leaders about what limitations they were facing in reopening schools, what they were hearing in their own community engagement sessions, and what help we could provide was essential to our reopening strategy.

Building upon those robust discussions with stakeholders and our meetings with community members, RIDE was able to build a Reopening School Toolkit to facilitate further community engagement between district leaders and their communities. This toolkit included public health informational materials, suggested communications strategies, and resources for school reopening. Without the thorough, constant engagement with the public and with local education leaders that we pursued throughout the summer, we could never have produced these materials, and I have no doubt that our transition back into in-person learning would have been far less successful.

While the threat of COVID-19 to the health of our communities loomed large over the last fifteen months, it was not the only major societal shift of the past year that demanded a strong community engagement plan. As we reckoned nationally with the systemic racism present in our criminal justice system, we saw so many young people here in Rhode Island stand up to make their voices heard. RIDE has worked hard to listen to those voices and empower our youth activists. Over the past year, RIDE has engaged with over 130 youth and

community stakeholders in virtual racial justice forums to hear their thoughts.

Community engagement is also the centerpiece of our work in the Providence Public School District. From day one, we have made sure that this revitalization of our capitol city's schools is lead entirely by the community, with RIDE providing strategic support and resources to fulfill their vision. We have continued working with the Community Design Team that created the district's Turnaround Action Plan and used their feedback to stay on track in our plans, even in spite of the pandemic. We also expanded beyond the stakeholders who were already engaged and heard from over 350 attendees on the district's accomplishments in the first year since RIDE assumed control of Providence schools.

The 2020-2021 school year has marked a tidal shift in how we communicate and engage with our community members. It has simultaneously made it more difficult by decentralizing the places where we might normally meet and by reducing our capacity for in-person contact. At the same time, the pivot to digital communication has made it easier to reach families who are better served by remote meetings. Even as the pace of vaccinations continues to accelerate and it becomes safer to hold meetings in person again, RIDE is dedicated to continuing this pace of constant and open digital communication with the students and families we serve in order to create an education system that works for them.



Progress Through the Year:

Engaged Communities

- Engaged an internal RIDE MLL Blueprint Workgroup with the district of Providence and met 10 times with dozens of external stakeholders, including teachers, district leaders, student groups, advocates, and institutes of higher education.
- Convened the Multilingual Learner and State Special Education Advisory Committees throughout the year to gather feedback and recommendations on a number of policy issues including the MLL Home Language Survey, MLL Blueprint, the State (Special Education) Performance Plan – annual report and other important policy issues.
- Convened the RI Special Education Advisory Committee to receive guidance on educational data collections and input on the expansion of behavioral health services in the schools.
- Held three virtual meetings with the Providence Public School District (PPSD) for elementary, middle, and high schools with more than 350 attendees. These sessions highlighted key accomplishments during the first year of the PPSD intervention and solicited input from the community and stakeholders on upcoming strategic initiatives, such as effective and efficient parent-teacher conferences and a Providence graduate profile.
- Engaged weekly from June – October 2020 with local education leaders from across the state at an education readiness meeting with the Governor’s office. The meetings were an opportunity to discuss best practices and establish policies to ensure teachers’ safety while providing high-quality in-person and virtual learning opportunities for all students.
- Launched the Back 2 School RI website in summer 2020 in the state’s top five languages. The website provides up-to-date information regarding in-person and distance learning, the latest data from public health experts, and events to connect with students, parents, and educators to ensure Rhode Island’s school communities have the information they need to be ready for the school year.
- Created a Reopening School Toolkit for district leaders to share best practices on how to best communicate with parents, families, and students to ensure they received up-to-date information regarding the reopening of schools. The toolkit covered critical topics for districts to consider, such as COVID screening templates for families, identifying key stakeholders to help amplify key messages and share information, and informational sheets on preventing the spread of the virus and preparing for in-person learning.
- Updated the 2020-21 statewide school calendar across all school systems, including shared professional development and vacation days. RIDE received positive feedback from stakeholders that the shared calendar helped provide school systems, students, educators, and families’ consistency with their schedule.
- Deployed a community survey through SurveyWorks during the height of the pandemic last spring to measure the views of students, families, teachers, and principals on the state of their education. The survey received 120,208 responses.
- Created and deployed a second SurveyWorks survey to track changes in community attitudes over the year. This year’s survey data will be essential to RIDE and state and local leaders as

they continue to plan on how to best support their school communities through the pandemic.

- Partnered with Sal Khan, founder of Khan Academy, to make Rhode Island one of the country's first states to offer schoolhouse.world, a free, live online platform for students statewide in grades 6-12. Schoolhouse.world is a platform that connects people around the world to free, small-group tutoring sessions, including high school mathematics and SAT prep.
- Engaged in regular statewide equity council meetings to update and seek feedback to ensure equitable learning opportunities and resources for all students across the state. This year these meetings were focused on Black and Latino communities that were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.



- Continued to engage the Community Design Teams (CDT) for PPSD strategic initiatives, including engagement sessions surrounding the Turnaround Action Plan (TAP).
- Convened the Learning, Equity, and Accelerated Pathways (LEAP) Task Force in February 2020 with a membership of 40 stakeholders. Engaged members in a participatory, evidence-informed, and data-driven process over seven weeks to understand statewide learning during COVID-19 in partnership with educational experts, practitioners, families, students and community members across the State of Rhode Island. That Task Force was charged with developing

recommendations that will inform learning strategy, both short-term and long-term, and align resources to achieve equitable and accelerated results for students.

- Issued the full [LEAP Report and Recommendations](#), which summarized the task force's findings and its recommended absolute priorities for RIDE's post-pandemic work, as well as eleven commitments that RIDE is making to support those priorities.
- Conducted two virtual racial justice forums for youth and community stakeholders to share their thoughts on the national and local conversations around race and racism and heard from over 130 stakeholders.
- Formed the RIDE Educators of Color Committee. Upon creation, the committee crafted and shared a Mission Statement and Community Letter. Both the Mission Statement and Community Letter were then showcased in a video featuring a number of the committee members. The committee has also created a project plan for 2021, including a virtual job fair and teacher mentorship program, among other initiatives.
- Continued to grow and build the Commissioner's Student Advisory Council. In the summer of 2020, the Student Advisory Council was instrumental in the planning stages of the Summer Academy for Interactive Learning (SAIL). The council has also been consulted for several initiatives as thought partners to bring an authentic student voice to educational priorities.
- Partnered with the Educational Operations Center (EdOC) in the summer of 2020 to create the Wellness Wednesday campaign. The campaign included resources and insight into how various stakeholders could better their mental health amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Partnered with the XQ Institute for "Graduate Together: America Honors the High School Class of 2020" in May of 2020. This event, which was broadcast nationally on network television,

provided high school seniors with the graduation they deserved but could not participate locally because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Multiple Rhode Island High School Seniors were featured during the broadcast for their accomplishments.

- Through a continued partnership during the pandemic, RIDE teamed up with NBC 10 to recognize outstanding teachers statewide in their communities by presenting them with the Golden Apple Award. A member of their school community nominates an educator, and the winners are surprised by Commissioner Infante-Green and NBC 10's Patrice Wood. Along with their Golden Apple Award, they also received a \$250 contribution from Ocean State Credit Union.
- Created and shared COVID-19 mitigation protocols and guidance documents through social media in partnership with Dr. Erin Bromage, an Associate Biology Professor at UMass Dartmouth. RIDE developed COVID-19 FAQs and guidance videos for the entire Rhode Island education community that featured educational and public health experts, including Dr. Bromage and Commissioner Infante-Green.
- Supported schools and administrators during the first few weeks of the 2020-21 school year by deploying RIDE team members on school grounds to assist with the logistical complications added to schools' opening due to the pandemic. The RIDE team members served as honorary school officials during arrival and dismissal to help students and families navigate their school building and reinforce proper mask-wearing and social distancing.
- Partnered with Providence Waterfire to celebrate excellence in education by producing teacher appreciation videos featured in a #StayHomeWaterfire virtual event, which applauded Rhode Island educators from across the state for their tremendous innovation and resiliency to serve their students during this trying time.

- Conducted a series of engagement sessions on returning to school in August 2020 with several stakeholders, including school officials, students, and families, to educate and prepare them to return to the classroom. These sessions prioritized students and families of color and Rhode Island's underserved communities to answer their questions and provide the insight and level of understanding needed to return to school.
- Advocated for options that included in-person and virtual learning opportunities for students, parents, and families and worked with local leaders to ensure they had the proper safety mitigations in place for in-person learning.
- Partnered with ABC6 WLNE to reach students, parents, and families with no internet or cable connection to provide regional and statewide information to families with difficulties accessing RIDE's available online platforms. RIDE developed a 10-minute informational television segment in which Commissioner Infante-Green provided updates on new initiatives and upcoming events.



- Hosted, along with PPSD, three Turnaround Action Plan (TAP) virtual sessions in English and Spanish to unveil "Turning Hope into Results," a document created with the support of the Community Design Teams (CDT) to serve as a guide to transformational change for all Providence students.

- Hosted weekly 45-minute coffee hours between Commissioner Infante-Green and educators and support staff. These meetings provided a more intimate opportunity for them to share their perspectives and ideas with the Commissioner and RIDE to share updates and discuss how to best support teachers with the reopening of schools.
- Held virtual meetings for students statewide to provide a platform for conversations around the COVID-19 pandemic, thoughts around virtual learning, social-emotional needs, shared best practices, and concerns around the upcoming school reopening plans.
- Held two virtual Latino town halls with the Governor's Office in partnership with Telemundo and Poder Radio to share updates and answer questions from Spanish-speaking families. These town halls were viewed by 58,600 people on Facebook Live.
- Designed and distributed a community-focused digital bulletin called The Academic Parrot (El Loro Escolar). The digital bulletin supported direct distribution to the cell phones of over 1,300 students, parents, and families in four of the most prominent languages (Spanish, Hmong, Portuguese, and English). The initiative cultivated partnerships with over 185 community partners and 92 faith-based centers to ensure families had weekly details on resources and services.
- Partnered with Progreso Latino and the Elijah Project, two non-profit organizations focused on delivering essential services to families in need of meals and groceries during the pandemic. Progreso Latino established a food voucher program with local vendors for 200 families and their children in Central Falls, and The Elijah Project held food tents for pick-ups in Providence.
- Conducted a Hispanic media campaign with the Commissioner that included radio and television to ensure the Latino community, which has been disproportionately impacted by COVID 19, had up-to-date information and made aware of available support and resources. The campaign also served as an opportunity to connect with families to answer questions and share updates of the Providence Turnaround Action Plan (TAP).
- Launched [EnrollRI](#) as a centralized hub for families and students to learn about, check eligibility, and register for learning opportunities, career and technical education, and charter public schools. Instead of navigating disparate systems to identify opportunities, parents now have one place to seek out and access high-quality schools and course options available to their son or daughter.
- Ran the most inclusive charter school approval process in the history of the agency. Throughout seven public hearings, more than 1,000 parents, community members, and educators provided feedback on the eight charter school proposals received by RIDE. By leveraging technology, and language interpretation services, RIDE made sure that every voice was heard in these important conversations.
- Hosted the first-ever [PrepareRI Virtual Summit](#) in collaboration with local Community Based Organizations. Over 100+ educators, community leaders and parents were in attendance. Topics included Reconciliation: The Power of Collective Accountability and Supports for Secondary Schools in the Challenging Year.
- Launched a series of [monthly webinars](#) for students through PrepareRI running from March to July 2021 on topics such as School Counseling, Work-Based Learning, and Ways to Save Money.
- Continued the statewide FAFSA Completion Initiative. Rhode Island finished the 2019/2020 FAFSA cycle ranked fourth nationwide, with just over 66 percent of eligible students completing the form by the end of the cycle in June. RIDE has worked to engage families through social media, virtual information sessions held with CPC, a FAFSA Toolkit (available in English, Spanish and Portuguese). RIDE has engaged

schools through the FAFSA completion dashboard, outreach emails, and Professional Development opportunities.

- Launched the development of new social studies standards for K-12 education in Rhode Island in partnership with the Rhode Island History and Social Studies Advisory Committee (RIHSSAC). Engaged with the community about social studies education and collected input in partnership with the Rhode Island History and Social Studies Advisory Committee.
 - The RIHSSAC worked with community organizations statewide to set up virtual feedback sessions culminating in a statewide survey.
 - RIDE also scheduled three virtual sessions for educators and community members to engage in the process.
- Over 900 students, educators, and community members participated in the sessions and/or completed the survey. The feedback will be used to inform the first draft of the social studies standards and other supporting materials. There will also be an opportunity in early 2021 for community feedback on the draft standards.

Providence

- Hosted Student Learning Summits to hear from students about what the future of education should look like. Over 200 students attended one of the five summits. The student panels gave PPSD an opportunity to ask questions about what is going well for its students and areas in which the district may improve. Students gave insightful responses, including letting PPSD know what they could change if they were the superintendent. Sessions were open to all families and included translation support and a bilingual session March 15 for Providence's Spanish speaking community.

- Redesigned the PPSD Office of Family and Community Engagement to better support families through this year of the pandemic. The team made over 5,000 calls to families to find ways in which PPSD can better support students both in person and remotely.
- Created a volunteer Parent Ambassador Corps with the goal of having stronger parent representation and presence at each one of PPSD's schools. This representation will assist the district to have a closer connection with families at each school.
- Strengthened the Parent Academy by adding offerings related to the current state of educational content delivery, as well as distance learning and its social emotional effects. PPSD has also made the events more accessible through an online format and has seen greater participation from families across the district.
- Created a process that will help to digitize and retrieve student transcripts. This initiative is designed to streamline and modernize the retrieval of records, and is scheduled to run from the summer of 2021 through the fall of 2023. This is a new process which will make the district more responsive to student and family needs.
- Stood up a District-Wide Advisory Council, a Student Advisory Council to the Superintendent and a Ninth-Grade School Redesign Advisory Group. These new initiatives provide greater voice to parents, key community stakeholders and students regarding policy decisions and planning. PPSD will look to them to provide feedback and to ideate challenges and opportunities that are present for the leadership team at the district.
- Worked to improve customer service across the district by providing training to over 600 staff members. With support from the Chief of Diversity and Inclusion, the office was able to develop cross-district customer service standards. These standards now give a

universal direction for all staff that guide their interactions and efforts with families, students and community members. These standards also provide guidance on how staff interacts with each other internally.

- Implemented a customer service tool called “Let’s Talk” which provides the district with an opportunity to record interactions between the community and schools as well as allowing individuals to grade the service they receive. To date, PPSD is averaging an 8.2 satisfaction rating out of 10.
- Partnered with Crossroads RI to better identify and support PPSD’s homeless student population. The district is actively identifying students who are either homeless or who may be on the path to becoming homeless. By determining a student’s status, the district can provide timely interventions through case management and referrals. The district has continued to use multilingual modes of communication with families, including over the phone interpretation services available in 350

languages, two-way text messaging, and the Let’s Talk rapid response system.

- Led Student Learning Summits to elicit student feedback for what school should look like in the future. Students were invited to share what is working, what is not working and what they really see as needs and focus areas for the future.
- Led ACCESS information sessions for MLLs and their families in the district’s seven major languages.

The Way Forward:

Excellence in Learning

Too often, when education is discussed, it is referred to as something students are given, as if it were a physical gift that we simply drop off at their desks and wait for them to accept. A truly high-quality education is not something students are granted, but something they have a hand in building for themselves. We have strived to find ways to help reorient Rhode Island's education system to better include students and to make them, as Carmela Sammataro of Westerly Public Schools puts it, "agents of their own learning."

Our greatest priority in the 2020-2021 school year has been implementing high-quality curricula across the state. For educators, a curriculum is more than just an outline of what students will learn over the course of a year. It's the foundation for a good education: textbooks and materials that support

learning and engagement, arranged in ways that will allow students to build upon their own abilities to achieve academic success that is in line with the state's learning standards. A high-quality curriculum is not a prescription for how our educators should teach—in fact, we trust our teachers to know how to reach their students best. It is simply a way to ensure that every child has access to the same quality materials and is encouraged to reach the same benchmarks of achievement.

Ensuring that every school is using a high-quality curriculum starts with a clear understanding of what they are currently using. This year, despite the obstacles presented by the pandemic, RIDE completed its annual collection of the K-12 English Language Arts and mathematics curricula used by each local education agency in the state, as well as our first-ever Science Curriculum Survey.

Armed with a better understanding of how our districts are currently operating, we then supported our local education agencies (LEAs) in how to select the right curriculum for their schools. In addition to working with LEAs, RIDE produced guidance on how to select and implement new curricula, especially for multilingual learners and students learning to read. We also partnered with EdReports, a nonprofit focused on evaluating and implementing high-quality curricula across America, for the fourth year in a row to engage with 15 LEAs across the state in a cohort, providing RIDE with insight into their unique challenges and the districts with tailored guidance on how to best implement curriculum changes.

These district-based supports are succeeding in moving Rhode Island forward. Our districts continue to adopt high-quality curricula in schools across the state, with dozens of new LEAs adopting new materials at every level in the 2020-2021 school year. Particularly exciting is our growth in elementary



school math curricula, where 75% of our LEAs have now adopted high-quality materials, setting our youngest learners up for success throughout their education. These numbers will continue to grow

in the years to come, with all 15 of the LEAs in our EdReports cohort expected to implement high-quality curriculum by the end of 2021.



We are confident that implementing these new standards and materials for learning will help set our students up for success and create a continuity in learning that is crucial to helping students transition seamlessly between learning environments when their education might otherwise be disrupted. That continuity has been particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic as students move between in-person and distance learning, but it is also an important equity tool, helping students in our urban core schools who may frequently move between schools or districts to stay on track in their learning.

Over the last year, RIDE has worked diligently to put supports in place for at-risk students both during the pandemic and beyond. To meet the immediate needs of our students and educators, RIDE rapidly developed and shared new, 2020-specific standards for learning in the four core subjects—English Language Arts, mathematics, science, and social studies—that were tailored to what Rhode Island needed in the moment and provided guidance to educators on how to provide a high-quality education. Recognizing that the transition to virtual learning would be difficult, the agency used funding from a competitive federal grant to create digitally-based interventions for students in need of additional immediate academic help.

While these safety measures were an important backstop against learning loss as a result of the pandemic, they do not solve the root issues with our education system that allows some students to fall behind. Fostering every student's potential for academic growth requires that we create a structural solution for identifying those who need unique individual support and for delivering it year after year. To meet that need, RIDE has implemented Individual Learning Plans statewide. These district-designed plans for every student will allow students to explore college and career options help our students who might otherwise slip through the cracks get whatever additional support they need to succeed.

Closing opportunity gaps and protecting at-risk students also requires that we provide our students with a high-quality education from the very beginning of their time in school. Rhode Island continues to be a national leader in Pre-K quality, even during the pandemic; our state's Pre-K classrooms were once again awarded a perfect score by the National Institute of Early Education Research, a distinction only four states earned this school year.

To build on that success, we are continuing to invest in providing Rhode Island's youngest learners with top-tier literacy programs. This year, RIDE issued \$15 million in grants to our LEAs and community groups and worked with them to create strategic, community-specific plans for reading instruction. This work, alongside significant professional development for our educators relating to teaching reading, is part of our efforts to meet the requirements of the General Assembly's 2019 Right to Read Act, which mirrors RIDE's internal commitment to supporting literacy in our schools.

All of this progress has been made simultaneously with our nation-leading efforts to restore in-person learning for our students. Our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum issued re-entry guidance for the four core subjects to help transition back into school, and RIDE has worked hand-in-hand with local education leaders as they create individual plans for each school to balance students' learning needs with necessary safety precautions. At the time of this report, the majority of our school districts have returned to learning in-person five days a week.

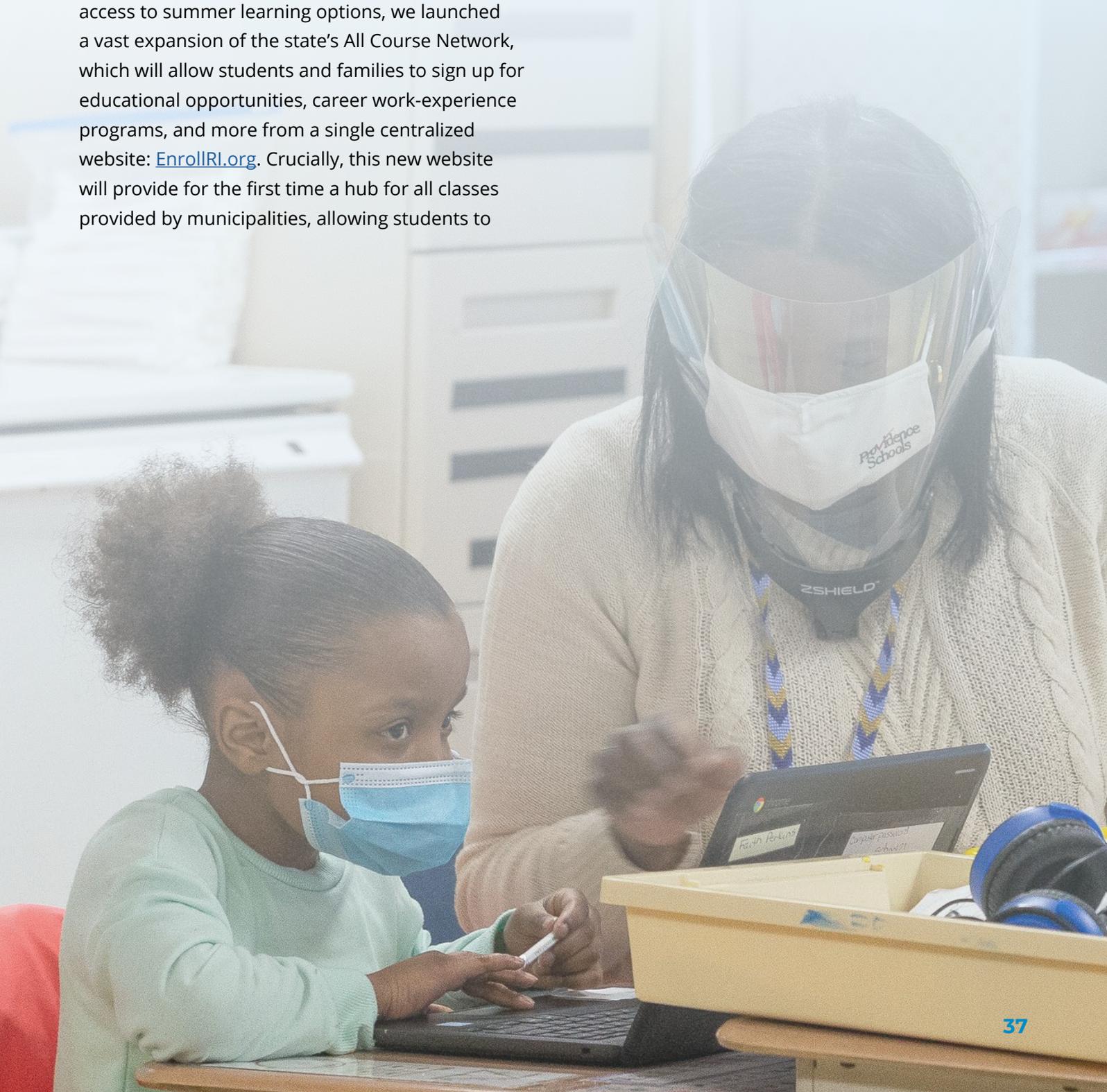
Now, as we close out the school year, we are beginning to turn our sights towards what the 2021-2022 school year will look like. Our LEAP Task Force has helped us to build a guide to creating a more engaging and just educational system for all of our students. We are looking forward to working closely with our local education leaders to help them expand upon the progress we have made over the

last year and following those recommendations. We have already started by offering new summer learning opportunities to help students stay engaged between this school year and the next.

In the summer of 2020, we launched the state's first digital summer learning program to encourage students to stay engaged and continue growing in spite of the pandemic. That program, the Summer Academy for Interactive Learning (SAIL), was widely popular with students across the state. Now, spurred on by SAIL's success and the recommendation of the LEAP Task Force to increase access to summer learning options, we launched a vast expansion of the state's All Course Network, which will allow students and families to sign up for educational opportunities, career work-experience programs, and more from a single centralized website: [EnrollRI.org](https://enrollri.org). Crucially, this new website will provide for the first time a hub for all classes provided by municipalities, allowing students to

select the summer learning experience that suits their interests and needs—not just the one closest to them.

We are deeply excited about the effects these new opportunities will have on our students' academic achievements. Our LEAs have been invaluable partners in these efforts, and we look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with them to empower our students.



Progress Through the Year: Excellence in Learning

School Reopening Plans

- Provided comprehensive support to LEAs and private schools throughout the summer as they created their Reopening Plans.
 - Created multiple reopening planning templates and tools to be used by LEAs and individual schools.
 - Conducted multiple planning sessions for all LEAs to provide support and problem solving while districts and schools created their Reopening Plans.
 - Reviewed and provided feedback on 64 LEA Reopening Plans & all private school plans that were submitted.
 - Provided ongoing, individualized support to urban districts throughout the summer as they planned to reopen.
 - Created and assigned RIDE points of contact for each LEA to streamline communication, share information, and provide ongoing support through the reopening of schools.
 - Created two dedicated mailboxes manned by RIDE staff: one for general reopening questions and concerns and one specifically for private schools.
 - Collected questions from the field and provided responses through a regularly updated FAQ document.
- mathematics curricula used by LEAs across Rhode Island. Additionally, RIDE collected its first survey of science curricula used in the state.
- Coordinated the fourth (and first virtual) EdReports Cohort with participation from 15 districts to help them examine curricula and determine the best fit for their students. All of these LEAs are expected to adopt new high quality instructional materials by the end of the year in ELA/Literacy or Mathematics.
 - Aided districts in their continued adoption of both ELA and Mathematics high-quality curriculum at all grade levels. This has drastically improved the percentage of students with access to high quality instructional materials (HQIM); the number of high schools with HQIM in both ELA and Mathematics has more than quadrupled. The percentage of students of color and who are low income who have access to high quality curriculum increased at an even higher rate, and the majority of those students have access to HQIM for ELA at every grade level.

Elementary Schools:

- 9 new LEAs are using a high-quality ELA curriculum, a 19% increase.
- 7 new LEAs are using a high-quality mathematics curriculum, a 19% increase.

Middle Schools:

- 10 new LEAs are using a high-quality ELA curriculum, a 22% increase.
- 5 new LEAs are using a high-quality mathematics curriculum, an 11% increase.

High-Quality Curriculum

- Partnered with [EdReports](#), a nationally recognized, independent non-profit organization which provides expert reviews of instructional materials, to conduct the annual collection of K-12 English Language Arts (ELA) and

High Schools:

- 4 new LEAs are using a high-quality ELA curriculum, a 9% increase.
- 6 new LEAs are using a high-quality mathematics curriculum, a 13% increase.
- Rhode Island's list of approved high-quality curricula in mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) in advance of the 2023 selection and adoption requirement for LEAs. The intent of this published list is to provide RI LEAs with the ability to choose a high-quality curriculum that best fits the needs of its students, teachers, and community.
- Released Rhode Island's list of approved high-quality curricula in mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) in advance of the 2023 selection and adoption requirement for LEAs.
- Published several curriculum adoption resources to support LEAs in adoption of high quality curriculum, including [Selecting and Implementing a High-Quality Curriculum in RI: A Guidance Document](#), a list of approved curriculum.
- RIDE has developed and released addition tools to support local teams in reviewing materials as part of the curriculum selection process:
 - [Additional Review Tools to Support the Selection of a High-Quality Curriculum in RI: A Guidance Document](#)
 - [High-Quality Curriculum Selection & Implementation: Understanding Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Education \(CRSE\) in ELA](#)
 - [High-Quality Curriculum Selection & Implementation: Understanding Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Education \(CRSE\) in Math](#)
 - [Multilingual Learner \(MLL\) Non-Negotiables for Math Curriculum Selection](#)
 - [Multilingual Learner \(MLL\) Non-Negotiables for ELA Curriculum Selection](#)
- Released [forty](#) Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant awards to districts and community-based organizations for a total of 15 million dollars across five years. Rhode Island's CLSD grants support the use of a high-quality curriculum and evidence-based strategies to support struggling readers. Through the grant RIDE worked with HILL for Literacy and CLSD subgrantees to develop district-specific literacy plans based on the RI Literacy Blueprint for 26 LEAs.
- Partnered with SchoolKit, a nationally-recognized professional learning nonprofit, to launch an asynchronous professional learning cohort centered on implementing high quality materials. School leaders participating in the Spring 2021 program will begin developing a 2021-22 professional learning and support plan for their district educators.
- Applied for and was awarded a \$10.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) to support the state's efforts to rethink education to better serve students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Rethink K-12 Education Models Grants support states' efforts to create new, innovative ways for students to continue learning in ways that meet their needs. Rhode Island was one of 11 states to receive an award, joining Maine as the only New England states on the list.
 - Used Rethink grant funding to issue an RFP for vendors of high-quality digitally-based interventions to apply to work with Rhode Island LEAs in need of intervention support for students in need of additional mathematics or literacy supports.
 - Used Rethink grant funding to work with OpenSciEd, an open-source science education program, to develop digital tools for high quality instructional materials

by developing curriculum materials and providing professional learning for remote and hybrid instruction.

- Designed a process to gain public input on the current set of mathematics and ELA content standards. The mathematics and ELA teams designed, disseminated, and analyzed data from a public comment survey. Review committees were then convened to discuss survey results and offer recommendations to RIDE.
- Gained endorsement of the K-12 Council on the [RI Core Standards in ELA/Literacy and Mathematics](#) in March, which are based upon the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.
- Piloted OpenSciEd Science middle school curriculum with 11 teachers across four schools and began recruiting educators to pilot the high school science curriculum next year.
- Developed a new Assessment Data Portal (ADP) for public reporting and Student Data Portal for confidential reporting to schools and districts. The public ADP allows the public to review and download the results of all state assessments at the state, LEA, and school levels as well as disaggregate the results by grade and subgroup. The Student Data Portal (SDP) provides role-appropriate access to confidential student-level statewide assessment performance to educators for use in supporting instructional and curricular decisions.

COVID-19 Response

- Wrote and shared priority standards for mathematics, ELA/literacy, science, and social studies specific to the 2020-2021 school year.
- Wrote reentry guidance for mathematics, ELA/literacy, science, and social studies instruction.
- Developed and shared best practices documents for distance learning, assessment, and science lab safety guidance for home learning.

- Established a Community of Practice for science and mathematics teachers and leaders with the focus of relevant professional learning for remote and hybrid instruction as well as problem of practice forums.
- Vetted and shared with teachers and leaders a curated list of [Digital Tools](#) and held several professional learning opportunities to support teachers in use of new tools for distance and hybrid instruction.
- Solicited, compiled, and published information for [RI Virtual Field Trips](#) with RI industries and informal-education groups. Trips are available for PK-12, some live and others are pre-recorded.



Early Learning

- Earned a 10 out of 10 in prekindergarten quality rating in the annual National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER) State of Preschool publication for the 10th year in a row. RI is one of only four states to meet these benchmarks in 2021.
- Continue to expand the number of high-quality Pre-K seats available. In the 2020-2021 school year, Rhode Island offered more than 1800 seats to early learners.
- Began working with RIDE's third Pre-K to Kindergarten Transition Summit Series cohort. The third cohort included four new communities for a total of 10 communities. The Pre-K to

Kindergarten Transition Summit Series is an opportunity for public school districts and community based early learning programs to meet with their transition coach on an ongoing basis to articulate and refine plans to enhance transitions from Pre-K to Kindergarten within their community. The team's work will build upon current Pre-K to Kindergarten Transition Plans.

Right to Read

- Developed and released an *LEA Guidance Document*, which lays out the requirements of the Right to Read Act and explains what trainings educators will need, to support LEA leaders and educators in understanding the requirements of the Act. RIDE also provided several resources and opportunities to support educators in developing an understanding of the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy.
- Provided professional learning for three cohorts of educators (approximately 160 teachers and leaders) in Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS), two cohorts of LETRS for Administrators training and one cohort of LETRS for Early Childhood Educators began Spring 2020. LETRS provides teachers with the skills they need to master the fundamentals of reading instruction.
- Hosted webinars aimed at supporting foundational reading skills and how to support beginning readers and those who struggle with word-level reading, including students with dyslexia. These webinars included an overview of dyslexia, a presentation of an instructional decision-making tool by AIM institute, virtual structured literacy instruction, a webinar on digital literacy resources, and a webinar co-hosted with RIPIN that outlined [Games to Support Early Literacy Skills](#), a resource for families.
- Developed and posted eight modules related to dyslexia and instruction to support early literacy instruction, particularly for those who require additional supports in reading and writing.
- Developed the [Structured Literacy page](#) to include resources for educators related to the science of reading and structured literacy. The resources are organized to support instruction, assessment, curriculum, and digital supports. In addition, RIDE enhanced its [dyslexia page](#) and included resources to support students with dyscalculia and dysgraphia.
- Reviewed and approved several [professional learning providers](#) to provide proficiency-level training in the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy to meet the requirements of the Right to Read Act and lead to a Literacy/Dyslexia Endorsement.
- Began collaborative work with BRIDGE-RI along with local and national experts to develop modules on the science of reading and structured literacy. These modules will be offered as a no-cost option for LEAs to meet the awareness requirements of the Right to Read Act.
- Developed and posted a [student checklist](#) to assist educators in tracking student progress with early literacy skills, and inform small-group instruction and intervention.
- Hosted monthly Virtual Communities of Practice to empower educators to share resources related to teaching Structured Literacy online. These sessions were well attended, and attendance grew throughout the year.
- Established a Literacy/Dyslexia subgroup in partnership with the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR). This group is working to develop a tool for Educator Preparation Programs in refining syllabi to meet the requirements of the Right to Read Act.
- Applied for a State Personnel Development Grant to further drive professional learning in the science of reading and structured literacy

with a critical focus on supporting students with language-based learning differences.

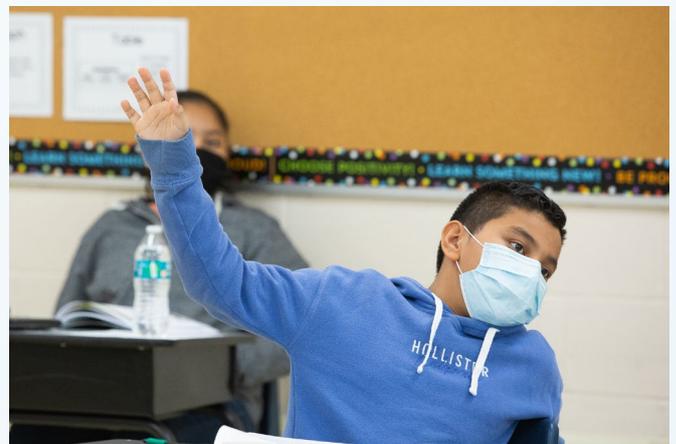
- Sponsored a statewide Cox Conservation Contest for grades K-8 in RI public schools, funded by a \$5,000 donation from Cox Business. The goal of the Cox Conservation Contest was to empower students with the tools and voice to support and advocate for environmental platforms, while bringing awareness to conservation initiatives that reduce waste and support the environment.

Assessment

- Hosted monthly test coordinator trainings to support the administration of the state assessments (RICAS, PSAT 10, SAT, DLM NGSA, and ACCESS). In addition, RIDE hosted [15 virtual trainings](#) on various test administration topics.
- Provided an opportunity in Fall 2020 for 12th grade students who were unable to take the SAT in Spring 2020 because assessments were canceled to take the SAT in school. Over 6000 students were able to access this opportunity to take the SAT and submit those scores to colleges and universities.
- Issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for high quality computer-based interim assessments in ELA and mathematics. RIDE purchased the assessments and related instructional supports for 45 LEAs in Rhode Island to ensure that educators had high quality resources to monitor student learning and address learning gap.
- Released a short document about [Assessment Best Practices](#) and a re-entry guidance that describes a cycle of four best practices for using assessment to measure student learning, diagnose learning gaps and unfinished learning, and guide instructional decisions.
- Published a study by the Regional Education Laboratory highlighting the advantages and long-term positive impacts of Advanced Placement, Dual Enrollment, and Concurrent

college courses for Rhode Island students, regardless of race or background.

- Published the first "[Guide to Advanced Coursework](#)", which provides details about the state-level mechanisms for dual enrollment, offers a grid to help students identify which opportunities they should pursue, and lists the most frequently asked questions around early college options.
- Implemented Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) statewide. 2020-2021 is the first full year of implementation for ILPs. Districts have been receiving professional development quarterly to support their ILP implementation, and over 450 educators have attended across eight professional development opportunities. Individualized support was provided for districts. Sample lessons and additional resources have been shared and added to the updated ILP toolkit, as was a 5-minute ILP implementation professional development video.



Computer Science

- Offered computer science courses in 100% of comprehensive high schools in Rhode Island and in 86% of high schools overall through the CS4RI program, which aims to increase access to computer science courses at every grade level in every school in Rhode Island.
- Provided access to college credits in computer science by offering the AP computer science course to every high school student through

the All Course Network, as well as Concurrent Enrollment courses at URI.

- A total of 2,954 students have earned credit from URI through CS concurrent enrollment courses since its inception in SY16-17.
- The number of students who have taken the AP exam has grown every year since CS4RI was founded, with a starting point of only 43 students taking it in 2016. 2020 marked the program's largest growth, with 737 students taking the exam, and the number of female students in that group continuing to rise.
- There has been a 55% increase in Computer Science post-secondary degrees received at Rhode Island's public higher education institutions since CS4RI started in 2015. 195 computer science degrees were awarded at RI schools in 2020.
- Approximately half of new CS majors from RI came in with credit from CS4RI high school courses, allowing them to skip the first and sometimes second courses to accelerate their CS degree.
- Offered CS4RI Script Workshops and have built comprehensive K-12 CS Implementation Plans for 24 LEAs, eight of which are urban.
- Provided computer science professional development to 210 educators in 2020-2021, for a total of 1051 educators trained through CS4RI since the initiative began.
- Awarded \$20,000 grants to 20 Rhode Island high schools to establish computer science pathways and study the impact of work-based learning on students' AP computer science scores in March 2021.
 - The program, funded through a \$2.5M grant awarded to RIDE by the US Department of the Education, provided \$20,000 to each participating school to establish a 21st-century computer science lab, free professional development for teachers, and the opportunity for students to earn 12 college credits at no cost to them or their family upon completion of a three-course sequence.
- Ten of the 20 schools have been tasked with implementing a brand-new computer science work-based learning course in the spring of 2021, which will include an 80-hour work-based learning requirement in addition to coursework.
- The grant has an explicit focus on broadening participation in computing for groups that have been historically underrepresented in the field. There are currently over 300 10th and 11th graders around the state completing the first course in the sequence, of which 83% are from a historically under-represented group in computing. Of these, approximately 35% are young women, 60% are students of color, and 62% are considered low-income.
- Launched Two Codes, a partnership between RIDE and College Board to integrate Computer Science with Civics/ American Government. The partnership includes nine high schools (Beacon Charter, Exeter-West Greenwich, Tiverton, Toll Gate, Middletown, Scituate, North Kingstown, Central High School, Ponaganset) to increase students' access to college-level AP U.S. Government and Politics and AP Computer Science Principles courses across the state.
- Partnered with the XQ institute to complete an educational opportunity audit of one-third of the high schools in Rhode Island. Two schools, TAPA and Ponaganset, received full XQ grants and became XQ Superschools; two schools received Accelerator grants; and 16 schools received Momentum grants to redesign aspects of their high school's based on the data and feedback on their student's journey through grades 9-12.
- Led the nation in Advanced Placement test pass rate improvement over the last year, 5 years, and 10 years. Rhode Island's graduating class of

2020 passed at least one AP exam at a rate more than double that of the class of 2010. (25.2% of the class of 2020 passed versus 10.8% for the class of 2010). This 10-year growth of 14.4 percentage points is nearly double the national average growth of 8.2 percentage points. Rhode Island's success on AP exams continued to grow in spite of the pandemic; RI's class of 2020 led all other states with a 2.9% improvement, even as most other states saw either no improvement or a drop in their pass rate.

- Updated LEA-facing and student facing guidance on AP, Dual and Concurrent Enrollment in March 2021.
- Partnered with WestEd Carnegie Math Pathways and Reading Apprenticeship, as well as postsecondary faculty from Rhode Island's public institutions of higher education, to launch in-school readiness course offerings for 300 students in 10 schools in Spring 2021. 16+ Rhode Island teachers received over 15 hours of professional development and weekly or bi-monthly coaching from WestEd focused on student-centered pedagogy and fostering productive persistence and growth mindset.
- Signed a memorandum of agreement with all three public institutions of higher education in Rhode Island to honor the results of the College Math Readiness post-test to place students in college math classes.
- Won a \$100k grant through the Gates Foundation Grand Challenge for Algebra I to expand our high school math readiness summer course to a semester long offering and build out supports for multilingual learners.
- Hit targets for seven out of eight goals in the [PrepareRI 1.0 Action Plan](#). Developed a [2.0 Action Plan](#) along with Governor's Office, Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, Governor's Workforce Board, and RI Commerce that spans from Middle School to Opportunity Youth, with goals focused on academic readiness, career knowledge and employability skills.
- Wrote and gained approval for the state's Perkins V State Plan in June 2020.
 - Launched the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) process to the field. Newly required under Perkins V, this is necessary for LEAs to receive their Perkins funds. With a goal of having LEAs identify their equity gaps through intensive data collection and analyses to best align where they spend their allotted Perkins dollars, RIDE offered intensive technical assistance and support for 36 LEAs to successfully submit their CLNAs to RIDE.
 - As of early March 2021, RIDE is on track to disburse over \$5.32 million (includes 2020 carryover) of Perkins funding to 36 LEAs. As of July 1, 2020, RIDE disbursed over \$4.19 million in Dollars of Categorical funding, state dollars to support the funding of high-wage high-demand CTE programs, to 33 LEAs.
 - Developed a series of field-facing feedback meetings to solicit districts' thoughts and ideas for improving/iterating and developing the following processes: CLNA, Perkins formula funds, and an upcoming CTE program audit.
- Resumed monthly career coordinator meetings to support individuals with work-based learning opportunities as well as other CTE initiatives so that schools and districts are aligned and well-informed.
- Expanded the All Course Network to provide Rhode Island students with the opportunity to enroll in 21 courses offered by eight providers. A total of 385 seats were filled in across 11 dual enrollment courses, nine work-based learning courses, and 1 career credential course. For the first time, in addition to payments for per pupil costs and a one-time administrative fee, funding was made available to providers who provided additional supports to multilingual learners and differently-abled students.

- Significantly expanded the scope of the ACN in the Spring 2021 semester. Changes included: The addition of enrichment courses as a new course category; expanding ACN opportunities from middle and high school students to all Rhode Island K-12 students; utilizing the EnrollRI platform for family and student course registration, the school approval process and student progress monitoring; and provider course management functions such as submitting attendance data, finalizing rosters, and accessing school and student contact information. To date, 1,687 seats have been filled in a total of 127 courses that include the following course types:
 - Enrichment (77 courses)
 - Dual Enrollment (23 courses)
 - Work-based Learning (21 courses)
 - Advanced Placement (3 courses)
 - Career Credential (3 courses)
- Developed and deployed an Early Warning System (EWS) that includes a set of indicators that enables educators and school teams to identify and intervene with students at risk of not graduating high school. The dashboard provides color-coded risk “bands” to inform a multi-tiered system of support and keep students in school and on track to graduate.
- Developed a web-based and mobile friendly tool called **The Reading Challenge** for students to document the number of minutes participating students spent reading each day.
- Supported nine of Rhode Island’s persistently lowest-performing schools across seven districts as they updated and revised Comprehensive School Improvement Plans for SY20-21, including an opportunity to adjust course in light of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Initiated the state’s first round of redesign in Providence Public Schools with six secondary schools.
- Conducted diagnostic site reviews of school quality at 26 schools in two districts, in partnership with SchoolWorks. In all, the team engaged district administrators, school leaders, and teachers at 18 schools in Providence and eight schools in Woonsocket through interviews, focus groups, and robust document review.
- Awarded \$1.3 million to fund 162 AmeriCorps positions to meet community needs in housing, health, and education, including academic achievement, distance learning, and chronic absence for an estimated 4,000 students. The new FabNewport Check and Connect AmeriCorps Program reduced the number of Newport’s chronically absent students by 42 by assigning students to attendance mentors. In one case, a student absent 117 days the year prior missed just seven days while supported by AmeriCorps.
- Launched new RI VetCorps in partnership with the Office of Veterans Services to support military family’s access to Rhode Island colleges and universities and completion of their degree.
- Provided professional development for teachers and administrators, targeting the transition of differently-abled students from school to adult developmental disability services. 100% of the eligible students exited school with a career development plan and connections to post-school adult services.
- Supported districts with applying for and receiving federal funding to pay for telecommunication services through the federal E-Rate program. RIDE procures the vendors



and assures maximum efficiency by bidding statewide and picking the lowest cost vendor for each school and library.

- Gained approved from K-12 Council on Education for the expansion of three high performing charter public schools and authorized the opening of three new charter public schools. The six schools will serve more than 5,500 children, mostly from Providence and Central Falls. The approval proposals will provide access to high-performing college preparatory experiences, dual language programs, and career-focused programs which will prepare students for a career in nursing.

Providence

- Redesigned education models at six Providence secondary schools, including establishing innovative learning models and expanding CTE courses.
- Launched a Freshman Academy at Alvarez High School to provide a small school learning environment for the transition from middle to high school as well as an inclusive learning for MLL students with limited or disrupted formal education.
- Created new CTE pathways aligned to high-wage RI industries. PPSD is transitioning the PTECH IT program to E-Cubed Academy, thereby doubling the ninth-grade seats available in the fall and freeing up more CTE seats at PCTA. Over the next several years, PPSD is also transitioning the Juanita Sanchez Educational Complex to a CTE-only school.
- Continued to expand the MLL program models that have been proven to yield best results for Multilingual Learners. This year PPSD increased integrated elementary MLL classrooms from 10 in 2019-2020 to 115 in 2020-2021. PPSD also expanded Dual Language programs at Fortes, Lima, Spaziano, and Lauro Elementary Schools.
- Expanded the district's first dual-language middle school offering at Gilbert Stuart Middle School to build on the dual language program it supports at the elementary level.
- Adopted American Reading Company (ARC) curriculum across all elementary and middle schools. In addition to the selection of this high-quality literacy program, extensive professional learning was provided, beginning in the spring of 2020, with six consensus-building sessions for district and school leaders. At the elementary level, reading, MLL, and special education coaches were also provided with six sessions of learning specific to their area of support to teachers. At the middle school level, teacher leaders of ELA, social studies, MLL, and special education were also provided with these sessions.
- Partnered with SchoolKit to support school leaders with developing their math instructional expertise through ongoing professional development sessions as well as site-based coaching. Elementary network leaders meet regularly with SchoolKit to align their supports to network priorities.
- Adopted National Geographic Cengage as the core secondary English Language Development Curriculum Resource.
- Began establishing advanced academics pathways for MLL learners at all levels, including new summer learning enrichment experiences.
- Joined the ACN and EnrollRI network to launch a comprehensive summer learning program with community partners.
- Increased high-dosage tutoring in mathematics to support Algebra 1 completion, as research shows a direct correlation between success in Algebra and long-term academic outcomes.
- Provided extended day enrichment opportunities for additional engagement and academic support.

- Enhanced early literacy and reading programs focused on structured foundational reading in alignment with the RI Comprehensive Literacy Guidance.
 - Began redesigning PPSD's Special Education program model for more inclusive learning and greater access to grade level curriculum.
 - Partnered with the Policy Lab at Brown University to assist in a three-year longitudinal cohort analysis of Providence's MLL programs at the elementary, middle and high school levels starting in July 2021. This study will help the district determine whether English Learners are overcoming language barriers within a reasonable period of time and whether students are participating meaningfully and equally in educational programs.
 - Formed a cross-divisional team to address both the regulatory and academic aspects of the Performance-based Diploma Assessment portion of the graduation requirements. Within the last year, the groundwork that was laid during two summer sessions with teacher representatives from high schools was expanded upon and resulted in the creation of consistent rubrics for scoring the project, a guidance document, and a course guide that serves as essentially the curriculum for the course itself. Despite the pandemic, teachers currently administering the course have been trained,
- there is a collective space for them to receive and share resources, and a feedback loop has been created to share the strengths and struggles of the new course for future revision.
- Led a Newcomer Summer Program for multilingual learners, serving 149 students new to the country and Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) in grades K-12.
 - Improved multilingual learner programs in support of its settlement agreement with the US Department of Justice. After PPSD hosted a February virtual site visit, the DOJ noted improvements in many areas of instruction, including use of sheltered language strategies and positive relationships between teachers and students.
 - Began the implementation of the comprehensive five-year school improvement capital plan designed to provide more than \$250 million in infrastructure improvements. To date, two school roof replacement projects have been completed at the Harry Kizirian Elementary School and at the Webster Avenue Elementary School. Work continues on roof replacement and building envelope projects at Roger Williams Middle School, Feinstein Elementary School at Broad Street, and Fortes-Lima Elementary School. Planning and design work is underway in preparation for major projects to begin summer 2021.



The Way Forward:

World-Class Talent

In a dark and difficult year, Rhode Island's incredible educators have been a ray of hope. That includes not only our spectacular teachers, but their classroom support staff, school administrators, school nurses, and the maintenance workers who have worked constantly to provide our students with the best learning experience possible in spite of some of the most difficult circumstances of their lives. We are tremendously lucky to have the education community that we enjoy here in Rhode Island, and RIDE is dedicated to providing them with the same level of dedication and support that they have shown to the children in their charge.

One of our foremost goals in providing our educators with support is giving them the opportunity to build their skills and grow professionally. To that end, we have offered a wide variety of professional development options to all of our teachers during the 2020-2021 school year. Those opportunities have ranged from new, pandemic-specific courses like our partnership with LearnLaunch to offer Building Blocks of Equitable Remote Learning, to the continued expansion of our existing programs, like the 210 new teachers who participated in this year's CS4RI computer science education training.



We've also worked hard to make our free professional development offerings easy to find and register for. RIDE circulates to every educator an organized list of free professional development opportunities in advance of each state professional development day, ensuring that they have access and a long lead time to get signed up. We are also expanding on that concept through our relaunch of the Educator Course Network (ECN) in February of this year. The ECN is the educator's answer to EnrollRI.org, providing a centralized hub for both the state's professional development opportunities and those offered by over 50 partner organizations.

A particular focus of RIDE's professional development goals over the last year has been expanding our educators' skills in providing emotional support to students—an important skill during this unusually stressful time, but also a crucial step towards creating an educational system that helps students grow not just academically but holistically. Using a U.S. Department of Education grant, we expanded the BRIDGE-RI website to offer training in how to identify students struggling with mental, emotional, or social issues and how to support them in their learning. In December, we began offering a course to our educators through the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence: a free 10-hour social and emotional learning with a specific focus on equity. These important emotional learning tools are of great help to educators as we move on from this emotionally-fraught period of our lives.

While professional development is deeply valuable, we do not just want to reward educators' hard work with the opportunity for additional work. We also want to spotlight the teachers who go above and beyond in their classrooms, even in spite of the pandemic. In the 2020-2021 school year, undeterred by our inability to gather in-person, we still held virtual ceremonies for our annual Educator

Recognition event as well as our RI District Teachers of the Year cohort, among other celebrations of our exceptional educators. We were greatly pleased to be able to offer these events and lift up our educators when we all needed it the most.

Fostering world class talent in our schools also requires that we create a pipeline of new educators who can learn from the talented teachers already in place. Expanding that pipeline also dovetails perfectly with RIDE's commitment to equity in our schools. In September of 2020, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approved new, independent certifications in teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages and special education. These new certificates are held to rigorous standards, but will help to expand our pipeline of educators in these much-needed fields, ensuring that students who require specialized support have access to well-trained, effective educators.

Those same changes to the certification regulations also included certification reciprocity with over a dozen other states. This drastic increase to the pool from which we can draw new applicants will not only allow us to hire better-qualified educators, but educators who look like the communities they serve. This has been true in Providence Public Schools, where we are working tirelessly to diversify

our teaching staff. To fill the traditionally large number of vacancies in the district, as well as to attract a wider range of candidates, RIDE and PPSD engaged in a national teacher recruitment campaign throughout the summer of 2020. The campaign, which spanned both traditional and social media, successfully attracted nearly 900 applicants, leading to a 66% reduction in vacancies at the start of the school year compared to 2019.

As we move forward in a post-pandemic world, it will be more important than ever that we continue to create opportunities for the incredible members of our education community to grow and to attract talented educators into our state. RIDE is committed to creating opportunity at every level: pathways to certification for those who want to educate, continuing professional development for everyone working in our schools, and a clear ladder to career advancement for teachers who want to join school leadership. By helping our educators to grow, we can continue to improve outcomes for our students.



Progress Through the Year: World Class Talent

Educator Recognition

- Celebrated and elevated RI educators through an annual Educator Recognition event. In 2020-21, an in-person celebration was unable to occur due to COVID restrictions. Undeterred, the Educator Recognition team hand delivered over 100 educator yard signs, gift bags and citations from the Governor, House and Senate members, and Commissioner. RIDE worked with the WaterFire staff, RI Rhode Show and COX media to share social media messages and spotlight RI educators.



- Convened a cohort of approximately 50 RI District Teachers of the Year (DTOY), which met five times throughout the year with a focus on increasing collaboration between educators and administrators in their district and engaging in professional learning. The DTOY cohort also serves as advocates for education policies at the local, state and federal levels, provides professional learning during State Professional Learning days and supports beginning educators. The cohort supports the Beginning Educator Professional Learning Network (BE-PLN) by speaking on practitioner panels and

supporting beginning educators with problems of practice during the BE-PLN sessions.

- Developed the Great Teachers in Action (GTA) professional learning initiative to provide RI educators with professional learning sessions presented by RI educators to RI educators. The GTA series is meant to provide teachers with professional practice and coaching feedback, allowing for the presenters to grow as educator leaders and presenters. Each session consists of modeling instructional skills, techniques and resources, and allows participants to engage in conversation that can lead to application within their own contexts.
- Created the RIDE Future Educator scholarship to recognize a Rhode Island graduating high school senior pursuing higher education in the field of education and the Rhode Island PK-12 educator who has made a significant impact on this student. The graduating senior selected will receive a \$500 scholarship. In addition, the RI educator identified by the senior as having made a positive impact on them and influenced their decision to pursue a career in education, will receive a \$500 award.

Pipelines/Educator Diversification

- Partnered with PPSD and NAIL to lead the Providence recruitment campaign from June – August 2020. A Providence recruitment video was shared via YouTube and social media to promote educator positions in Providence. From the recruitment video, 9,906 viewers clicked through to the 4PVDKids.com landing page. 876

individuals then submitted an interest form to learn more about teaching in Providence.

- Surveyed Teaching Assistants (TA) from the Providence School Department to gauge interest in and need for TA pathway programs to full certification. The Annenberg Institute at Brown University analyzed the data, providing recommendations for next steps. RIDE has shared information on currently approved educator preparation programs with interested TAs and is supporting the exploratory work in developing additional TA pathways to full certification.

Certification

- Facilitated the process of approving new certification regulations and communicated the changes to the field. Council approved [new certification regulations](#) in September 2020 after an extensive process, facilitated by RIDE, of listening to the field, providing opportunities for public comment, and finalizing recommended certification regulation changes. Among the changes, the new certification regulations created a new independent PK-12 ESOL certificate and new independent special education certificates to ensure that properly trained, effective educators can provide the necessary services to all students in Rhode Island schools without having prohibitive burdens. The new regulations also expanded interstate flexibility from two states to sixteen 16 states, increasing reciprocity opportunities to recruit educators of color and meet high-need certificate shortage areas.
- Hosted training sessions for LEA human resource directors and Educator Preparation Program (EPP) leaders to provide information on the new certification regulations that were promulgated in September, 2020. The sessions were designed to help LEAs and EPPs think through how the new regulations impact staffing and programming within their context.
- Introduced a new building level administrator certificate pathway called the Fast-Track Principal certificates in which districts can support experienced educators in pursuing an innovative pathway to certification while growing in their leadership capacity through an on-site internship and a RIDE-approved leadership development program.
- Supported PPSD's efforts to appropriately serve their MLL student population by streamlining the emergency certification process for educators pursuing new ESOL certification. RIDE attended sessions for Providence educators to discuss educator requirements and pathways to certification upon receipt of their emergency certificates, ensuring that they receive the proper training necessary to serve in these essential roles.
- Developed the MLL Ambassadors project in collaboration with the University of Rhode Island, which created the first cohort of school administrators to receive training in MLL education. The training courses are 3-credit graduate level classes, so the credits may be used towards future degree programs.
- Overhauled the Personnel Assignment Submission (PAS) process to ensure that the RIDE certification team has regular communication with RI LEAs to provide proper support for reporting. LEAs have three structured check-ins with RIDE certification team members to review out-of-area reports and to address errors. Additional support opportunities are provided through LEA HR sessions and one-on-one follow-up support. This new process ensures that all LEAs meet the requirement that all RI students are in classrooms with assigned educators who are properly certified.

Evaluation

- Engaged new district evaluators in training that consists of four modules, three of which are asynchronous and one that ran as a synchronous session in October of 2020. The modules support new evaluators in learning how to observe lessons and give scores and feedback that is grounded in the Rhode Island Evaluation model. New evaluators submit evidence of completion of the modules and can reach out to education specialists for additional support.

School Counseling

- Launched monthly professional development for School Counselors. Over 30 professional development opportunities were offered in 2020 for counselors. Professional development opportunities were topic and grade-level focused, including specific resources for distance counseling. Approximately 900 counselors from over 50 school districts attended during the year.
- Created the School Counselor Hub to be a searchable data base of lessons, resources and activities, including academic, career and social emotional resources. Counselors were provided with resources that were created with support from the RI School Counselor Association.
- Created School Counseling Competencies and aligned them to the American School Counselor Association standards.
- Launched the PrepareRI School Counseling Corp through the Rethink RI grant. 10 high schools were selected to participate in the School Counseling Corp and one School Counseling Corp counselor will be added to each participating high school. All school counseling departments will receive ASCA training to support the development of a comprehensive school counseling program.

Educator Preparation

- Completed a comprehensive review that led to the approval of Rhode Island School for Progressive Education's Master of Education in Urban Education Leadership, providing a new option for future leaders to receive Building Level Administrator Certification. RIDE has also completed an initial review of a new dual certification program in Early Childhood/Early Childhood Special Education and is currently reviewing three alternate route certification applications (Elementary, Secondary Mathematics, and Secondary General Science) with the explicit focus of increasing educator diversity across the state.
- Continued to update and support Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs) through quarterly meetings and other virtual sessions. Quarterly meetings—typically 3-hour in-person meetings—shifted to virtual meetings in May 2020 initially served as a common space to address the effects of COVID-19 on educator preparation and student teaching.
- Created a cross-office team to support alignment and accountability of Rhode Island EPPs to the Rhode Island legislation and RIDE initiatives. The cross-office team consists of members from the Office of Educator Excellence and Certification Services, Office of Instruction, Assessment and Curriculum, and the Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports. The team has drafted Right-to-Read Act guidance for EPPs, engaged EPPs in requirements of Multilingual Learner Blueprint and high-quality curriculum work, and is currently working to revise the PREP-RI process used to evaluate Rhode Island EPPs.

Professional Learning

- Created the professional learning offerings list to support the safe reopening of schools. The list is updated regularly as RIDE offices and outside organizations submit free professional learning

opportunities. The offerings are grouped in the following categories: health, wellness, community engagement, distance learning, social and emotional learning and academics. This list is posted to the RIDE website and shared in the field memo for two weeks prior to each state professional development day.

- Partnered with LearnLaunch, a nonprofit supporting equitable high-quality teaching and learning, to offer their Building Blocks of Equitable Remote Learning tool and workshops for free to Rhode Island educators and school leaders, as well as five additional workshops facilitated by a national expert that provided time for participants to collaborate around pressing challenges in schools. Topics included: Engaging Students in Deeper Learning, Supporting Educator Well-Being, and Supporting Parents.



- Offered a five-part virtual workshop series to guide school and district leaders in applying research evidence to current challenges. The workshops, based around the [EdResearch for Recovery project](#), included both short presentations and Q&A with researchers, as well as longer periods of structured discussion and peer work sessions to inform planning and implementation efforts. The Research Briefs were shared with participants in advance of sessions that were grounded in topics focused

on academic instruction and social emotional learning.

- Relunched the Educator Course Network (ECN) in February 2021 to support educators with searching and selecting challenging, relevant, and sustained professional learning opportunities. With a current listing of over 50 partners, the ECN will continue to expand as a statewide professional learning marketplace that aligns with key aspects of the Rhode Island Professional Learning Standards and other priority initiatives such as the implementation of high-quality curriculum materials. RIDE has connected with currently listed professional learning providers to ensure the accuracy of the information shared on the ECN and has initiated a current application process for new professional learning providers seeking to join the ECN. The RIDE team is also in the midst of expanding the ECN to support educators with finding professional learning providers who provide training to satisfy requirements related to the Right to Read Act.
- Continued to convene the Science Leaders Network made up of science educators quarterly to share best practices in science curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- Recruited 50 diverse Teach For America AmeriCorps Teachers to earn certification in critical areas of secondary-STEM subjects, special education, and multi-lingual learners.
- Held the first Pathways to a Career in Education event, helping AmeriCorps alumni and volunteers, especially individuals of color, navigate teacher certification pathways and apply to be substitutes and teacher assistants.
- Exceeded 500 registered users with 20 live courses on [BRIDGE-RI](#), Rhode Island's on-line professional learning platform for training educators in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for students.

- Won the USDOE School Based Mental Health Capacity grant to inform recruitment, retention and respecialization strategies in three pilot districts with a focus on cultural responsiveness and diversity.
- Began publishing a [STEM webpage](#) and [STEM newsletter](#) with resources for teachers and leaders of STEM. The shared resources support the expansion and enhancement of STEM programs in RI schools.

Providence

- Launched a Curriculum Leadership Academy for teachers and coaches to participate in hands-on professional development while supporting Providence's curriculum revisions. During the initial information sessions, almost 50 teachers shared their interest in applying for this new program. Those selected for the academy will work May-August to prepare resources and training materials for teacher teams.
- Provided coaching to not only all school leaders but also most teacher leaders, with a team of 17 specialized coaches providing direct, on-the-job learning and support to over 150 employees.
- Facilitated professional learning communities designed to promote teacher voice. The first set of Professional Learning Communities were dedicated to providing teachers an opportunity to share their concerns about teaching in a pandemic and to share best practices with one another. The PLCs fostered a shared learning that allowed for teachers to eventually lead PLCs to share their own best practices in instruction and technology to improve engagement and student outcomes.
- Continued to lead a series of 40 sessions focused on sheltered content Instruction strategies for all teachers of MLLs to help make rigorous academic content accessible to students of varying proficiency levels. This school year, teachers are also engaging in Sheltered Content Instruction PLCs after each of the SCI PD sessions to go deeper into the topics covered and to allow time for teachers to collaboratively reflect, practice, plan and embed SCI strategies into upcoming lessons/unit of study.
- Streamlined the Office of Human Resources by reducing head count, while reallocating staff to better support schools. Previously, staff functions in HR were aligned to support employee groups, not schools. This approach has increased effectiveness and responsiveness to school leaders. HR team members, along with Central Office staff, participated in customer service training to enhance the support they provide to schools, staff, and job applicants.
- Significantly reduced the number of classroom vacancies by the first day of the school year, from 102 in 2019-2020 to only 22 in 2020-2021, a 78 percent reduction, with plans to continue this downward trend. In addition, PPSD greatly reduced the number of one-year positions by 42 percent, from 106 in 2019-2020 to only 61 in 2020-21, providing more stability to new PPSD educators.
- Launched a national teacher recruitment campaign to attract high-quality teachers to Providence. More than 160,000 people saw the campaign's core video at least once. More than 9,000 eventually visited the special landing page for PPSD teacher recruitment, leading to nearly 800 live leads for PPSD recruiters. This led to over 600 teacher referrals to PPSD. PPSD supported its fellow Rhode Island districts, providing additional referrals PPSD received along to other districts based on the specifics of the referral.
- Increased the diversity of new educator hires for the 2020-2021 school year, with 26 percent of new hires identified as an educator of color, compared to just 17 percent in 2019-2020 and 11 percent in 2018-2019.

- Launched a pilot survey at 10 PPSD schools that enable students to provide feedback to teachers on their classroom practice.
- Supported a second cohort of 100+ teachers with tuition reimbursement to obtain their ESL certification in order to better support MLLs.
- Received the highly competitive and prestigious Teacher School Leader (TSL) Grant from the U.S. Department of Education to support with leadership development. The multi-year grant

will allow the district to improve leadership development and grow its own leadership pipeline.

- Increased the number of MLL coaches at the elementary level from 18 to 22 so that every elementary school in the district would have a dedicated coach to support teachers of MLLs.



The Way Forward:

Governance Structures

Our philosophy is that RIDE should be an agency of support, not just one of compliance. Our local education agencies know their communities best, and while we have set strategic goals for those LEAs, we can be most effective when we work in collaboration with them and provide them aid as they devise their own strategic plan to accomplish those goals.

This past year served as a live trial for that belief. Developing our plans to reopen schools required constant, open communication back and forth with every local education leader in the state. While it was important to RIDE that every student have the opportunity to learn in-person as soon as possible, what the return to the classroom would look like could not be a top-down decision. We wanted to give every school the opportunity to customize a plan to suit their physical space and the needs of the community.

Instead, we supported them by creating resources for our schools to use to draft plans for distance, hybrid, and in-person learning, and then worked with them as thought partners to perfect those plans. Along with the team in our Education Operations Center, we then supported LEAs by getting them the resources they needed to successfully execute their plans. It is because of that collaborative approach to planning and development that Rhode Island has successfully led the nation in its return to schools, and it has guided our work in reforming the governance structures of our education system.

In addition to their school reopening plans, 2020 ushered in another important set of plans from our LEAs. This school year was the first full year under 2019's Education Accountability Act (EAA), which requires that every LEA have a three-year strategic plan, including annual plans and state testing improvement plans. Our Offices of System Transformation and Data and Technology Services are working with every LEA to provide them with a planning template and analysis of their plans, as well as professional development to support principals in meeting the new standards created by the EAA.

The EAA also includes another important change to our governance models: the creating of a District Accountability System. Our Office of Data and Technology Services has created "star ratings" for districts, which aligns with our School Report Cards, measuring both the outcomes that our schools help our students achieve, as well as each school's satisfaction of both federal and state accountability requirements. Those ratings will help RIDE to determine which schools are in need of the most support from our agency and how we can best deliver it. We have also begun to use the data we have collected to create equity profiles for each school, so that we can look specifically at where we



are allowing achievement gaps to form and persist and hold ourselves accountable in bridging those gaps.

Our work with the LEAs has, in turn, informed the development of our own [strategic plan](#) for 2021-2025: Together Through Opportunity: Pathways to Student Success, Rhode Island's Plan for PK-12 Education. This plan, which lays out our goals for the next five years, was already scheduled to be published this past year, but the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our education system have made it all the more timely. We are looking forward to partnering with our LEAs to achieve the goals laid out in this strategic plan and to continue improving outcomes for our students.

The next few years are our opportunity to rebuild our education system to be stronger and more equitable, and that effort will certainly require that we continue to work collaboratively with our LEAs to create change from the ground up. I am deeply grateful to our local education leaders for their continued leadership and for their dedication to their communities.



Progress Through the Year:

Governance Structures

- Created a District Accountability system in accordance with the Education Accountability Act that took effect January of 2020. This system includes state and federal requirements, as well as a coordinated alignment with the current School Accountability model. The “star ratings” will determine levels of RIDE support.
- Developed a plan to create Equity Profiles based on data and common problems of practice to build networks and communities of learning partnerships. These partnerships will receive direct service and support from RIDE.
- Created partnerships with the Annenberg Institute at Brown University and with Harvard around targeted cycles of improvement as well as Superintendent Institutes for standardized support.
- Worked to create a Strategic Planning System that will include District Accountability Data, SurveyWorks, and local, state and federal monies in order to empower LEAs to track impact of spending and time on initiatives. This system will house all of the district and school plans required by the Education Accountability Act. Thirteen LEAs have signed on to work with RIDE in planning, building and testing. The field was also surveyed and 38 LEAs responded with specific needs and feedback on the functionality and requirements of the system.
- Supported LEA partners across the state in meeting the Education Accountability Act’s requirement to develop a three-year strategic plan. RIDE helped to design a strategic planning template, tied to district and school resources in order to analyze outcomes compared to time, effort and money spent. The additional plans required by law will lay within the three-year Strategic Plan and provide specific alignment to RIDE’s Strategic Plan. The Strategic Planning template and System will allow LEA’s to have common priorities and use a network approach to improvement across the state, aligned to RIDE’s priorities and those unique to the district.
- Supported the Principal Professional Learning needed to support school leaders in the newly inherited responsibilities around personnel, budgeting and implementation of School Improvement Teams. Guidance and information/training modules have been created for School Improvement Teams with the input of key stakeholders that will preside within the teams in each school community.
- Designed, developed and deployed a new custom-built Single Sign-On Portal that will allow RIDE to deploy role-based applications and will provide more efficient way for LEA data managers to assign roles to their staff.
- Designed and administered a new School Social Worker Survey in response to the Rhode Island Social Workers Quality Assessment Act.
- Updated statewide policies on the identification, screening procedures, placement and reclassification of multilingual learners.
- Revised and updated the statewide Home and Language Survey and published it in top twelve languages.
- Developed an ad hoc training module on the updated guidance released on the identification of multilingual learners, state and federal guidelines.
- Completed a cross-walk with current regulations and alignment to the Blueprint for MLL Success. Began the process of revision of current regulations.

Turning Hope Into Results: Progress on Legislative Benchmarks

Turning Hope into Results Legislative Progress

Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, RIDE has worked diligently to meet and exceed the requirements of the education laws the General Assembly passed in the 2019 legislative session.

- **Curriculum (S863B and H5008)**

- RIDE guided districts in selecting high-quality, enriching curricula for their students at every level throughout the pandemic, starting with a holistic review of the English Language Arts, mathematics, and, for the first time ever, science curricula currently in use in every school in the district.
- Once we had a strong understanding of the materials in use, we provided our local education agencies with guides for how to find and select the right high-quality curriculum for each student group, including specialized advice for teaching multilingual learners, a year ahead of the legislative requirement.
- Throughout this process, RIDE has delivered changes earlier than the deadlines laid out in the legislation. The legislation required that RIDE identify 5 curricula examples by January of 2021, but the agency was able to provide these examples by June of 2020. Similarly, RIDE has already implemented processes to update and improve standards and curriculum

identification well before the September 2021 deadline provided.

- As a result, more students than ever have access to high-quality curricula, particularly students of color and students from low-income households.

- **Fast-track Principal (S869A and H6085AAA)**

- To support a pathway to leadership within their own community for teachers, RIDE introduced a new building level administrator certificate called the Fast-Track Principal.
- Through this certificate track, districts can support experienced, exception educators to expand their leadership capacity through an on-site internship and a RIDE-approved leadership development program while simultaneously pursuing a professional certification allowing them to become a principal.

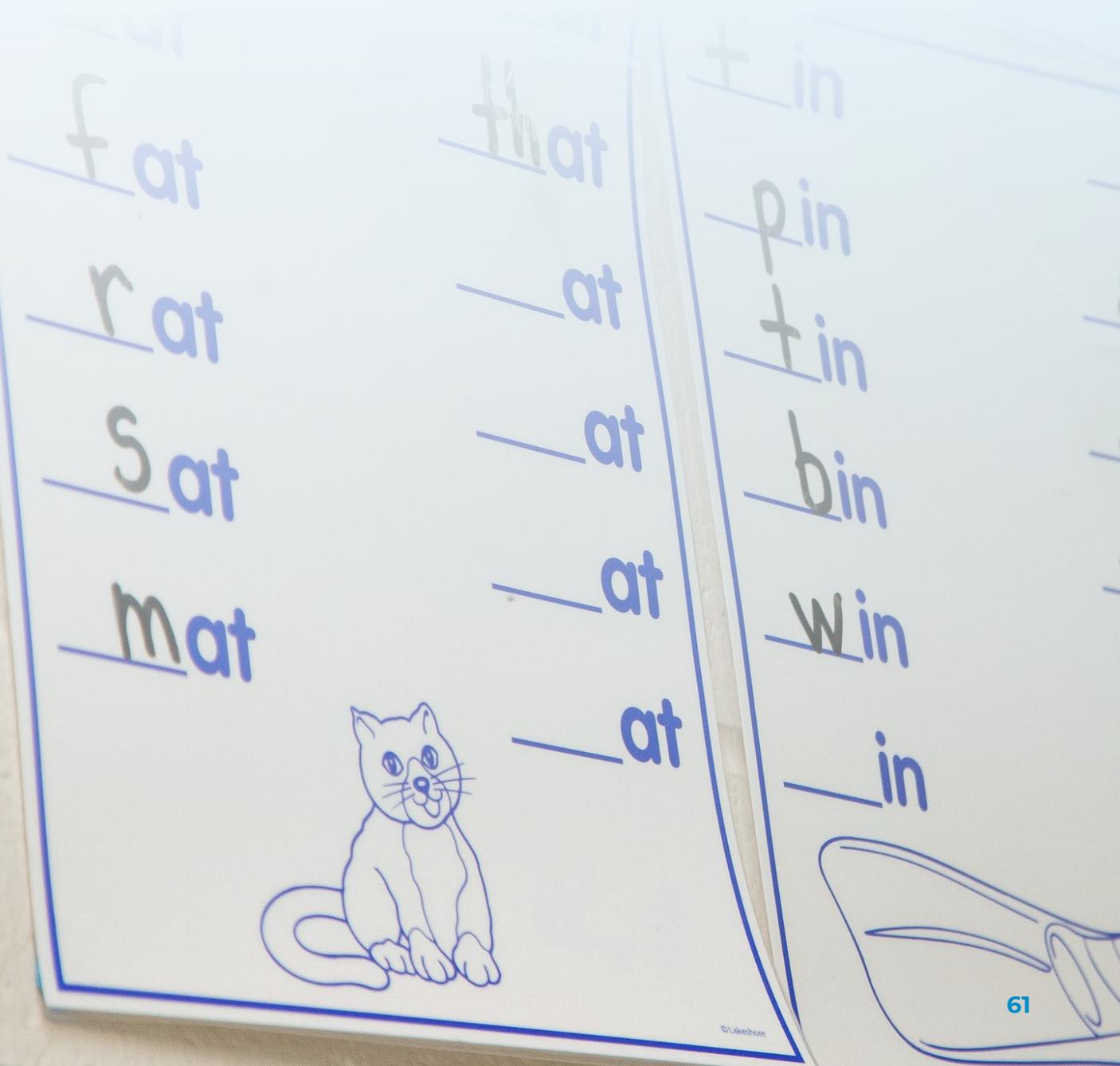
- **Education Accountability Act of 2019 (S865A and H6084A)**

- In accordance with the Education Accountability Act of 2019, RIDE has created a district accountability system that provides districts with a performance rating in accordance with state and federal requirements.

- The Star rating system provides a 1-5 star rating, where lower-performing districts will receive a higher level of hands-on support from RIDE. This is an elevation of the current Star rating system currently in place for schools.
- Additionally, in partnership with local education agencies, RIDE has advanced the shift to governance through the delivery of guidance and the creation of training modules for school improvement teams.
- The agency is working closely with districts in the creation of a strategic planning system that will facilitate the creation of district strategic plans as articulated in the law.

- **Right to Read Act (H587B and S1036)**

- RIDE has composed an LEA Guidance Document to help both administrators and teachers understand what is expected of them under the Right to Read Act and to explain the basic concepts of the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy.
- The agency also trained over 160 administrators and teachers in Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling and providing remote, asynchronous professional development opportunities for our educators to learn more about literacy pedagogy, especially for students with dyslexia.





2020-21

School Year



RIDE Rhode Island
Department
of Education