

# TRANSFORMING EDUCATION IN RHODE ISLAND

ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2010 - 2015



**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS**

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**RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner**



Deborah A. Gist  
Commissioner

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
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June 2015

Dear Friends of Education,

Five years ago, recognizing both the urgency and the opportunities before us, the team at the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) and our Board of Regents held a series of community meetings and forums and used this public input to write a strategic plan for transforming education in Rhode Island. We wanted the plan to set forth priorities and objectives that would be clear, measurable, and aspirational. We wanted the plan to guide every aspect of our work over the next five years. We wanted the plan to inspire us to work in the best interest of Rhode Island students. We wanted to be held accountable for accomplishments and results. Every year, I reported to the public through the annual State of Education address to the General Assembly on the progress we were making toward transforming our schools, and now we are issuing this close-out report on *Transforming Education in Rhode Island 2010-2015*.

Today, we can look back on our strategic plan with pride, with hope, and with the benefit of lessons learned. We have fulfilled virtually all of the strategies that we set forth in the six priority areas of our plan. We have seen admirable and encouraging gains in student achievement, such as improved scores on the Nation's Report Card, higher graduation rates, rising scores on state assessments, and increased participation in challenging coursework such as Advanced Placement. We recognize, however, that we fell short of some of the goals that we had hoped to attain. We cannot yet say, for example, that 85 percent of our graduates are ready for success beyond high school nor that 90 percent of our elementary-school students are proficient in mathematics and reading nor that we have cut achievement gaps by 50 percent. Yet I do not regret setting such ambitious goals. It will always be important to strive for excellence, and transforming education must be a continuous process of growth and achievement for everyone – students, teachers, school leaders, and community members as well.

From the outset, we said that our strategic plan would be a living document, and so it has been. Over the past five years, we have received support, advice, and feedback about every aspect of this plan, and I am grateful to the thousands of educators, business leaders, elected officials, foundations, faith-based organizations, and nonprofit agencies who have been our partners in transforming Rhode Island schools. I am also grateful for the selfless commitment from the members of the Board of Education and, in particular, for the extraordinary dedication from the hard-working, talented members of the RIDE team – the finest and most professional group of public employees that I know.

As I write this letter, I am in the process of transition, and by the time you read this I may have already moved on to a new challenge as the superintendent of schools in my home town, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Earlier this year, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education selected a group of 26 volunteers to write a new strategic plan for education in Rhode Island – establishing new values, setting new goals and objectives, proposing new strategies to make Rhode Island schools even greater. I am confident that Rhode Island is moving in the right direction, and I wish you the very best as you continue on your journey toward excellence and success.

Sincerely,

Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner

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**FIVE YEARS AGO**, under the leadership of newly appointed Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist, the team at the Rhode Island Department of Education developed the Strategic Plan 2010-2015: Transforming Education in Rhode Island. This plan established the goals, priorities, and strategies that have guided our work since 2010. “We expect you to hold us accountable for moving toward its objectives,” Commissioner Gist wrote in introducing the plan. Today, we stand at a moment of transition. We are in the process of developing our next strategic plan, which will guide our work through the year 2020. As we prepare to embark on a new phase of transforming education in Rhode Island, we take this opportunity to report on the progress we have made, the goals we have attained, and the challenges we have faced over the past five years.

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## **GOALS, GAPS, AND RESULTS**

*This plan is also a vision statement, articulating our hopes and best predictions of where we need to be... and what we need to do to get there.*

### **DEBORAH A. GIST | EDUCATION COMMISSIONER**

In developing the Strategic Plan 2010-2015, we established a number of what Commissioner Gist called “really ambitious” goals. We did so in order to drive home the sense of urgency and to inspire all of us – students, parents, educators, and members of the RIDE team – to hold high expectations for student achievement and academic success. We can take pride in many of the successful outcomes we have achieved over the past five years, including higher graduation rates, lower dropout rates (especially among black and Hispanic students), and improved scores on state assessments (especially at the high-school level). We are proud that, for the first time, we have surpassed the national averages on the Nation’s

Report Card (National Assessment of Educational Progress). We have raised the participation rates and rates of student success on AP tests, reduced the percentage of students needing remedial work when they enter community college, improved outcomes in adult-education programs, and achieved significant savings through statewide efficiencies. We know we still have much work to do – particularly regarding closing achievement gaps, improving performance in our lowest-achieving schools, and raising overall proficiency rates at all grade levels. Working together, we will continue to set our sights high and to aim for ambitious goals as we prepare to put our next strategic plan into action.

# Rhode Island Public Education: Results

## NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NAEP) THE NATION’S REPORT CARD:

In 2013, for the first time ever, the percent of Rhode Island students scoring proficient or better was above the national average in all four assessments in mathematics and reading on “The Nation’s Report Card.”

Five years ago we were above the national average in grade 4 and well below the national average in grade 8. Since then, we have far outpaced the country in grade-8 improvements while matching the national improvements in grade 4 – and are now above the national average in both grades, both tested subjects.

Here is a breakout of Rhode Island improvements on NAEP scores over the four-year span (2009-2013) covering the last three NAEP exams:

SUBJECT	2009	2013	4-YEAR GROWTH
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>			
Grade 4	39	42	+3
Grade 8	28	36	+8
<b>READING</b>			
Grade 4	36	38	+2
Grade 8	28	36	+8

## NEW ENGLAND COMMON ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (NECAP):

The percent of students attaining proficiency in reading and mathematics has been stable or positive over the past five years in all grades except for grade 3, with particularly strong improvements in the upper grades.

High-school students have attained 81 percent proficiency in reading, the highest among the NECAP states. High-school students have matched the other NECAP states in mathematics, thanks to an 8-point improvement over five years.

At all grade levels in writing, Rhode Island students have the highest proficiency rate among the NECAP states.

Statewide NECAP science results have improved by 8 percentage points over the six years of testing.

### NECAP RESULTS: PERCENT PROFICIENT OR BETTER

SUBJECT	2009	2013	4-YEAR GROWTH
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>			
Grades 3-8	58	59	+1
Grade 11	27	36	+9
<b>READING</b>			
Grades 3-8	70	71	+1
Grade 11	73	81	+8

**ADVANCED PLACEMENT RESULTS:**

Over the past five years, the number of students taking an AP exam increased by 73 percent and the number of students earning a score of 3 or greater on an AP exam increased by 59 percent.

Additionally, over the past five years the percent of Black students and of Hispanic students taking AP exams more than doubled.

<b>ADVANCED PLACEMENT RESULTS</b>	
# of students taking an exam	2,690
% Increase from 2008	73
# of students earning a 3 or greater (college mastery) on an AP exam	1,576
% Increase from 2008	59

**GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES:**

Over the past five years, our 4-year graduation rate has climbed from 76 percent to 81 percent while our dropout rate has declined by 5 points, from 14 percent to 8 percent.

Over the past five years, the dropout rate among black students declined from 18 percent to 11.5 percent. For Hispanic students, dropouts declined from 23 percent to 13 percent – a 10-point improvement.

<b>GRADUATION RATE</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>INCREASE</b>
	76	81	+5
<b>DROPOUT RATE</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>DECREASE</b>
All Students	14	8	-6
Black Students	18	11.5	-6.5
Hispanic Students	23	13	-10

**COLLEGE REMEDIATION:**

The percentage of recent RI high school graduates entering the Community College of Rhode Island who need remedial courses is down to 66 percent, a 3-point improvement from the previous year and the lowest percentage over the last six-year span as measured by the College Board’s Accuplacer Placement Test.

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>PLACED IN REMEDIAL COURSES</b>
Fall 2014	66.2
Fall 2013	69.4
Fall 2012	75.5
Fall 2011	73.7
Fall 2010	72.5
Fall 2009	74.0



# PRIORITY 1

## ENSURE EDUCATOR EXCELLENCE



*Ensuring educator excellence requires thorough preparation, ongoing professional development, a high-quality system of supports, and candid and instructive feedback about performance.*

## ENSURE EDUCATOR EXCELLENCE

We made ensuring educator excellence the first priority in our 2010-2015 strategic plan because we know that the single most important school-based factor in the education of our students is the effectiveness of the classroom teacher. Our goal has been to ensure that all students have excellent teachers throughout their educational experience. Over the past five years, we have put into action many strategies that are moving us toward that goal, including new standards for programs that prepare our classroom teacher and school leaders, annual evaluations of all educators based in part on evidence of student growth, and linking certification renewal with effective job performance.

### IMPROVE RIGOR OF PREPARATION PROGRAMS

***To strengthen standards and criteria for program approval, we:***

- Developed educator-preparation approval standards that require programs that prepare aspiring teachers to focus on classroom practice, to recruit a diverse pool of candidates, and to publicly report on quality;
- Raised the minimum test score required for entry into educator-preparation programs;
- Developed the Rhode Island Preparation Index, which provides information to preparation programs, districts, and the public regarding preparation, certification, and employment; and
- Developed and conducted a revised preparation program visit structure aligned to revised standards.

***To create innovative options and supports for those with diverse backgrounds to demonstrate proficiency and enter the profession, we:***

- Doubled the number of alternative-route completers through a partnership with Teach for America (100 candidates) and TNTP (79 candidates) that provided schools and districts with hard-to-staff schools with additional qualified teachers.

### SUPPORT DISTRICTS ON EFFECTIVE HUMAN-RESOURCES SYSTEMS & SUPPORT PERFORMANCE-BASED COMPENSATION

***To develop models of effective Human Resource Systems, we:***

- Supported the use of an online recruitment platform, SchoolSpring, that the majority of participating districts use to reach a wider pool of potential candidates;
- Ended the use of seniority as the sole basis for personnel decisions; and
- Provided policy guidance to districts to support human capital systems.

***To provide models of effective performance-based evaluation systems, we:***

- For the first time, implemented educator evaluations statewide, including annual evaluations, aligned with the Board of Education standards for educator evaluation, of all teachers and principals;
- Developed a statewide model for educator evaluation, the Rhode Island Model for Educator Evaluation for Teachers, Principals, and Support Professionals, which 40 districts have put into action, and approved four other evaluation models and provided ongoing support to the districts using these models;
- Developed online modules, guidance documents, and toolkits that schools and districts can access at any time to support the evaluation process;
- Developed, in partnership with support professionals (e.g., speech and language teachers, school psychologists, social workers, guidance counselors), an evaluation model unique to their roles;



## ENSURE EDUCATOR EXCELLENCE

- Provided extensive face-to-face training to district teams and to more than 800 evaluators each year to prepare all districts to implement educator evaluations;
- Developed and deployed a cohort of approximately 15 intermediary service providers, who delivered ongoing support for conducting evaluations in districts;
- Conducted sessions with school and district teams to help them establish and strengthen Student Learning Objective development and the scoring of professional practices;
- Worked with a cohort of principals who wanted on-site coaching and support to strengthen educator-evaluation practices, including observation calibration and conferencing;
- Conducted and analyzed annual statewide surveys, and used the feedback to make adjustments to the evaluation models;
- Released and distributed to all schools and districts the results of the final effectiveness ratings and convened groups of educators to reflect on the implications of the results;
- Launched an electronic platform (Educator Performance and Support System) designed to assist districts in the management of evaluation implementation and the collection of information to be used for planning professional learning; and
- Launched two compensation pilot projects that explored innovation in compensation to increase leadership opportunities for teachers and leaders.

## ALIGN EDUCATORS' GROWTH AND ADVANCEMENT TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

### ***To revise licensure renewal, we:***

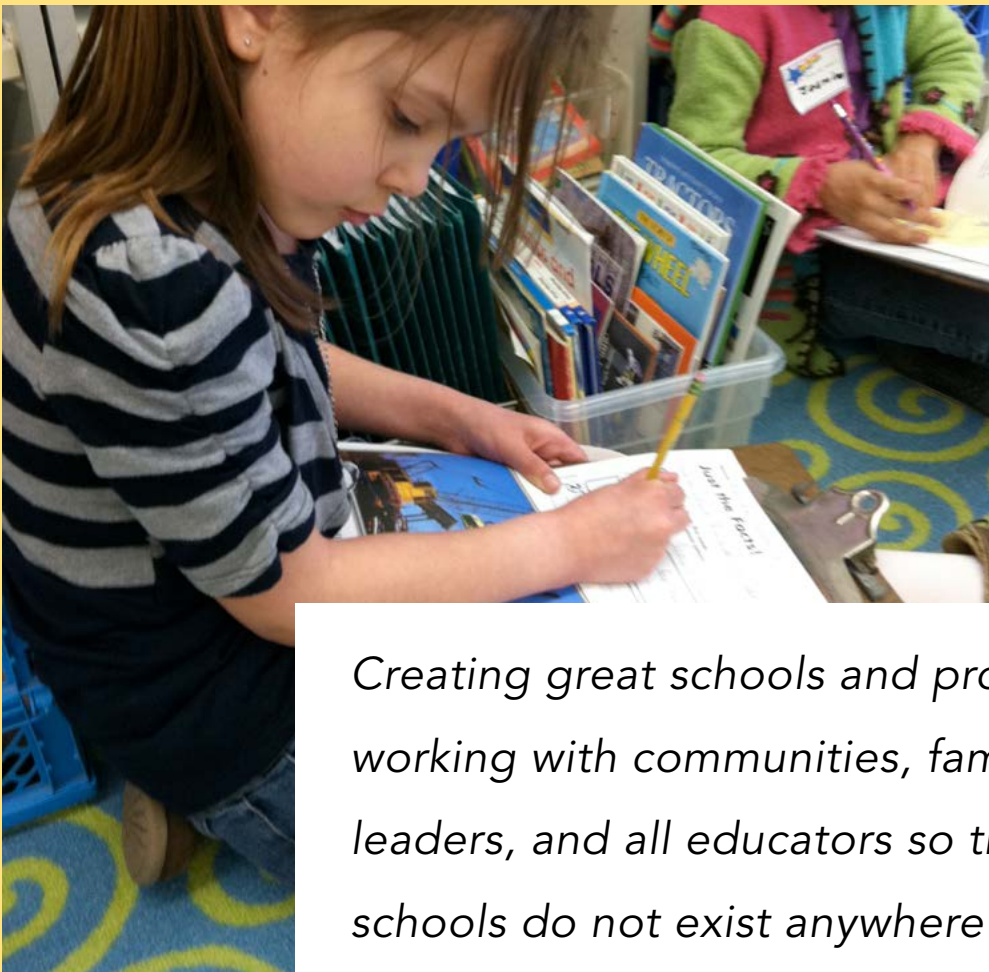
- Adopted new regulations for certification renewal, based on results of educator evaluations;
- Revised the comprehensive set of regulations for certification in Rhode Island, including an expansion of certificate options for those hoping to teach in Rhode Island; and
- Built a new web-based application so that educators could renew certification online.

### ***To ensure that districts have targeted professional development based on evaluation information, we:***

- Developed an online professional development platform that allows educators to access high-quality professional development aligned with evaluation feedback, school-improvement goals, and other school or district priorities;
- With support from a \$674,000 federal grant, focused on advancing the knowledge and skills of educators working with children who receive special-education services;
- Established an induction program that involved 28 coaches and that provided mentoring, guidance, and instructional support to 872 beginning teachers over two years;
- Sustained induction by coordinating the ability of districts to share induction coaches and continue to offer extensive professional development so as to expand the Rhode Island cadre of induction coaches;
- Expanded programs for educator recognition and development by enhancing the Rhode Island Teacher of the Year program, creating an advisory committee consisting of award-winning educators, presenting Golden Apple Awards, and holding an annual celebration of educator excellence; and
- Awarded 12 groups of educators Professional Learning Community mini-grants to address the areas of "Building Parent-Teacher Relationships," "Closing Student Achievement Gaps," and "Using the Common Core State Standards."

# PRIORITY 2

## ACCELERATE ALL SCHOOLS TOWARD GREATNESS



*Creating great schools and programs means working with communities, families, civic leaders, and all educators so that failing schools do not exist anywhere in Rhode Island.*

## ACCELERATE ALL SCHOOLS TOWARD GREATNESS

Our 2010-2015 strategic plan called for aggressive gains in student achievement and for a system of public education in which all students attend high-quality schools and programs. Our goals have been to hold schools accountable for student success, to provide low-performing schools with the support they need to improve, and to ensure that our schools provide a wide variety of programs and courses of study – multiple pathways – that will lead students to success.

### ENSURE THAT ALL SCHOOLS ARE ACCELERATING ACHIEVEMENT AND CLOSING ACHIEVEMENT GAPS.

#### ***To improve quality and accessibility of early learning programs, we:***

- Established the Rhode Island Pre-kindergarten Program, built the program up to 17 sites serving 8 communities, and received a \$19-million federal grant to help expand the program to 60 sites by 2019;
- Awarded more than \$1.4 million in quality-improvement grants to nearly 200 early-learning programs, centers, and classrooms and began the BrightStars quality-rating system for preschools and early-learning programs to help families make wise choices and to encourage continuous program improvement;
- Revised the Early Learning Standards to include ages birth to five and embedded standards into the state-wide program quality improvement continuum to connect community-based child care, licensed through the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, and BrightStars to RIDE's Comprehensive Early Childhood Education standards; and
- Developed a kindergarten-entry profile to ensure smooth transition from preschool to kindergarten.

#### ***To ensure that districts address achievement gaps, we:***

- Conducted Summer Leadership Institutes to help schools use data to design improvement plans;
- Provided enhanced support for educator evaluation in districts with the lowest-achieving schools; and
- Developed a more sophisticated diagnostic screen and accountability framework for low-achieving schools that led to robust discussion on improving the quality of education, resulting in enhanced monitoring and support for 31 schools and their districts.

#### ***To support schools in the development of a system of academic, social, and emotional supports for health and well-being, we:***

- Convened a statewide anti-bullying forum, led efforts to prevent bullying, especially to prevent cyber-bullying, and endorsed the Safe Schools Act, which led to the first Rhode Island statewide policy against bullying, including cyber-bullying;
- With input from the Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Health, and state and local police and firefighters' associations, developed a model School Safety Plan that all school districts can use or adapt to ensure that their schools are safe and secure places for students and staff members;
- In partnership with the Rhode Island Food Bank, expanded the Summer Food Service Program – and earned national recognition for this initiative;
- Championed afterschool and extended-learning programs through the Commissioner's annual Summer Learning Tour;
- Launched a social-and-emotional learning initiative aligned with national standards and measures; and
- Developed a multi-tiered system that provides training to educators on the use of data to improve academic, social, and emotional learning.

## ACCELERATE ALL SCHOOLS TOWARD GREATNESS

### TRANSFORM SCHOOLS THAT FAIL TO ACCELERATE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND CLOSE GAPS.

#### ***To develop, implement, and support a set of options for transforming identified schools, we:***

- Developed a system of school accountability and support that identifies specific shortcomings and strengths at each school, provides each school with the specific support or intervention needed, and enables schools to select the interventions that respond best to their local context and their needs;
- Developed a robust school reform planning and quarterly monitoring process that shifted transformation work from a system of task-level compliance-monitoring to a system that focuses on the essential processes of intervention implementation, allows for frequent adjustments to implementation based on locally relevant data, and develops and documents a shared understanding of school progress and mutual accountability among the schools, the districts, and RIDE;
- Designed two types of intervention supports for implementing plans for school transformation: School Achievement Specialists and Educator Evaluation Implementation Specialists;
- Helped four of the lowest-achieving schools in Rhode Island to make significant progress toward exiting Focus or Priority status; and
- Identified existing barriers to innovations through the Educator Autonomy Project.

#### ***To support the development of leaders who are able to intervene in and transform underperforming schools, we:***

- Developed an Academy of Transformative Leadership that provided intensive training and coaching to nearly 90 school leaders in 11 districts, affecting the lives of 15,000 students;
- Created a set of online professional development modules for school and district administrators and building-based leadership teams to advance knowledge and practices to help struggling schools and to provide educational equity for all students;
- Provided individual coaching for principals of 14 identified schools and intensive professional development (i.e., three summer institutes and eight afterschool sessions) for their leadership teams; and
- Created a turnaround-principal corps for 13 aspiring principals, through the establishment of a year-long residency program.

### CREATE MULTIPLE PATHWAYS TO COLLEGE AND CAREERS.

#### ***To diversify the ways that youth and adults will graduate and successfully transition in post-secondary education and training, apprenticeships, or employment, we:***

- Championed classroom technology, blended learning, and virtual learning by awarding two Innovation Powered by Technology Model School grants, opening the first blended-learning charter public school in Rhode Island (Village Green), and holding three annual Innovation Powered by Technology conferences;
- Expanded opportunities for enrollment in charter public schools by supporting the growth of successful charters and mayoral academies and welcoming new charters that meet specific student, community, and workforce needs, such as the Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College and the Nowell Leadership Academy;
- Opened the Achievement First Providence Mayoral Academy, the only school in Rhode Island that is a replication of a national high-performing charter model;

## ACCELERATE ALL SCHOOLS TOWARD GREATNESS

- Welcomed the first “recovery high school” program, the Anchor Learning Academy, whose mission is to help students re-entering the school system following treatment for substance abuse;
- Opened opportunities for students in career and technical education and advanced workforce development by directing resources toward career and technical programs and adult-education programs in the areas of greatest economic growth;
- Due to the high performance of Rhode Island adult-education programs, became one of only 15 states to earn a \$670,000 Workforce Incentive Grant;
- Implemented and supported the use of project-based learning strategies with more than 40 educators in two Providence high schools (Providence Career and Technical Academy and Central High School), which resulted in greater integration of reading, writing, and mathematics with career and technical subject areas and in more effective use of common planning time;
- Revised the Career and Technical Education regulations, establishing a statewide system of choice that enables students to enroll in programs that prepare students for careers in growth industries regardless of where they reside; and
- Adopted new regulations for the approval and renewal of charter public schools in Rhode Island, with the renewal based on the performance of the school as measured against established goals and objectives.

### ***To provide technical assistance to schools implementing approved multiple pathways, we:***

- Endorsed and championed the Dropout Prevention Act, which is designed to keep students in school and lead them to graduation, and raised the mandatory attendance age to 18; and
- Introduced a new system for review and approval of career-technical programs, based on career-technical standards and student outcomes.

### ***To form strategic partnerships to align elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and community- and work-based components of pathways, we:***

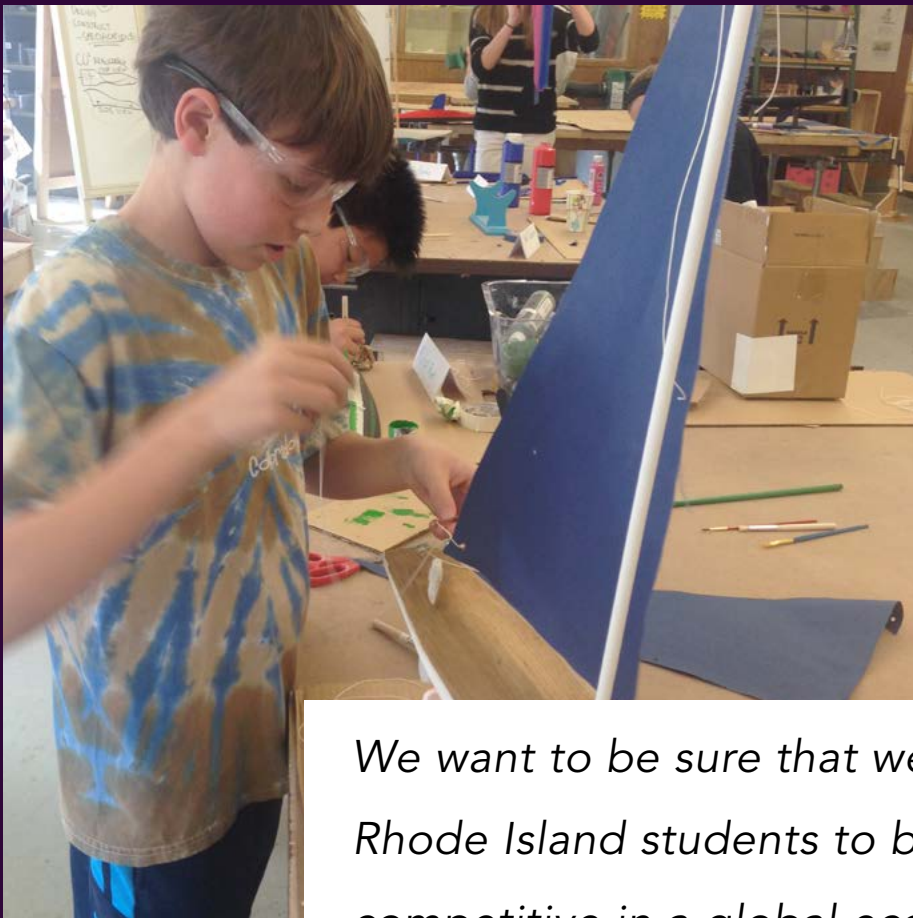
- Approved the first Rhode Island regulations on dual enrollment, with the goals of establishing clear standards, better communications between high schools and postsecondary institutions, and increased access for all students to striving to obtain college credits while in high school.

### ***Regarding evaluating relative effectiveness of and returns to different pathways:***

- No significant accomplishments were realized on this strategy during this time period.

# PRIORITY 3

# ESTABLISH WORLD-CLASS STANDARDS & ASSESSMENTS



*We want to be sure that we prepare all Rhode Island students to be internationally competitive in a global economy.*



## ESTABLISH WORLD-CLASS STANDARDS & ASSESSMENTS

Standards set forth what students need to know and be able to do at each grade level. Assessments evaluate student success – providing information to help teachers improve instruction and providing parents with information about the performance of their children and of our schools. By implementing the Common Core State Standards, providing support to all Rhode Island educators, and joining the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, we have established an educational system in Rhode Island that we can measure against the best in the world.

### ENSURE THAT ALL STUDENTS HAVE ACCESS TO A RIGOROUS CURRICULUM ALIGNED TO INTERNATIONALLY BENCHMARKED STANDARDS THAT ARE TAUGHT THROUGH MULTIPLE PATHWAYS.

#### ***To ensure that Rhode Island content standards are aligned to the Common Core, we:***

- Adopted and implemented the Common Core State Standards by engaging more than 5,800 educators in the study of the standards, and preparing an additional 1,800 educators who work with students with disabilities or English learners;
- Assembled the Common Core Ambassadors, a team of experienced Rhode Island educators, to provide information on the Common Core to community members and parents through more than 30 community events;
- Offered professional development to approximately 2,500 educators on the significant shifts of the Common Core in mathematics and literacy;
- Supported a group of educators to convene the “Cut to the Core” conference to provide professional development on aligning instruction to the Common Core;
- Awarded approximately 50 mini-grants to districts to support their professional development on the Common Core, to develop local assessments, and to understand how to use data to improve instruction; and
- Created and disseminated online professional development modules on English Language Arts and mathematics to support implementation at the district level.

#### ***To coordinate the review, development, and monitoring of rigorous curricula in English Language Arts, mathematics, and science, we:***

- Developed 14 model curricula (i.e., three in English language arts, six in mathematics, four in science, and one in social studies) that more than 450 educators from 17 schools or districts wrote over the course of four years;
- Disseminated all curriculum models through the RIDE SharePoint site to enable access by all schools and districts;
- Encouraged the expansion of Advanced Placement course opportunities in all school districts, which has led to a 73-percent increase in AP test participation and a doubling of participation among Black and Hispanic students over the past six years, and brought Advanced Placement participation to all Providence high schools and to all but three school districts;
- Created a common design process for curriculum development that enabled educators to share their work using a common language and deep understanding of standards; and
- Adopted and began transition to the Next Generation Science Standards, which introduce science at an earlier age, when children are asking many questions about the world and how it works.

## ESTABLISH WORLD-CLASS STANDARDS & ASSESSMENTS

***To support the use of successful programs and structures in reading, writing, and mathematics for students who need additional support, we:***

- Worked with the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and several school districts to help students improve in mathematics and prepare for graduation through the Summer Success Math Program;
- Designed and implemented *Virtual Learning Math Modules* to support student progress in learning mathematics, provided technical assistance and support to 13 high schools, developed a video and online guidebook, and expanded the use of the modules by adding three adult-education programs; and
- Created a blog that captures school and district success stories, <http://ri-rttsuccessstories.blogspot.com/>, to promote a sharing of effective practices and progress.

## IMPLEMENT HIGH-QUALITY STATE ASSESSMENTS ALIGNED TO INTERNATIONALLY BENCHMARKED STANDARDS.

***To review and revise the state assessment system as needed to align with the Common Core, we:***

- Prepared for transition to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College Careers (PARCC) assessments through professional development for educators, successful participation in the 2014 field test, and investments in technology that have enabled more than 60 percent of students to take these assessments online during the first administration; and
- Administered PARCC assessments successfully in spring 2015, with more than 190,000 tests completed online in the first assessment phase.

***To connect Rhode Island schools to nationally and internationally benchmarked assessments aligned to alternate pathways for students, we:***

- Recruited six high schools to pilot the international OECD Test for Schools, which provided extensive reports on school performance related to global benchmarks.

## MONITOR AND SUPPORT DISTRICT IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPREHENSIVE LOCAL ASSESSMENTS AND REPORTING SYSTEMS BASED ON INTERNATIONALLY BENCHMARKED STANDARDS.

***To provide logistical support for the development and use of formative and summative assessment processes and data, we:***

- Supported districts in developing and using formative assessments, which take place continuously during the course of teaching and learning to provide teachers and students with feedback;
- Developed items for interim assessments in English, mathematics, science, and social studies;
- Developed items and performance tasks in English, mathematics, social studies, and science as well as an item bank, which contains more than 8,000 items, and nine performance tasks in each content area for classroom and school use;
- Provided orientation sessions for more than 300 educators representing 38 schools or districts to help them design and plan formative-assessment professional development for their schools and districts;
- Created two forms of interim assessments, fixed-form assessments, and test-construction tools, which selected schools and districts piloted; and
- Developed interim fixed-form assessments in English language arts and mathematics, which 17 districts and 52 schools used in 2012-13 and 2013-14.

## ESTABLISH WORLD-CLASS STANDARDS & ASSESSMENTS

***To identify models and practices that support implementation of comprehensive local assessment systems, including graduation-by-proficiency requirements, we:***

- Developed Comprehensive Assessment System guidance to frame how state and local assessments should work together to gather sufficient, high-quality information about student learning;
- Offered an assessment-literacy course for administrators and teachers from seven districts;
- Developed a test-construction tool that allows teachers to build their own classroom or school tests in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies by selecting questions from the item bank that includes test questions, rubrics, and annotated student work;
- Developed an online formative-assessment course, entitled *Linking Learning and Assessment*, which supported all Rhode Island educators in developing understanding of classroom formative-assessment practices; and
- Through *The Assessment Project*, worked with teams from four school districts to streamline testing at the local and state level and to provide models of best practice to other school districts.

# PRIORITY 4

## DEVELOP USER-FRIENDLY DATA SYSTEMS



*We must create user-friendly data systems, instructional-management tools, and systems of reports so that all Rhode Islanders can access information that will help them make decisions that improve education.*

## DEVELOP USER-FRIENDLY DATA SYSTEMS

In writing our 2010-2015 strategic plan, we recognized the need to use data to evaluate programs, inform instruction, and monitor how we invest our resources. Our goal has been to create a system in which all educators use data to make vital decisions about improving student performance, classroom instruction, and school climate and achievement.

### IMPROVE THE AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF ACCURATE DATA ON STUDENT, TEACHER, SCHOOL, AND DISTRICT PERFORMANCE.

**To create tools to provide access to user-friendly data, we:**

- Launched InfoWorks, which combines key data elements from a range of sources – assessment results, demographics, survey data, and more – to provide a holistic view of public education in Rhode Island;
- Built three data warehouses for early childhood, pre-kindergarten through grade 12, and postsecondary education, so that educators across the system can use and share data;
- Built five data systems (Instructional Support System, eCert, Educator Performance Support System, Early Warning System, and the Growth Model Visualization), to support data use at the district and community levels, which have been accessed more than 165,000 times since their inception;
- Developed public-facing report cards for school accountability, based on proficiency levels, closing achievement gaps, growth, and graduation rates; and
- Developed and implemented a data-focused strategic-planning process aligned with Basic Education Program functions and capacities and piloted the process in five school districts.

### ENSURE THAT THE DATA AND TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT THE SHARING OF HIGH-QUALITY DATA ACCESSIBLE IN REAL TIME AND ARE ABLE TO PROMOTE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.

**To establish an integrated, comprehensive data structure that provides single-point access to comprehensive education, demographic, and human-services data for all students in pre-kindergarten through grade 20, we:**

- Integrated the RIDE data system and the postsecondary-education data system through the Rhode Island Data-HUB and the Rhode Island Data Warehouse; and
- Continued to build the Rhode Island longitudinal data system, which encompasses data about students from prekindergarten through elementary and secondary education, postsecondary education, and the workforce.

**To ensure that there are processes and structures set up to support ownership around data quality and integrity and the meaningful use of data by all stakeholders, we:**

- Signed the Postsecondary Education Data Sharing Agreement, linking our student data to postsecondary-education data, governed by the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, and to data at other colleges and universities, through the National Student Clearinghouse;
- Developed robust policies on data security and data privacy;
- Convened a Data Governance Board, which developed a model for data quality that included audits, monitoring, and data-quality awards for school districts in order to develop a data dictionary for items in the data warehouse;
- Created a Data Team made up of district representatives who provided feedback on statewide data collection and use and who served as liaisons with their peers across the state; and
- Held three trainings annually for district and school staff members on data collection and use and technology readiness.

## DEVELOP USER-FRIENDLY DATA SYSTEMS

### CREATE THE ABILITY FOR EDUCATORS TO USE RELEVANT DATA TO INFORM DECISIONS FOR IMPROVING INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AND CLASSROOM OUTCOMES.

#### ***To create tools for educators to access data that will improve instruction, we:***

- Created and launched the Instructional Support System, which offers ease of access to and a central place for relevant information to improve classroom instruction, and presents historical data that is helpful when educators are looking at trends;
- Created and launched the Educator Performance and Support System, which transformed the way schools and districts conduct educator evaluations, moving the system from paper-based to online and providing teachers with timely, detailed feedback from their evaluators; and
- Redesigned the educator-licensure platform, eCert, that provides educators with round-the-clock access to their certification information and allows educators to renew certification online.

#### ***To support districts and individual educators in using data to improve instruction, we:***

- Developed and launched the Using Data Professional Development Series, made up of four components, to help educators use data effectively, and prepared 1,226 educators from 289 schools through a year-long, tiered professional development series to help educators analyze student data to inform educational decisions;
- Developed early-warning indicators (e.g., attendance, discipline, state-assessment scores) and launched the Early Warning System to help educators identify students who are at some risk of not graduating on time so that educators can provide the appropriate interventions for these students;
- Opened RIDEMap, a sign-on system giving educators access to data and information about students they are teaching;
- Created and posted on the RIDE website a series of training materials, modules, and guidance documents for all Rhode Island educators; and
- Designed and awarded to 16 teams of educators a total of 30 Race to the Top competitive mini-grants that emphasize using the new technology platforms and using data to improve instruction.

### REDESIGN SCHOOL AND DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESSES TO EXTEND BEYOND NECAP RESULTS TO INCLUDE VALID AND RELIABLE DATA AGAINST KEY INDICATORS SO THAT THE APPROPRIATE SUPPORTS, INTERVENTIONS, ENHANCEMENTS, AND IMPROVEMENTS CAN BE TARGETED EFFECTIVELY TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.

#### ***To develop an accountability process that accurately measures effectiveness of programs and supports, we:***

- Developed an accountability system, approved by the U.S. Department of Education, with criteria based on proficiency, closing achievement gaps, student growth, progress toward annual targets, and graduation rates.

#### ***To develop standards and processes for how performance metrics are to be used to improve student achievement, we:***

- Developed a model for measuring student growth and incorporated that growth measurement into the approved accountability system and into systems for educator evaluation;
- Created a suite of tools that provides school districts with a process for self-assessing the Basic Education Program that includes foundational capacities, legal requirements, and rubrics for continuous improvement.



# PRIORITY 5

## INVEST OUR RESOURCES WISELY



*We must create an education-finance system that supports student achievement and ensures that we get the best return on the investments we make.*

## INVEST OUR RESOURCES WISELY

When we looked at school finances in 2010, we observed that Rhode Islanders spend generously on public education, yet our outcomes and results had fallen short of our expectations. We set two main objectives regarding school finances: We agreed to develop and implement a funding formula for state aid to education, and we agreed to empower school districts to link expenditures with educational achievement. Our goal has been not only to promote spending efficiencies but also to ensure that the funds we spend support innovation and improve student achievement.

## ENSURE THAT SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS ARE ADEQUATELY AND EQUITABLY FUNDED.

***To promote an equitable and predictable Funding Formula to support the education of all students, including adult learners, we:***

- Oversaw the development and implementation of the Funding Formula for aid to education, under which “the money follows the student,” that takes into account student needs and district capacity, and that has brought predictability into the education-funding and budget-making process;
- Advocated for increased state funding in public education by \$124.5 million since 2010; and
- Designed and hosted Funding Formula information sessions throughout Rhode Island and annual projection meetings with school districts.

***To consolidate and promote efficiencies for the application, reporting, and accounting systems for schools and programs, we:***

- Developed and launched the Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA), a method of accounting that provides transparency, uniformity, accountability, and comparability of financial information for all schools and districts and that helps school districts ensure that they are using their investments to improve instruction and to advance learning, with five years of data now available;
- Created a RIDE UCOA Accounting Manual, quality-assurance review tests, and agreed-upon procedures guidance for local auditors to ensure data comparability;
- Provided ongoing training for school business administrators and school office staff as well as for school committees and community members; and
- Prepared data reports to assist users with reviewing UCOA expenditures at the district and state level, which allow comparison among districts by assigned grouping or self-selection.

***To seek public and private funding to support this plan:***

Over the course of the past five years, RIDE has received more than \$160 million from various public and private entities in support of the priorities, objectives, and strategies put forth in the strategic plan, including but not limited to:

- Successfully competing for federal grants, including Race to the Top, Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge, Pre-kindergarten Expansion, longitudinal data grants, grants for Adult Education and Special Education Professional Development, Centers for Disease Control grants, Charter School Expansion grant; and
- Securing foundation support for key RIDE initiatives including digital learning, advanced placement, educator recognition, Common Core communication and outreach, and strategic planning.

## INVEST OUR RESOURCES WISELY

### ENSURE RESOURCES ARE INVESTED APPROPRIATELY AND DIRECTED TOWARD AREAS THAT WILL IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.

#### ***To create tools and processes for guiding innovations and cost efficiencies tied to increases in student achievement, we:***

- Achieved statewide efficiencies through on-going initiatives, leading to annual savings of more than \$2 million in transportation costs, \$1.3 million in food-service management costs, approximately \$250,000 in the purchase of supplies, \$3.4 million from the E-Rate program, which covers schools and public libraries, and an estimated total since 2007 of \$90 million in the cost of school construction;
- Issued the Public Schoolhouse Assessment, a report that evaluates the capacities and building conditions in all Rhode Island schools in order to help determine the necessity of school construction and to foster statewide uniformity in the quality of school buildings;
- Invested \$20 million in the Wireless Classroom Initiative, which brought wireless technology to every classroom and instructional space in the public schools of Rhode Island;
- Won eight Green Ribbon School awards, which the U.S. Department of Education issues to honor schools for their exemplary efforts to reduce environmental impact and utility costs, promote better health, and ensure effective environmental education, including civics and green career pathways; and
- Developed master-price agreements through which schools can purchase laptops and software at a fixed, reasonable price, and can procure transportation services, financial management and information systems, student-information management systems, and energy-management consulting services.

#### ***To evaluate the tools and processes for guiding innovation, creating efficiencies, and improving student achievement, we:***

- Monitored and reported on the actual savings from statewide efficiencies on an annual basis as part of the budget submission.

### ENSURE THAT SCHOOL BUDGETS ARE RESPONSIVE AND RELEVANT SO AS TO MAXIMIZE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.

#### ***To standardize school budgets so that they assess priorities and long-range planning, we:***

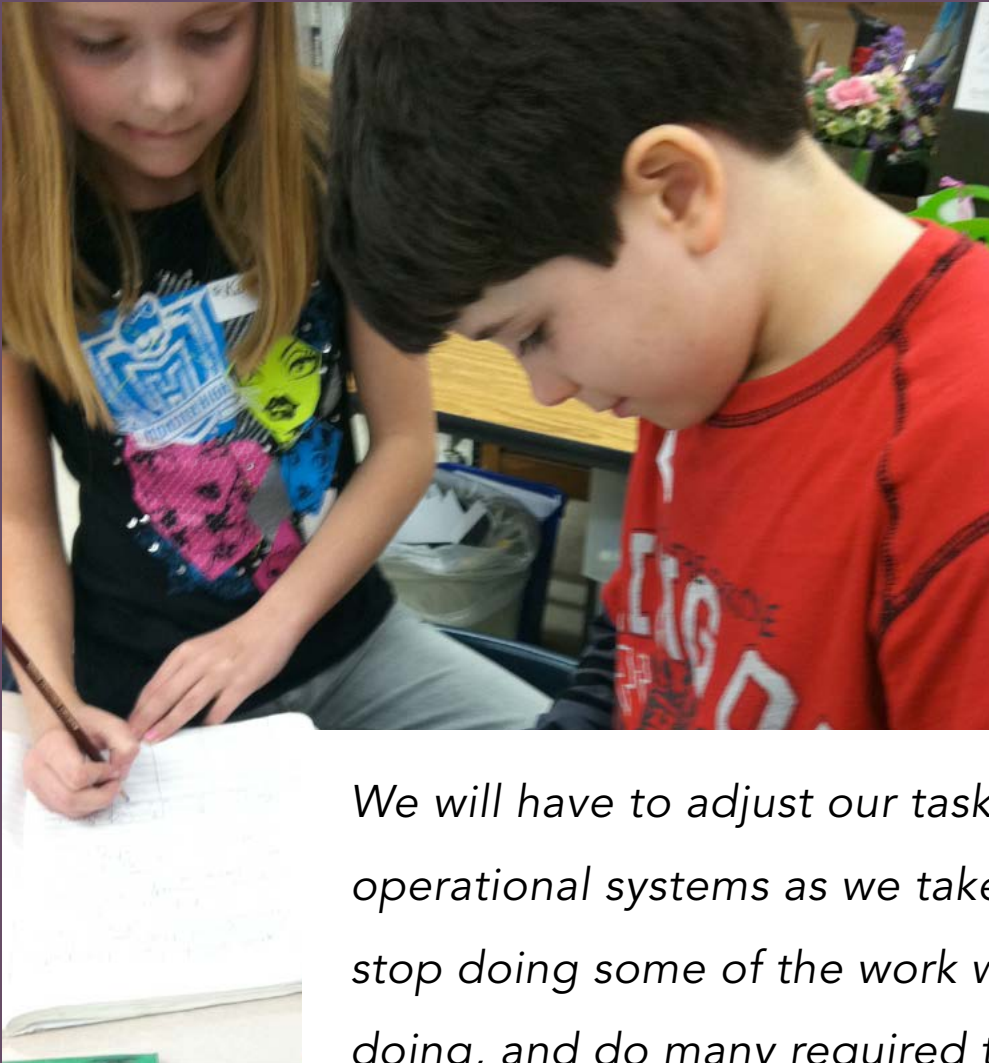
- Developed approved, required elements for budget presentation materials now in place and provided proposed future requirements for implementation; and
- Provided technical and operational support to school districts in financial distress to help school leaders make decisions regarding revenues and expenditures and to build local expertise and capacity to manage school finances.

#### ***Regarding identifying effective practices linking education investments to student achievement:***

- No significant accomplishments were realized on this strategy during this time period.

# PRIORITY 6

## PROVIDE PRIMARY SUPPORT



*We will have to adjust our tasks, practices, and operational systems as we take on new work, stop doing some of the work we currently are doing, and do many required tasks in new, strategic ways.*

## PROVIDE PRIMARY SUPPORT

Fulfilling the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan 2010-2015 has affected the work of every member of the team at the Rhode Island Department of Education. The Strategic Plan has guided every aspect of our work over the past five years. Our quarterly and annual evaluations ascertain how effectively we have put the strategic plan into action. We strive to provide timely and reliable services to the people of Rhode Island and to work in the best interest of Rhode Island students. RIDE staff members are committed to making RIDE the highest-performing state education agency in the country. We have highlighted some of the major components of the work we do every day to transform education in Rhode Island.

### TO SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS AND PROCESSES FOR ALL RIDE STAFF ON PROVIDING TIMELY AND RELIABLE SERVICE, WE:

- Created a Customer Service Team to improve relations with the public across all offices and throughout the agency;
- Developed agency-wide protocols on responsiveness to constituents' requests for information;
- To support educators across the state as they strive to implement new technology systems, we established a Help Desk, which has handled more than 25,000 requests over three years;
- Redesigned the Special Education Call Center to improve responsiveness to parents and families;
- Instituted the weekly Field Memo for superintendents and the education field to ensure timely communication between RIDE and school and district leaders;
- Disseminated letters to the public, news releases, and reports on progress made in key priority areas through a variety of outlets (e.g., website, news media, blogs, and social media such as Facebook and Twitter);
- Engaged with state and national media groups on a regular basis to provide information about the progress we have made in major policy areas;
- Processed more than 275 public records requests and posted 15 regulations approved by the Board of Education with the Secretary of State;
- Redesigned and launched the RIDE website to improve access to information, tools, and resources;
- Conducted numerous surveys on priority topics (e.g., curriculum, educator evaluation, technology use) to solicit frequent feedback;
- Provided multiple webinars on a variety of topics (e.g., ESEA waiver, Common Core State Standards, PARCC) to the field and other constituents to strengthen communication and policy implementation;
- Convened quarterly as the entire RIDE team to review and discuss agency policies and practices;
- Administered all operational tasks and essential daily functions, including clerical work, records management, management and maintenance of network systems and personal technology, schedule and calendar management, delivery of mail, general office maintenance, management of purchases and supplies, and management of interaction, both in person and via mail or email, with the public and with the education field, so as to ensure agency-wide effectiveness and timely and helpful public service;
- Met on a regular basis with professional organizations (e.g., Rhode Island Schools Superintendents' Association, Rhode Island Association of School Principals, Rhode Island National Education Association, Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals), legislative leaders, teacher advisory groups, community and business organizations, and institutes of postsecondary education to share viewpoints on policy implementation and receive timely feedback;

## PROVIDE PRIMARY SUPPORT

- Carried out the policies and directives that the Board of Education and the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education (and formerly the Board of Regents) established and provided these Boards and Council with information and support needed to fulfill their statutory responsibilities;
- Monitored all education-related legislation introduced at the General Assembly, provided resources and testimony as needed to advance Board and RIDE initiatives and policy positions, and ensured necessary agency follow-up as needed for newly enacted legislation;
- Worked with the Governor's Office, the General Assembly, and other state agencies to provide timely information on educational issues affecting students and educators and to support cross-agency initiatives such as school safety, student health, early learning, and workforce development; and
- Supported numerous advisory groups (e.g., Special Education Advisory Committee, Educator Evaluation Advisory Committee, Educators in Action, English Language Learners Advisory Committee) to gain feedback on policy implementation.

## TO ALIGN ALL RIDE RESOURCES AND STRUCTURES TO FOCUS ON PREPARING STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS, WE:

- Conducted quarterly reviews of the strategic plan and annual staff performance reviews to determine progress toward goals;
- Managed and reviewed federal and state grants on a yearly basis to ensure alignment of resources and goals;
- Engaged in ongoing planning, analysis, and assessment of fiscal and human resources to strengthen organizational processes and structures;
- Developed annual state budgets to support the Strategic Plan, agency operations, and Board of Education goals;
- Issued, reviewed, and monitored contracts and agreements to ensure that vendors fulfill contract terms and meet performance targets; and
- Processed all required travel and procurement requests to meet state operational standards and requirements.

## TO USE DATA AND ESTABLISHED PERFORMANCE MEASURES TO IMPROVE RIDE FUNCTIONING, WE:

- Established and implemented a performance-management system so that all staff members are responsible for achieving annual goals;
- Created EdStat, which embedded data-driven decision-making throughout RIDE and assisted staff members in focusing on actions needed to resolve issues and reach benchmarks;
- Conducted performance-management reviews with the U.S. Department of Education that included onsite visits and document reviews for major federal grant programs and initiatives;
- Participated in all required state and federal program and fiscal audits and addressed findings to improve operational functions and processes;
- Managed and reviewed all legal matters related to education, including conducting hearings, issuing legal opinions, and presenting legal arguments in court;
- Established a new process for progress monitoring, called Collaborative Learning for Outcomes, through which school districts work together as teams to learn from one another and come up with their own ideas for solving intractable problems; and
- Worked with and supported the Board of Education in its review of the implementation of the Strategic Plan and policies to improve education statewide.





## **CONCLUSION: ACCOMPLISHMENT & CHALLENGES**

With pride in our accomplishments but with recognition that transforming education remains an ongoing challenge, we submit this report on the progress we have made by working together to fulfill the goals of our strategic plan: Transforming Education in Rhode Island 2010-2015. Along with many other friends of education in Rhode Island, we eagerly anticipate the development of the next strategic plan, which will guide our work over the course of the next five years.



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