

In Pursuit of Excellence

A Report on the State of Education in Rhode Island



School Year 2019-2020



RIDE Rhode Island
Department
of Education

Reimagining Education

From Hope to Results

A vision for Rhode Island that embraces accountability, collaboration, and **high expectations for all.**

We are anchored in these principles:

Students Come First

All of our decisions serve all Rhode Island students.

Equity and Access Matter

We value diversity and recognize that all students are capable of learning and achieving.

Transparency is Key

We make information transparent and accessible so that our decisions can be driven by data.

Focus on Results

We are unwavering in our goals, but flexible in our approach.

WORLD-CLASS TALENT

- Attract, recruit and retain a highly-skilled workforce
- Put professional learning at the center of improvement
- Grow and diversify the educator pipeline
- Create flexible pathways into the profession
- Provide leadership development opportunities

EXCELLENCE IN LEARNING

- Set high expectations, high standards and quality curriculum
- Close equity gaps
- Build pathways aligned to student interests, needs, and careers
- Take a whole student approach and prioritize school culture
- Maintain 21st century learning environments

ENGAGED COMMUNITIES

- Establish governance structures that respond to families
- Elevate the student and community voice
- Create high-quality options for all Rhode Islanders
- Forge partnerships with community and industry
- Invite feedback and create responsive policies accordingly



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Table of Contents

Introduction: A Letter From Commissioner Infante-Green	2
Rhode Island Passes its Toughest Test: Reimagining Education Through COVID-19	4
Turnaround Time (Excellence in Learning)	9
Come Together, Right Now (Engaged Communities)	11
Moving to the Front of the Class (World-Class Talent)	13
Shifting RIDE Into Gear (Excellence in Learning)	15
Listening Says So Much (Engaged Communities)	17
Culture Comes First (Excellence in Learning)	19
Today's Lesson: Self Care (World-Class Talent)	20
Turning Hope Into Results: A Report of Actions Taken to Improve Educational Outcomes	22
COVID-19 & Distance Learning	22
World-Class Talent: Finding, Supporting, and Retaining the Best	27
Excellence in Learning: Pushing Performance Across the Board	35
Engaged Communities: Building a Responsive and Accountable Culture	53
Epilogue: The Pursuit of Excellence Has Only Just Begun	60



Introduction: A Letter from the Commissioner

Dear Rhode Island:

May 19, 2020

One year ago, no one could have imagined that a pandemic would stop our students from going to school. Yet COVID-19 has not stopped school from going to our students.

As the direct result of a statewide commitment and relentless follow-through, Rhode Island is leading the way in making distance learning happen. I am so proud of my new home state for doing all we can to keep the promise we have solemnly made to educate all of our students, all of the time. We have moved forward as one education community, despite the unprecedented challenge posed by the ongoing public health crisis.

We have charted a creative course due to the thoughtful, consistent leadership of Governor Gina Raimondo, the full support of the General Assembly and the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, and the dedication and energy of our superintendents, principals, teachers, school staff, families, and my own wonderful team at the Rhode

Island Department of Education (RIDE). I am so thankful to all of you for your contributions and guidance.

But above all, I thank our students for their commitment to learning, no matter the obstacles in their way. Every day, they continue to show up and participate as active learners under a very different set of circumstances than they started out with last fall. They are showing us what is possible.

So here we are, out in front, showing the rest of the nation how to move forward during the most challenging of times.

State law mandates that the Education Commissioner report annually to the General Assembly on progress made over the past year. As I reflect on how far we've come since I became Commissioner at the end of April 2019, I am more optimistic than ever about how far we can go. I only wish I could be delivering this in person to a group of students, families, educators, community members, and more.



The reality is that when I first started — and long before COVID-19, our students, our parents, and our educators already knew that our schools were in a crisis.

Based on the first administration of the Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS) in 2018, 73 percent of students in grades 3-8 **did not meet expectations** in Math and 66 percent **fell short of expectations** in English Language Arts. If

I am so proud of my new home state for doing all we can to keep the promise we have solemnly made to educate all of our students, all of the time. We have moved forward as one education community, despite the unprecedented challenge posed by the ongoing public health crisis.

Rhode Island’s statewide results had been viewed as a single district in Massachusetts, Rhode Island would have been in the bottom 10 percent of Massachusetts districts.

When I first arrived, people would often wish me “good luck!” My response was always the same: “Thank you, but I don’t need luck — I need your partnership to deliver for our students, not luck. Please work with me to make it happen.”

Before the COVID-19 crisis hit, RIDE put forth a collective vision that embraces high expectations for everyone. We convened leaders from schools of all types to review performance data and plot a course forward. We put a special, intense focus on the students in our capital city of Providence. Our

statewide goals were to recruit and grow **world-class talent** in our schools, promote **excellence in learning** across Rhode Island, and build and nurture fully **engaged communities**.

Our vision and our high expectations positioned us to be the national leader we are right now in distance learning. We cannot and will not lose focus on those strategies and on the work still ahead of us. Yes, we have much work to do, but the foundation is already there to build on the achievements reported here. And it has been strengthened by our experience making school happen under extraordinary circumstances.

The stakes are high. Rhode Island’s young people must complete high school prepared to contribute to making the world a better place for all of us and ensure our state is able to compete on a national and global level. It’s an honor to work together with you to position them for success.

Thank you once again for your continued support for all of our students.



Angélica Infante-Green

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education





Rhode Island Passes its Toughest Test: Reimagining Education Through COVID-19

One thousand-piece jigsaw puzzles don't magically fall into place on their own.

But there was something remarkable about what came together on the fourth Monday in March 2020. Education Commissioner Angélica Infante-Green calls it her proudest day in education – the day the Rhode Island education community confronted an unknown landscape with challenges never before imagined.

Commissioner Infante-Green had been on the job for just 11 months when Rhode Island Governor Raimondo announced on Friday, March 13, 2020 that due to the spread of the novel coronavirus all public schools would move up their April vacation and close the following week, giving school officials the time and focus they needed to prepare for distance learning for all their students. The same day, a Cranston High School West student tested positive for COVID-19, and all students, faculty, and staff there were advised to quarantine themselves at home for the next two weeks.

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, Rhode Island became the first state in New England – and one of the first in the nation – to make a statewide commitment to distance learning, creating a model for student-focused goals and outcomes that drew national attention.

Governor Gina Raimondo, Commissioner Infante-Green and the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) team set the tone for entire effort when they sent a clear message to Rhode Island's 64 public local education agencies (LEAs):

Students need and deserve to continue their education, in turn supporting a sense of continuity in their lives and in the lives of their families.

In the span of a week, RIDE provided a planning template and guidance to LEAs to help them develop distance learning plans, and 100 percent of LEAs returned those plans to RIDE for review and feedback. This swift action helped teachers, principals, superintendents, and state officials quickly assemble a picture of what an education system that honors its promises under extreme circumstances could and should look like.

In Rhode Island, the entire education community realized that, on their own, they didn't have the answers they needed, but together they could build

"It almost felt like in this moment of crisis, all the pieces came together,"
Commissioner Infante-Green says.
"But the reality is that we have been laying the foundation for this since I arrived in Rhode Island."



a new education framework that delivered for students and families.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Exceeding expectations. Putting students first in every conversation. Building communities. Shifting from compliance to support. These strategies not only apply to developing a model for distance learning, they have guided the department's work, with the full support of Governor Raimondo and the Council for Elementary and Secondary Education, since the Commissioner's first day at RIDE on April 29, 2019.

The first Latina and person of color to lead education in Rhode Island, Commissioner Infante-Green came to Rhode Island from the New York State Education Department, where she was a deputy commissioner with a solid reputation for closing achievement gaps, supporting multilingual learners, and engaging students and parents in improving schools.

Hitting the ground running, her calendar read like a marathon training schedule, with lengthy visits to 18 schools around the state in her first few weeks on the job. She consistently met with students, families, educators, and education advocates. She worked closely with state leaders and the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education.

Inside RIDE's offices, she shifted the focus of staff meetings away from compliance to problem solving to support students, educators, and leaders. She insisted on hearing and discussing issues based on data. She reprioritized resources and reorganized her senior executive team, appointing experienced leaders in the field and hiring new staff focused on community engagement and



servicing multilingual learners. Staff members were encouraged to speak up and contribute to decision-making. But once decisions were made, staff presented a united front.

"When I came here, we weren't all speaking the same language," Commissioner Infante-Green says. "Now, we are one organization."

The RIDE team's achievements over the past year were the result of a three-pronged strategy focused on expanding **world-class talent** in schools throughout the state, creating a strong foundation for **excellence in learning** in all schools, and building fully **engaged communities**.

Once she took charge of RIDE in April 2019, Commissioner Infante-Green immediately launched major efforts to improve K-12 education across Rhode Island.

She brought together leaders from all different types of schools — district, charter, and state-run — to collectively review performance data and tackle challenges together. RIDE focused deeply on creating a list of approved high-quality curriculum,

on-track to be released in summer 2020, a year ahead of the January 2021 legislative deadline.

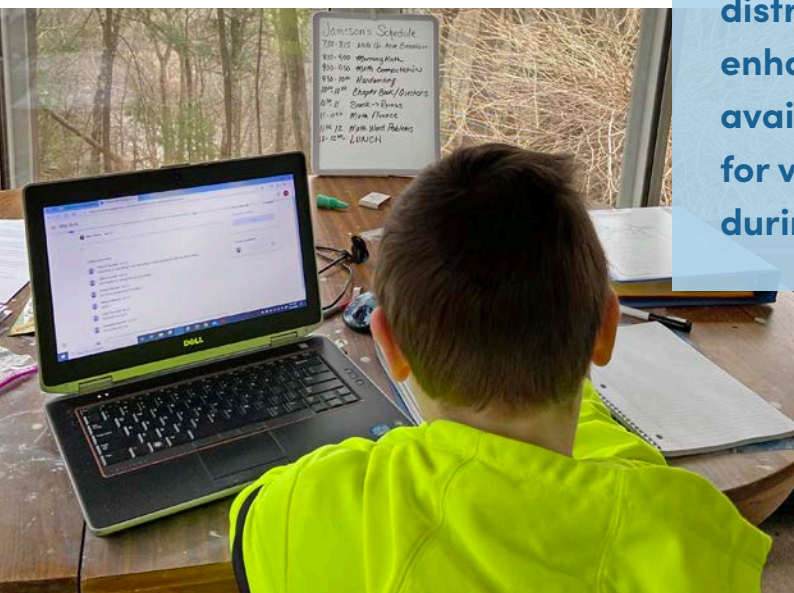
Her team developed and significantly expanded tools to help school leaders better understand performance data and support students. For example, to help combat student chronic absenteeism, RIDE expanded a student attendance nudge tool from an initial pilot in one district to more than 120 schools across 23 districts. And RIDE fielded an entirely new teacher attendance tool as well.

So, when the pandemic hit, RIDE was ready to get to work.

A CRISIS DEMANDS ACTION

Once the Governor announced students wouldn't be physically returning to school, RIDE moved swiftly to help districts ramp up for distance learning. RIDE assigned a senior staff member to work with every school district, charter, and

Coordination with school leaders led to distribution systems for daily school lunches, enhanced technology in homes, increased availability of school materials, and channels for vital information to keep families connected during the crisis.



In Rhode Island's capital city, the Commissioner led the historic state intervention in the Providence Public School District after a comprehensive review revealed widespread systematic dysfunction that prevented students from learning and thriving.

Consistent in all of RIDE's work and the Commissioner's conversations, she demanded excellence and raised the expectations of those around her. She took responsibility. She restored the public's trust in RIDE by increasing transparency and delivering on promises to put students first.

state-run school to develop its individual distance learning plan, providing feedback and support to ensure that students would receive the best education possible.

Each district, charter, and state-run school had to take into account how students could access computers and the internet and maintain daily communication between teachers and students. School leaders worked under a tight deadline with hands-on support from their RIDE point of contact to expedite decision making and provide teachers with vetted professional development resources and help finding online curriculum and learning activities.

Coordination with school leaders led to distribution systems for daily school lunches, enhanced technology in homes, increased availability of

school materials, and channels for vital information to keep families connected during the crisis. Significantly, teachers' unions committed to the effort right from the start.

This statewide coordination contrasted with the approach taken in Massachusetts. Over the border, individual school officials were left to decide for themselves the scope of their online curriculum and activities.

Rhode Island's approach, which included constant communication with families and tireless work to connect more students to the Internet, paid off. After the first week of distance learning, 98 percent of LEAs reported that supporting and communicating with their classroom teachers were going well, and 75 percent reported success in providing differentiated supports to students across grade levels.

Even before Governor Raimondo announced the initial one-week school closure to reduce the spread of COVID-19, RIDE had already recognized concerns that limited technology and internet

opportunities for families to use cellular hotspots at little to no additional cost.

In partnership with the Rhode Island Foundation, RIDE worked to raise more than \$450,000 to provide computer and Wi-Fi devices to expand home learning opportunities for students.

RIDE recognized that multilingual learners and differently abled students require special attention in distance learning plans. Districts and RIDE staff worked to develop organic resources for Spanish-speaking families that contained COVID-19-related resources for families and developed new practices and innovative solutions to support these students. That effort grew to include several other languages.



The state forged partnerships with internet providers and major cell phone carriers to provide internet hotspots across the state and expanded opportunities for families to use cellular hotspots at little to no additional cost.

access could inhibit the ability of some students and families to fully engage with distance learning. The state forged partnerships with internet providers and major cell phone carriers to provide internet hotspots across the state and expanded

The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education resumed regular meetings via the Zoom platform on April 7. During that month, students in the state recorded more than 1 million

minutes of reading in response to an April Reading Challenge announced by Governor Raimondo.

After the first week of distance learning in Rhode Island, the state's school districts reported average

daily statewide participation rates had reached 95 percent, with many exceeding their normal averages – an outstanding performance by any measure. But the Commissioner isn't declaring victory: "I won't be satisfied until we get to 100 percent."

RIDE is *still* moving forward with major initiatives to help improve outcomes for students long-term. RIDE is working with local and national experts to develop a statewide blueprint to better serve multilingual learners.

"WE ARE ACTUALLY LEADING"

A bold and innovative experiment proved that Rhode Island's education system has tremendous flexibility to see distance learning continue for the remainder of the academic year. With the whole state operating off one common calendar, there are opportunities for teacher planning and professional development for all teachers throughout the rest of the school year. And RIDE is working hard on preparations for summer learning and the next academic year – with students and families contributing to those plans.

"What this has said to me, this pandemic, is that we're actually capable of doing much more," Commissioner Infante-Green says. "We've always lived under the shadow of our neighbors. For the first time, with distance learning, we are actually leading. We are not in their shadow anymore."

Moreover, the pandemic didn't stop the work already underway at RIDE. Despite all of the resources RIDE has reprioritized to help support LEAs with distance learning, RIDE is *still* moving forward with major initiatives to help improve outcomes for students long-term. RIDE is working with local and national experts to develop a statewide blueprint to better serve multilingual



learners. School construction is still moving forward. District accountability results will be released for the first time in fall 2020. RIDE will finalize and release a Providence Turnaround Action Plan in spring 2020 to guide the district's long-term improvement.

RIDE continues to seek feedback and remains responsive to students, parents, and educators across the state. The Commissioner participated with the Governor at a groundbreaking Town Hall for the Hispanic Community concerning the COVID-19 pandemic. RIDE virtually hosted a student-led Youth Student Summit in April 2020, with participation from students across the entire state. SurveyWorks 2020 will evaluate school

climate and culture to inform future goal-setting. As Rhode Island students feel their concerns are recognized by their schools and communities, they will be empowered to remain a part of the improvement process.

Commissioner Infante-Green will be the first to acknowledge that distance learning plans in Rhode

Island aren't perfect. There are still questions that still need to be answered about equity and what the next school year will look like. But the Commissioner, RIDE, districts, schools, and families are committed to finding those answers.

They will find those answers — and complete that puzzle — working together.

Turnaround Time *(Excellence in Learning)*

Few students felt safe in school. Teachers felt demoralized, while principals felt powerless.

Commissioner Infante-Green showed no reluctance to offer harsh criticism of the troubles inside the Providence Public School District (PPSD), as first documented by a May 2019 Johns Hopkins University Institute for Education Policy report. After a team of reviewers chronicled bureaucracy, low expectations, and a lack of safety inside the capital city's 41 failing schools, she declared publicly that "things are actually worse than the report indicates."

The problems were having a devastating impact on student academic performance.

The Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS) scores for the 2018–2019 school year showed that over four out of every five Providence students in grades 3–8 failed to meet expectations in either math (88 percent) or English Language Arts (83 percent). Some schools had testing results with proficiency levels in single digits. Math results for multilingual learners and

differently abled students were so low that they could not be publicly reported. These results were a sober restatement of the previous low results Providence had seen on different iterations of state assessments that had come beforehand.

The Johns Hopkins report on the Providence schools was an urgent call for action and the Commissioner recognized the state's primary response was to get to work.

However, in sharp contrast to efforts beforehand, Commissioner Infante-Green recognized that a state-led response required collective buy-in and effort from those closest to students. So, she worked

The Johns Hopkins report on the Providence schools was an urgent call for action and the Commissioner recognized the state's primary response was to get to work.

quickly to bring together parents, educators, and community leaders for nine community forums and 13 focus groups and workshops to



reallocated funds to significantly increase the number of teachers trained to serve multilingual learners, the human resources office was revamped, and an effort is underway

The turnaround timeline for overcoming decades of neglect and poor performance is projected to last years. Yet, already attitudes are changing, and hope is growing.

identify needs and gaps. Monthly public meetings solicited feedback and galvanized residents who believed there was a better future for Providence schoolchildren.

Driven by the community's desire for meaningful change, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education unanimously granted the Commissioner the authority she sought to formally intervene in Providence's schools — and made it clear that expectations for success were high. True to this being a collective effort, Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza, the City Council, and School Committee all signaled their support for the state to take the necessary steps to intervene in the capital city's schools.

With new authority, Commissioner Infante-Green launched the process of transforming a broken system into one that puts students first. There was no time to waste. Even before the official state intervention started on November 1, 2019, RIDE and PPSD had already started a full financial and human capital analysis to figure out how to start realigning the district's resources to best serve the needs of students. As a result, the district

for a national teacher recruitment campaign that will address chronic classroom shortages.

One consistent theme that emerged from the Johns Hopkins report was the inconsistent use of curriculum across the district. Different schools had different curriculum for the same grades, and educators did not feel supported with professional learning. To immediately address this challenge, RIDE and PPSD engaged more than 100 teachers for discussions centered on high-quality curriculum. RIDE and PPSD leveraged this engagement to select elementary curriculum in English Language Arts (ELA) and middle school curriculum in ELA and math that will start to be implemented across the district in the 2020-2021 school year.

A critical step in the state's intervention was selecting the right turnaround team to drive the transformation efforts from within the district. To lead that team, Commissioner Infante-Green recruited



Turnaround Superintendent Harrison Peters, a leader with deep experience in urban school system turnaround efforts.

Commissioner Infante-Green and Superintendent Peters vow not to compromise when it comes to student outcomes and working with parents and families as partners. As part of the turnaround team, the new senior-level PPSD positions of chief equity officer and chief of family and community engagement were created. By putting these

priorities front and center within its leadership structure, PPSD is positioned to sustain efforts already underway to bring the community into the process of improving Providence's schools and focus on closing opportunity gaps head on.

The turnaround timeline for overcoming decades of neglect and poor performance is projected to last years. Yet, already attitudes are changing, and hope is growing.

Come Together, Right Now *(Engaged Communities)*

Change does not happen in a vacuum. True change requires real roll-up-your-sleeves-and-lock-your-arms partnership that spans across and outside of state government. True change requires the commitment of many actors working together to chart and stay the course. A commitment to working with public and private partners is a critical component for RIDE's efforts to advance student outcomes.

One key partner is Rhode Island's General Assembly. Upon the release of the initial, disappointing RICAS results, the General Assembly sprang into action. During the 2019 legislative session, the legislative body adopted a set of meaningful reforms, including a focus on implementing high-quality curriculum, ensuring statewide accountability, enabling excellent educators to become school leaders, and supporting students with dyslexia.

RIDE remains committed to ensuring these policies are translated into action on the ground. Over the past year, the department has continuously supported districts as they selected and implemented high-quality curriculum. These efforts have included professional development focused on guiding districts to understand which curriculum is standards-aligned or not. Beating legislative deadlines by almost half





a year, RIDE is poised to release a list of approved curricula in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics by summer 2020.

Despite not administering new statewide assessments in spring 2020 because of COVID-19, RIDE is still moving forward with district accountability, helping LEAs better understand their current system-wide performance and ensure their strategic plans and use of resources catalyze improvements.

RIDE earned a competitive \$20 million federal grant to help improve statewide literacy outcomes and is launching professional learning in the science of reading. RIDE is also in the process of proposing regulatory changes to enable principal certification faster than even the drafters of the legislation expected, once again beating expectations.

Another key partner has been the Rhode Island Foundation. After the release of the initial RICAS results, the Foundation convened a long-term education planning initiative, which included educators, policy makers, community members,

and Rhode Island leaders to craft a shared vision for education in Rhode Island. In early 2020, the group (which includes Commissioner Infante-Green) released a 10-year plan for improving education in Rhode Island. *Chart a Course, Stay the Course: Rhode Island's Path to a World Class Public Education System* has subsequently been endorsed by the Governor, the General Assembly, and the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education.

To build on this effort's initial momentum, the Foundation promised \$1 million of philanthropic funding to invest in strategies that will turn this vision into reality. RIDE has partnered with the Foundation to establish the new Fund for Rhode Island Public Education to raise and strategically leverage charitable giving to the benefit of students statewide. Case in point: when the COVID-19 crisis hit, RIDE and the Foundation were able to leverage the fund to raise more than \$450,000 through a Technology Challenge. Thanks to the generosity of many, RIDE has allocated approximately 400 hotspots and 1,200 computers to close technology gaps for disadvantaged students and families across the state.

Public and private partnership will remain central to RIDE's efforts going forward. Already, RIDE has begun an agency re-organization to think through how it best aligns its resources to achieve transformative change, and RIDE plans to develop a new long-term agency strategic plan, that will replace the current expiring one, later in 2020.

As RIDE continues along this path, it knows that a steadfast collective commitment to moving this work forward, together, will ensure that Rhode Island students have the foundation they need to succeed in the years to come.

Moving to the Front of the Class *(World-Class Talent)*

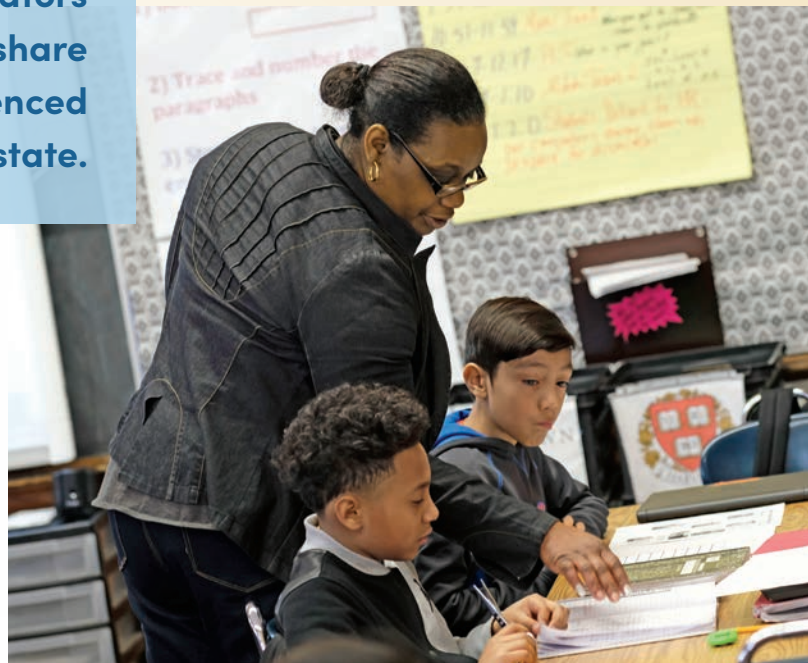
When the Johns Hopkins report on the state of Providence Public Schools first came out, it identified significant gaps in student support. These included far too few educators certified to teach multilingual learners and differently abled students, as well as limited content expertise in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The entire state demanded swift change, rightly so.

reciprocity with neighboring states and expanding teacher pipeline pathways. Passing policy regulations is not enough — RIDE is developing a nationwide teacher recruitment advertising campaign to actually attract talent to the state. RIDE has also partnered with the Commerce Department to propose tuition reimbursements for new teachers in STEM areas, and RIDE is also working with Rhode Island Housing to promote down payment assistance loans to Rhode Island teachers for first-time homebuyers in the state.

RIDE has organized several forums throughout the 2019–2020 school year for these educators of color statewide to come together and share insights and challenges they have experienced while working in the state.

But the truth is that these teacher shortages exist in these same areas across the state — not just in Providence. As an example, during a school visit, one suburban district informed the Commissioner that they could not offer physics to its high school students because it does not have a qualified teacher available.

To begin addressing these statewide gaps, RIDE has taken decisive action to recruit teachers, especially in these shortage areas. With recent approval from the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, RIDE revised the educator certification regulations to help attract and keep top educators in Rhode Island. Some of these changes included expanding full certification



As RIDE tackles the issue of teacher shortages statewide, it also recognizes that it must confront one of its biggest systematic shortages — low numbers of educators of color across Rhode Island. Research shows that students benefit from seeing teachers who represent their own communities.

Sadly, that is often not the case. Approximately 43 percent of Rhode Island’s public school students are students of color, while just 11 percent of their teachers are. The gap is most visible for Hispanic/Latino students and teachers: 26 percent of the state’s students are Hispanic/Latino, while just 3 percent of teachers are.



The Commissioner is committed to the principle that educators of color deserve to be supported in confronting the challenges they face.

Under Commissioner Infante-Green’s leadership, RIDE has organized several forums throughout the 2019–2020 school year for these educators of color to come together and share insights and challenges they have experienced while working in the state. Many have highlighted a lack of compassion and understanding of the trauma educators of colors face as a result of systematic oppression, and a lack of mentors and allies within their own schools.

Through these forums, the Commissioner has sought to understand the root cause of why these educators do not stay in the state and what RIDE can do to retain these teachers. The Commissioner is committed to the principle that educators of color deserve to be supported in confronting the challenges they face.

Recruiting world-class educators, and recruiting world-class educators of color are not separate goals, and cannot be pursued in silos. RIDE is developing multiple strategies that will nurture pathways into the educator profession that will especially support teachers of color once they are in front of Rhode Island classrooms. RIDE has joined forces with the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals, Central Falls School District, and Achievement First Charter School to participate in the New England Secondary Schools Consortium’s Task Force on Diversifying the Educator Workforce. RIDE is also part of and supporter of a special legislative taskforce that similarly focuses on increasing the number of Rhode Island educators of color.

While significant teacher gaps remain, RIDE is committed to ensuring that world-class talent fills those gaps and turns a history of failure into a future of promise.

Shifting RIDE into Gear *(Excellence in Learning)*

“Hello. We’re from RIDE, and we’re here to help.”

Those words have often been a mixed blessing for superintendents to hear.

Not because of a lack of best intentions or arduous efforts by RIDE’s staff, but because RIDE was historically built to operate as a top-down compliance organization, not a mission-support engine. It was a bureaucracy first and foremost.

This truth was echoed in every conversation the Commissioner had when she first started – from front-line teachers to General Assembly members. She knew things had to change; in fact she was hired to make that change happen.

Change starts with leadership. RIDE initiated an agency-wide re-organization that established a new Division of System Transformation and an Office of School System Planning and Improvement, and brought on experienced leadership from the field to spearhead RIDE’s new supportive efforts.

However, fundamentally altering an agency’s DNA does not simply happen overnight. When she brought her leadership team together for its first retreat, the Commissioner passed out excerpts from *Atomic Habits*, a book focused on how a series of incremental 1 percent changes compound over time and lead to remarkable results. Smart organizations leverage atomic thinking to improve themselves. The message was clear: *every moment in which RIDE could focus more on support, every*

single interaction, adds another piece to the full puzzle.

When RIDE released the SAT results in fall 2019, the Commissioner asked RIDE what they *did* with the results. “We’ve always just released them,” was the initial response. Not anymore. Based off that conversation, RIDE created the PrepareRI Readiness Action Plan, a framework to help school systems analyze their high school performance data and connect those results with strategies to improve student proficiency.

When RIDE released the 2019 school star-ratings, a similar question drew a similar response. New plan: RIDE would now start to meet with every single district and review the results with them, so they could better understand their nuanced accountability data to better plan and develop strategies that aligned to their data.

Through these “1 percent” changes, RIDE began to lean into supporting school systems by using one of RIDE’s most under-utilized assets: data. Rather than





including lower achievement, disengagement from school, course failure, and increased risk of dropping out. Teacher chronic absenteeism also has significant impact on student learning, and Rhode Island has the third-highest teacher chronic absenteeism rate in the nation, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

Through these “1 percent” changes, RIDE began to lean in to supporting school systems by using one of RIDE’s most under-utilized assets: data. Rather than simply collecting data for data’s sake, RIDE now focuses on converting that data into analytical tools for school systems to use, free of charge.

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Based on direct feedback from districts when reviewing their accountability data with them, RIDE will soon release a data-visualization tool that enables every school to see their students’ performance at an individual level based on proficiency and student-growth.

In addition, RIDE heard from the field the need for tools to help ensure that *all* students are on track to be college and career ready. To address that challenge, RIDE developed a new early warning system that combines multiple data-points, such as school performance and suspension rates, to help high schools identify students at risk of dropping out.

One of the biggest challenges facing Rhode Island classrooms is chronic absenteeism. Research shows that chronic absenteeism is associated with a number of negative consequences for students,

To address these challenges, RIDE significantly expanded a tool that tracks student absences and uses behavioral science to send “nudge” messages to students and families if a student is at risk of being chronically absent. Now, more than 120 schools across 23 LEAs use the student attendance nudge tool. To address teacher chronic absenteeism, RIDE forged a partnership with Harvard University’s Student Social Support R&D Lab to develop a new dashboard to help superintendents better understand their chronic teacher absenteeism data, and with more research-backed solutions in development for next year.

These 1 percent changes continue. RIDE recently won a \$3.24 million federal grant that will be used to create data-driven strategic planning tools for districts by leveraging the state’s longitudinal data-system.

More and more, day by day, the momentum builds – and superintendents don't wait for RIDE to call.

They reach out to ask for help – and they expect the department to deliver.

Listening Says So Much *(Engaged Communities)*

One of the primary findings of the Johns Hopkins review of Providence Public School System (PPSD) was that the community felt alienated from their school system. In comment after comment during the public forums held in the summer of 2019, family members and others repeated the same message: We feel powerless to affect the education of our own kids. In response, the Commissioner and RIDE made a core

commitment to engage the community in every step of PPSD's transformation.

As part of that work in Providence, RIDE formed three Community Design Teams, to guide the revitalization of the PPSD and inform its turnaround action plan. These Community Design Teams consisted of parents, students, educators, and members of groups such as Parents Leading for

Educational Equity, the Latino Policy Institute, and ARISE. Each team worked with diligence and focus to develop a set of recommendations to address issues related to world-class talent, excellence in learning, and community engagement in PPSD.

As part of that work in Providence, RIDE formed three Community Design Teams, to guide the revitalization of the Providence Public School District (PPSD) and inform its turnaround action plan. These Community Design Teams consisted of parents, students, educators, and members of groups such as Parents Leading for Educational Equity, the Latino Policy Institute, and ARISE.



222 applications for 45 volunteer spots. The sheer number of highly qualified people who wanted to participate in the community design process was a clear sign of optimism for the future of the capital city's public schools, and a clear sign that the families of Providence wanted a voice in the process.

The overwhelming interest in becoming a design team member could not have happened without an intensive effort to build relationships with various stakeholders. Commissioner Infante-Green made community engagement a cornerstone of RIDE's plan to intervene in PPSD after the June 2019 release of the scathing report by the Johns Hopkins University Institute for Education Policy.

She has subsequently elevated the role of Chief of Family and Community Engagement and created a community engagement team within the RIDE staff to reinforce this priority in Providence and statewide. The work of this team has been to apply the lens of Rhode Island families to the work of the agency, and responsively interact and build relationships with families, as well as directly support the work of the Providence Community Design Teams.

Building relationships is a central pillar of her overall strategy for shaping an educational system

that offers inclusive and productive learning and teaching. Community engagement takes time and a commitment to maintaining a consistent presence in and around the neighborhoods served by city schools.

That's why the Commissioner held 18 in-school coffee hours to listen to teachers and students in Providence schools between late 2019 through February 2020. Before COVID-19 hit, she had already visited every Providence school. These coffee hours feature a frank give-and-take between the Commissioner and those with the deepest investment in their school communities. PPSD's Chief of Family and Community Engagement, Nick Figueroa, has introduced a host of other initiatives to build and strengthen connections between the community and district leadership.

Even after COVID-19 put a stop to in-person gatherings, the Commissioner held four virtual meetings with Providence elementary school communities and held a virtual town hall with PPSD Superintendent Harrison Peters. She also accepted an invitation from high school students to appear at an April 25, 2020, virtual youth summit after the pandemic canceled the in-person event originally scheduled a month earlier.



The three-hour, virtual event drew 60 high school students from across the state and included a discussion with the Commissioner on the progress of distance learning and what summer learning could look like. More importantly, it gave students a chance to tell the Commissioner what they hoped for and expected in the future. She also found time for virtual meetings with other school communities, including Newport and Middletown.

The Commissioner joined Governor Raimondo for an April 28, 2020, live forum addressing the concerns of Latino Rhode Islanders, who have disproportionately suffered during the pandemic (while nearly half of COVID-19-positive Rhode Islanders are Latino, they constituted just 15 percent of the state’s population). The forum, which maintained a live audience of more than 600 throughout, was broadcast on the RIDE Facebook page in partnership with Telemundo. Speaking in Spanish, Commissioner Infante-Green told parents about online resources available in multiple languages to help their children.



Under Commissioner Infante-Green’s leadership, RIDE has organized ongoing, collaborative roundtable discussions. Engaging with superintendents, lawmakers, business leaders, nonprofits, students, and families, the Commissioner has listened to and implemented recommendations from these important stakeholders.

In many ways, engaging communities is the new heart of RIDE’s work – and that effort has only just begun.

Culture Comes First *(Excellence in Learning)*

Every Rhode Island student deserves to learn in a climate of safety, security, and belonging. Academic success will follow when a school environment builds respectful relationships, enhances productive learning and teaching, and promotes positive engagement and partnerships with families.

To support students physically, mentally, and emotionally, RIDE is creating tools and acquiring

resources that assess and transform school culture, with a focus on social emotional learning.

One such resource is the School Climate Transformation Project. During the 2019-20 school year, RIDE implemented the first year of this initiative, funded by a competitive \$2.5 million federal grant won during the 2018-19 school year.

Through this initiative, RIDE is supporting schools and districts in expanding and connecting



coordination in educating and caring for the whole child.

Participating districts and schools were selected by a competitive application, and include Coventry, East Greenwich, East Providence, Exeter-West Greenwich, Johnston, Newport, Warwick, Westerly, and Paul Cuffee Charter School in Providence.

programs that address the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students. During the first year, school-based teams (with support from district leadership and a cross-agency RIDE team) completed a deep data analysis to identify academic equity gaps, complete a root-cause analysis, and develop an improvement plan. By taking a holistic approach to behavioral, social, and emotional supports, schools can more effectively address equity and achievement gaps, ensuring

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While in many ways this work has just begun, every day a new commitment to healthy school culture is taking shape across Rhode Island.

Today's Lesson: Self-Care *(World-Class Talent)*

Even in a time of great uncertainty, there is no doubt Rhode Island teachers have taken on heroic roles in supporting student learning since the closure of brick-and-mortar schools. But even before COVID-19 disrupted the school year, RIDE had already recognized the need to support teachers directly as they take on one of the toughest jobs out there.

For example, RIDE worked with Donors Choose — a crowd-sourcing philanthropy engine — in the fall of 2019 to attract funding for every open Rhode Island teacher request. This was a shot in the arm for all educators in the state, who found themselves able to deliver even more for their students.

RIDE also brought a sharp focus to the need for teachers to practice self-care to be at their best

in front of the classroom. To promote self-care, RIDE partnered with Pure Edge Inc., a nonprofit that provides schools with free online resources to provide wellness support for teachers. Before the public health challenge Pure Edge provided free, in-person seminars offering evidence-based mindful movement and breathing exercises. Once COVID-19 hit, Pure Edge pivoted to provide free virtual options.

The first online seminar proved so popular that Pure Edge had to add extra sessions on the first day so everyone who wanted to participate could join. Feedback from teachers taking part in sessions

in January and February revealed that 94 percent of participants believed trauma impacted students and 98 percent believed it impacted teaching staff.

Additionally, 96 percent said they were confident they could take what they learned and apply it to their role as teachers. When Rhode Island partnered again with Pure Edge to help provide self-care training virtually in April 2020, more than 2,100 people participated.

RIDE recognizes that the stress of navigating the transition to virtual classrooms while managing disruption in their own homes may take a toll on teachers and their families. As a result, RIDE is continuing to partner with Pure Edge for future professional development training sessions that address social, emotional, academic development, and coping strategies.

To promote self-care, RIDE partnered with Pure Edge Inc., a nonprofit that provides schools with free online resources to provide wellness support for teachers.





A Report of Actions Taken to Improve Educational Outcomes

Over the course of the last year, RIDE has organized its efforts and acted ambitiously to move from hope to results for the students of Rhode Island. The following is a list of the major highlights and accomplishments of the agency, organized around the three pillars of the Commissioner’s vision – **World-Class Talent, Excellence In Learning,** and **Engaged Communities**. While these highlights do not include all of the ongoing support and operations that RIDE staff provide on a daily basis, taken as whole they demonstrate the agency’s commitment to improving educational outcomes for all students. This report reflects RIDE activities as of May 19, 2020.

Section I: COVID-19 & Distance Learning

One of the first states to physically close schools, Rhode Island has emerged as a national leader in successfully implementing distance learning statewide. Rhode Island’s distance learning success is the result of a collective statewide effort, from supporting our world-class talent, to striving to create excellent learning experiences for students, to engaging communities to ensure that all students and educators have the resources they need to be successful throughout this public health crisis.

RESPONDING TO THE PANDEMIC – WORLD-CLASS TALENT & EXCELLENCE IN LEARNING:

Preparing the State for Distance Learning

1. On March 12, only eleven days after Rhode Island’s first announced positive case of COVID-19 and before any announcement

about school closures, RIDE recognized the significant threat COVID-19 posed to disrupting students’ lives and swiftly acted to require districts to begin developing distance learn-

On March 12, only eleven days after Rhode Island’s first announced positive case of COVID-19 and before any announcement about school closures, RIDE recognized the significant threat COVID-19 posed to disrupting students’ lives and swiftly acted to require districts to begin developing distance learning plans in anticipation of potential school closures.

ing plans in anticipation of potential school closures.

2. On March 13, in partnership with Governor Raimondo, all school systems had their April vacation moved up to the week of March 16. This gave RIDE one week to work with school systems to support, review, and provide feedback on their distance learning plans, with 100% of districts turning in distance learning plans by March 19th. These plans included key elements of distance learning, including technology access, student supports, and other information critical to ensuring quality instruction continued. Through these efforts, RIDE ensured that all Rhode Island districts and school systems had quality distance learning plans in place prior to beginning distance learning the week of March 23, 2020. During this time RIDE also focused on communicating with students and families, developing strategies to ensure that their technology device and access needs were being met.
3. Assigned each LEA an individual RIDE staff member to serve as a point of immediate contact and support in the development and review of a distance learning plan during the week of March 16, 2020. Through these points of contact, RIDE engaged with each LEA to directly provide constructive feedback to improve the quality of their plan, and provided technical support to assist with the implementation of the district learning plans. These points of contact have since developed strong connections with each of their districts, maintaining frequent, direct communication to help rapidly identify and support resolving

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any issues with distance learning that the district might face.

4. Reoriented all RIDE functions and services to support school systems during distance learning. RIDE stood up multiple cross-agency task forces focused on the multitude of key issues pertaining to COVID-19, including, but not limited to: finishing the remainder of the school year on a strong note, planning for robust summer learning, planning for the re-opening of schools, and allocating stimulus funding. Through these efforts, RIDE is also collaborating with other government agencies, such as the Department of Health, and creating virtual communication systems for the ongoing work of RIDE to continue.
5. Early in the COVID-19 crisis, imbedded a RIDE liaison within the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH). As the initial COVID-19 positive cases stemmed from a school based setting, RIDE's liaison worked closely with RIDOH

to support early contact tracing, as well as supported schools with how to navigate the potential impact of a COVID-19 case for their school community. This liaison role continues to help align policy efforts across these two agencies.

6. Created a statewide shared school calendar across all school systems for the rest of the 2019–2020 school year – 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.



7. Arranged for the pending distribution of federal stimulus funds to LEAs to support their efforts to provide an excellent education to students during the pandemic crisis, as well as to support schools with their re-opening for the 2020–21 school year.
8. Applied for and received federal waiver for assessment and accountability for the 2019–

2020 school year. All state assessments not administered prior to March 13, 2020, will not be administered for the 2019–2020 school year. However, while RIDE will not formally administer the majority of its state tests until spring 2020, RIDE is evaluating options on how supporting districts with quality interim assessments may be used, starting in summer 2019, to evaluate COVID-19’s impact on student learning, and guide future instructional strategies during the 2020–21 school year.

9. Created an assessment and accountability frequently asked questions document to clarify outstanding questions LEAs might have pertaining to the federal waiver received. This document addresses questions such as which tests are included in the waiver, tracking student growth and progress, the status of star accountability ratings, and the school improvement system.
10. Applied for and received additional waivers for LEAs to have more flexibility over their federal funds, enabling them to better spend these funds to support their distance learning plans.
11. Created a Distance Learning Guidance document for LEAs to address best practices for distance learning and to provide clarity around frequently asked questions. The guidance document covered key topics for LEAs to consider, such as registration and enrollment, the length of school day, how much time students should be spending in front of a screen, and grading and graduation policies. RIDE differentiated guidance on these topics for elementary and secondary education levels.

Additionally, RIDE created lists of frequently asked questions related to access and accountability and other topics, and a school closure information document for parents.

12. Established revamped data systems and procedures to monitor student attendance on a daily basis throughout the COVID-19 crisis, with a statewide daily average attendance rate of greater than 90%.
13. Supported all educator preparation programs across the state to ensure that they had distance learning plans in place to continue to train and develop prospective educators.

Overseeing Implementation and the Start of Distance Learning Across State

14. Partnered with Discovery Education, a nationally recognized virtual learning organization, to allow Rhode Island educators to use Discovery Education's resources and curriculum free of charge for the remainder of the school year. Over 750 Rhode Island educators participated in virtual professional development with Discovery Education in April 2020, with ongoing professional development planned for the rest of the school year.
15. Developed lists of online content and vetted professional development resources for teachers, and a separate list of educational resources for parents to enhance their students' distance learning. This content has been made available in multiple languages, including Spanish.
16. Provided continual feedback on executive orders from establishing RIDE as a fully

functional, remote operation to maintaining contact and offering support to LEAs during the pandemic.

17. Set up electronic design approval and invoicing process in consultation with RIDE's School Building Authority to continue remote supports and systems for school construction projects during COVID-19 pandemic. Because of these efforts, despite schools physically being closed, school construction is still moving forward during the remainder of school year 2019-20.
18. Immediately responded to the COVID-19 outbreak by identifying ways to implement remote supports and systems to continue advancing school construction projects. RIDE's School Building Authority established virtual schematic design approvals where designs could be sent electronically and approved remotely and also processed pay-as-you-go invoices.
19. Successfully transitioned adult basic education programs to distance learning in March in response to COVID-19 closures. All 20 adult basic education programs continue to provide services remotely, making use of online resources, smartphone apps, phone calls, and paper homework packets to keep learners engaged despite uneven access to technology. In addition to delivering educational activities, adult basic education programs also ensured adult learners are connected to resources to address basic needs insecurity, and supported parent-learners as they help their own children navigate distance learning.

RESPONDING TO THE PANDEMIC - ENGAGED COMMUNITIES

Ensuring Community Connections and Connectivity

20. Continued ongoing in-person virtual efforts to consistently engage the community and provide important updates, including through a Town Hall for the Hispanic Community with Governor Raimondo and a Providence-specific Town Hall with PPSD Turnaround Superintendent Peters.
21. Scaled technology and internet access to students and families across the state. These efforts included raising over \$400,000 in April 2020, including donations from CVS Health, Cox, Brown University, and private individuals, for mobile computers and hotspots through a fundraising challenge issued in partnership with the Rhode Island Foundation. Mobile and internet providers also created local hotspots and affordable internet access for families.
22. Joined the Highlander Institute and its network of Fuse RI Fellows in launching the RI Distance Learning Helpline, which offers tailored, one-to-one coaching for parents, families, and teachers to assist them with distance learning.
23. Provided access to virtual wellness and self-care trainings and sessions from Pure Edge Inc. to RIDE staff, educators, students, and families. Over 2,000 individuals participated during April 2020 alone.
24. Launched the 2020 April Reading Challenge, in collaboration with the Governor's office, challenging all RI students to read at least one hour per day. More than one million total reading minutes were logged by nearly 22,000 students across the state as a result of this challenge.
25. Partnered with WJAR to develop plan to award virtual Golden Apples recognizing amazing educators during distance learning.
26. Conducted virtual meetings of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education to keep leaders and the public informed about distance learning while also moving forward key council actions, such as the review of proposed educator certification regulation changes.
27. Communicated with educators, districts and families through weekly field memos, social media, and RIDE's website to provide important updates about distance learning, as well as how the rest of the RIDE work across the agency continued to move forward. For example, RIDE highlighted the work of excellent educators providing distance learning through daily social media posts.

Conducted virtual meetings of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education to keep leaders and the public informed about distance learning while also moving forward key council actions, such as the review of proposed educator certification regulation changes.

28. Engaged weekly with education leaders from across the nation to highlight and share best practices and policies for distance learning.

Keeping the Work Moving Forward

29. Worked with every school district in the state along with some charter schools, state schools, nonprofits, and private businesses through the RIDE Child Nutrition Program to expedite the setup of meal sites for children that meet the USDA nutrition requirements. Through these efforts, RISE was able to ensure that despite the COVID-19 crisis, students still had access to meals they otherwise would've received in school.
30. Became the second state to receive federal approval for families to use Pandemic-EBT cards to help with school nutrition purchases. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households with one or more children who have temporarily lost access to free or reduced-priced meals at school due

to COVID-19 school closures will have the additional benefits added to their existing EBT cards. Non-SNAP households who qualify under the Pandemic-EBT benefits will receive a new P-EBT card in the mail with the benefits automatically added, a personal identification number, and setup instructions.

31. Rapidly implemented an effective work from home strategy ahead of other state agencies to ensure that RIDE staff were able to continue to efficiently support students, educators, and schools while also keeping RIDE staff safe.
32. RIDE's Human Resources office provided and continues to provide quick and meaningful feedback on executive orders that impact the RIDE workplace to ensure the agency can continue to support schools and districts during the pandemic. This guidance extended not only to RIDE as a state agency, but also to Rhode Island's state schools, such as the Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

Section II: World-Class Talent

Over the course of the past year, RIDE has taken critical steps to diversify and deepen the teaching pool, expand professional development opportunities, and support educators in Providence and across the state.

ATTRACT, RECRUIT, AND RETAIN A HIGHLY-SKILLED WORKFORCE

Developing Incentives and Campaigns to Recruit Excellent Teachers

33. Began developing a soon-to-be released teacher recruitment advertising campaign to attract world-class professionals from across the nation to come and teach in Providence, with plans to expand the scope of the advertising campaign statewide.
34. Collaborated with the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation to propose tuition reimbursements and loan forgiveness for new teachers in Science, Technology, Engineering,

and Mathematics (STEM) areas through their new eligibility to participate in the Wavemaker initiative.

35. RIDE is working with Rhode Island Housing to market their Spring7500 program to Rhode Island teachers. This program provides a \$7,500 down payment assistance loan to eligible first-time homebuyers in Rhode Island, and is an appealing incentive to keep talented professionals in the state.
36. In the process of overseeing regulation changes making it less burdensome and more attractive for teachers in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and multiple other states, to teach in Rhode Island if they have full certification from those states or the ability to complete a state-approved program. These certification changes will align with the larger goal of broadening certification pathways which will allow for greater flexibility in becoming RI certified, especially for shortage areas. The changes also are informed directly from feedback from educators and school system leaders, as well as informed by research from surrounding states in expanding certificate areas.

Establishing Excellent Leadership within Providence Public Schools

37. Held a press conference on Jan. 27, 2020, where Commissioner Infante-Green announced Providence's turnaround team, led by Turnaround Superintendent Harrison Peters. Superintendent Peters brought more than two decades of experience as an educator having served as a classroom

teacher and a school principal before taking on senior leadership roles in three of the ten largest school districts in the country. Most recently, Superintendent Peters had served as the Deputy Superintendent and Chief of Schools for Hillsborough County, a public school district in the greater Tampa area that served more than 206,000 students.

38. As part of the turnaround team, Commissioner Infante-Green also announced the creation of two new positions at the senior leadership levels for Providence: a Chief Equity Officer and a Chief of Family and Community Engagement. These two new positions will ensure that both of their respective areas are at the forefront of future efforts to improve Providence's schools.
39. In addition, Interim Superintendent Dorothy Smith was elevated to a new role of Senior Advisor to the Turnaround Superintendent to help directly support Superintendent Peters with his transition into his new role.
40. Prior to Superintendent Peters starting at PPSD, RIDE recruited a new Chief of Staff and Chief Operating Officer to lead critical roles in PPSD's transformation.
41. Going forward, PPSD will continue a district wide re-organization focused on centering the district around student needs, and shifting resources closer to schools to help leaders and educators meet those needs.

Supporting Educators and School Systems with Changes to the Educator Certification Regulations

42. Created a targeted email campaign for educators whose licenses expire in 2020 to keep

Honored 111 educators for educational excellence on Sept. 28, 2019 at the Annual Salute to Educators event during Providence WaterFire. This event included representation from 30 professional associations, 47 Local Education Agencies (LEAs), 17 high school career education programs, and 17 community partners. More than 600 people attended the event. RIDE also partnered with XQ as a sponsor for this event, including bringing the XQ School Bus to WaterFire as an interactive exhibit.

educators informed about updated certification regulations that went into effect at the start of the 2019–2020 school year.

43. Created voiceover videos, YouTube video playlists, and revamped the certification webpage to inform educators of updates and changes to certification regulations.

Maintaining Ongoing Educator Certification Requirements

44. Reviewed and issued more than 8,000 educator certificates in the 2018–19 school year.
45. Received more than 2,000 educator renewal certifications for the 2019–2020 school year.
46. Staffed certification counter open to the public weekdays from 1 to 4 p.m. to assist edu-

cators with questions about regulations and licensing.

47. Completed all necessary updates to internal data systems to reflect recent certification changes approved by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education.

Recognizing Excellence in Teaching

48. Honored 111 educators for educational excellence on Sept. 28, 2019 at the Annual Salute to Educators event during Providence WaterFire. This event included representation from 30 professional associations, 47 Local Education Agencies (LEAs), 17 high school career education programs, and 17 community partners. More than 600 people attended the event. RIDE also partnered with XQ as a sponsor for this event, including bringing the XQ School Bus to WaterFire as an interactive exhibit.
49. Started the social media hashtag, #TeachersLeadRI, to spotlight excellent teaching in classrooms across the state.
50. Developed a toolkit designed to support LEAs in their educator recognition selection process as part of the national initiative, Systems to Elevate Excellent Teaching (SEET). This toolkit includes enhancing the District Teacher of the Year selection process and was developed in a partnership through the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). This toolkit uses certification, professional learning, and educator recognition systems to augment this process, with a focus on yielding more equitable representation in future District Teacher of the Year cohorts.

51. RIDE will continue to shine a spotlight on statewide excellence in the teaching profession. Throughout the 2019–2020 school year, RIDE will recognize approximately 50 educators across the state with Golden Apple awards to signify their excellence in teaching.

Launched a new wellness training for Providence educators through a philanthropic donation from Pure Edge Inc. focused on professional development for educator and student self-care and stress management. This partnership initially focused on in-person professional development sessions and since spanned virtually statewide as a result of COVID-19.

PUT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AT THE CENTER OF IMPROVEMENT

Supporting School Leaders as Informed Consumers of High-Quality Professional Learning

52. RIDE launched the Educator Course Network (ECN) in April 2019 with 47 approved providers of sustained professional learning offerings that align to the RI Professional Learning Standards (RIPLS). Through the Educator Course Network, RIDE created a centralized online platform of vetted professional learning providers with which school systems and districts can directly engage.

53. RIDE received more than 10 new applications to join the ECN and is currently working through the 2020 ECN applications to add new providers to the listings. RIDE has the goal of supporting LEA leaders as informed consumers of high-quality professional learning.

Providing Professional Development Opportunities to RI Educators

54. RIDE, in collaboration with the Providence Public School District and postsecondary education institutions, announced a partnership to significantly increase the number of teachers trained to serve multilingual students. Through this partnership, Providence teachers will be eligible for reimbursement up to \$3,200 in educational expenses for enrolling in an English as a Second Language (ESL) certification or master's degree program in the 2020–2021 school year. This initiative, which will serve up to 125 participants, will aid in the district's efforts to comply with a recent agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). The agreement is clear that Providence must increase its number of ESL-certified teachers. Leaders from Rhode Island College, the Rhode Island School for Progressive Education, Roger Williams University, and the University of Rhode Island have all committed to ensure enough seat capacity for the Providence teachers enrolling in ESL certification programs.

55. Launched a new wellness training for Providence educators through a philanthropic donation from Pure Edge Inc. focused on

professional development for educator and student self-care and stress management. This partnership initially focused on in-person professional development sessions and since spanned virtually statewide as a result of COVID-19.

56. Planned a two-part, culturally responsive, sustaining pilot professional development program for Providence in January and February to raise awareness of implicit bias in educators, foster difficult adult conversations, and amplify student voices in the classroom.

Creating Teacher Certification Pathway Endorsement Areas

57. Identified and developed competencies for three new educator certification endorsement areas – Multilingual Learner Supports, Reading/Dyslexia, and Computer Science – approved by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education on Sept. 17, 2019. These pathway areas allow educators to receive recognition for deepening their content and pedagogical knowledge in the respective endorsement areas.
58. In addition to developing the competencies for these endorsement areas, RIDE also reviewed and approved nine providers to offer programming that will lead to educators earning these endorsements.

Updating Methods to Authentically Measuring Student Learning

59. Launched new student learning options for educators across RI evaluation systems in the 2019-2020 school year. These options allow

educators to more authentically engage in the process of measuring student learning. These options were developed in partnership with more than 250 educators and leaders across the state.

60. Provided coaching and sustained training to 55 new evaluators using the Rhode Island Model Evaluation and Support System, a training series involving pre-work, two days of in-person training, an online supplementary training in the fall, a winter webinar, and a spring in-person training.

Targeting Feedback for Building Administrators to improve programs and student learning

61. Launched a new, differentiated model for building administrators in the 2019-2020 school year through partnership with the RI Association of School Principals (RIASP) and RI School Superintendent Association (RISSA) to improve programs and student learning.

Implementing Professional Learning Units (PLUs) and Professional Learning (PL) Plans

62. Developed guidance for LEAs on new requirements for enhanced Professional Learning Units (PLUs) to emphasize the importance of ongoing learning throughout the education career continuum.
63. Provided technical assistance in the development of Professional Learning Plans that include enhancements to educator data-systems to support a transparent planning and implementation process.

GROW AND DIVERSIFY THE EDUCATOR PIPELINE

Engaging with Educators of Color

64. Convened four meetings with Rhode Island educators of color during the 2019–20 school year to understand their experience and discuss how best to diversify the state’s teacher workforce. These conversations centered on the barriers into the profession that teachers of colors face, recruitment strategies, and ongoing supports to ensure educators of color can work, grow, and succeed.
65. Joined forces with the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals, Central Falls School District, and Achievement First Charter School to participate in the New England Secondary Schools Consortium’s Task Force on Diversifying the Educator Workforce. The task force will explore current state and regional strategies that have significantly increased the diversity of the educator workforce and determine strategies most likely to be successful in New England states. The task force will produce a report that includes recommendations and strategies for states to consider.
66. Partnered with the Annenberg Institute to begin to develop a statewide pipeline predictor with data analysis beginning with PPSD and four other districts to understand trends and needs. Continued analysis will help Rhode Island understand future needs.
67. Participated in and supported a state legislative task force focused on increasing teacher diversity.

Improving Teacher Residency Programs

68. Formed a work group of educators, district administrators, and educator preparation providers from across the state in November 2019 to draft guidance around the new one-year practical residency requirement in the recently updated educator certification regulations. These regulations take effect Dec. 31, 2022.
69. Worked with the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform Center (CEEDAR) to develop partnership agreement for districts and preparation programs to guide clinical experiences for future educators. CEEDAR is a stakeholder team made up of special education directors, district leaders, PK-12 educators, and educator preparation programs.

Promoting the Teaching Profession to Graduating High School Seniors

70. Coordinated with districts and educator preparation programs to recognize graduating seniors planning to pursue education careers at school pinning ceremonies, with more than 40% of districts participating as of the second year of the initiative in spring 2020.

CREATE FLEXIBLE PATHWAYS INTO THE PROFESSION

Reviewing and Expanding Educator Preparation Programs

71. Approved Brown University’s redesigned secondary education program over the course of 2019.

- 72. Released a PREP-RI report in 2019 for program approval with conditions at the Rhode Island School of Design based on a program visit and evaluation.
- 73. Provided summer 2019 feedback on Rhode Island College's (RIC) educator preparation programs and continued work to prepare for spring 2020 review. (In-person campus visits planned for Spring 2020 were canceled due to COVID-19 concerns. RIC is the largest preparer of RI educators.)

Joined the Partnership for Rhode Island in supporting the continued expansion and participation of 64 district and school administrators in the National Institute for School Leadership's (NISL) Executive Development Program (EDP).

- 74. Supported the launch of Roger Williams University's (RWU) Secondary Grades Career and Technical Education teacher preparation program in March 2019 for launch at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year.

Implementing Changes to Certification Areas to Provide Flexible Pathways into the Profession

- 75. Developed resource tools to align new standards for approved Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs with the appropriate CTE educator certification.
- 76. Collaborated with the Association of School Nurse Teachers on requirements for a new

Registered Nurse certificate after 2018 regulation and certification changes to distinguish Registered School Nurses from School Nurse Teachers.

Updating Methodology to Determine Educator Shortage Areas

- 77. Created and received approval for methodology to determine 29 certified shortage areas where educators can apply and be issued Preliminary Expert Residency Shortage Area certificates to work in districts while completing certification requirements.

PROVIDE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Supporting and Growing School and District Leadership through Professional Learning

- 78. Joined the Partnership for Rhode Island in supporting the continued expansion and participation of 64 district and school administrators in the National Institute for School Leadership's (NISL) Executive Development Program (EDP).
- 79. Established an ongoing Community of Practice for continued support of EDP participants after they complete the EDP program, in collaboration with the Center for Leadership and Educational Equity (CLEE). This Community of Practice is designed to provide continued support and feedback as these leaders begin to implement what they learned during their EDP experience.
- 80. Created an additional Community of Practice (CoP) network open to all building leaders in partnership with the Connecticut Center

for School Change for district leaders to give and receive feedback on specific instructional challenges. These CoPs are designed to provide a collaborative space where individuals can come together on a regular basis to discuss and improve their work as school leaders.

Supporting and Growing Novice Principals through Mentorship

81. Starting in summer 2019 and continuing throughout the 2019–20 school year, supported the RIASP New and Early Career Principal Coaching program to provide mentorship for a total of 15 novice principals and assistant principals through the Delaware Academy of School Leadership and 12 novice administrators through regular virtual and in-person coaching, feedback, and problem-solving from nine coaches.
82. Opened mentorship opportunities to train additional RI principals in 2020–21 to become RIASP mentors.

Creating New Pathways for Building Administrator certification

83. Developed draft certification regulations for Council on Elementary and Secondary Education consideration for a new Fast Track Principal Certification resulting from legislation passed in the 2019 legislative session. RIDE has developed a proposed framework for implementing this piece of legislation, and brought discussions on that approach to multiple council

meetings in November and December 2019. The proposed framework included a mechanism to enable educators to receive a preliminary certificate even faster than the original legislation contemplated. The final draft regulations were presented to the Council for approval in the spring of 2020.

Supporting District and School Leaders to Implement Site Based Management

84. Presented panel discussion at October 2019 RIASP General Membership Meeting to discuss impact of the Education Accountability Act, which expands school leadership roles and responsibilities.
85. Developed guides and School and District Readiness Assessment tool to help districts evaluate strengths and areas of need as they take steps to implement site-based management to comply with Education Accountability Act. As LEAs use them, these tools and documents will facilitate conversations and planning around the implementation of site-based management related to the legislation.



86. Convened a work group with superintendents, principals, school committee members, union representatives, and school legal counsel to identify and develop additional resources needed by the field to successfully roll out

site-based management. RIDE will continue to develop tools and resources for school systems to help them effectively implement site-based management within their schools.

Section III: Excellence in Learning

Under Commissioner Infante-Green, RIDE has expanded the scope of what it means to achieve excellence in learning to include high quality curriculum, positive school cultures, safe school environments, and academic achievement for all students across the state.

SET HIGH EXPECTATIONS, HIGH STANDARDS AND QUALITY CURRICULUM

Setting high expectations and high standards for all school system leaders

87. Launched series of school system leader monthly meetings that, for the first time, includes bringing together leaders from districts, charter schools, and state schools to routinely be at the same table and collaboratively discuss how to improve student outcomes. Priorities of these meetings have included collectively reviewing student performance data, diagnosing root causes for key issues impacting all schools, and fostering collaboration and review of best practices across schools, irrespective of the school's governance structure.

88. For the first time at RIDE, started meeting with school system leaders to individually re-

view their student performance and accountability data. Based off these meetings and school system leader feedback, RIDE is developing additional tools and data visualizations that will further help school system leaders analyze their student performance data.

Implementing High-Quality Curriculum

89. Assembled list of approved curricula in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics scheduled for June 2020 release, well ahead of the legislatively mandated January 2021 deadline.

90. RIDE developed and launched a K-8 ELA and mathematics verification platform for LEAs to digitally update curriculum used on a yearly basis. RIDE also sent out a high school ELA and mathematics survey for the first time to understand the state of curriculum in grades 9-12. The results of this survey will also inform how RIDE can build our curriculum statewide practices and expand our resources to support long-term curriculum implementation.

91. Published a K-12 curriculum visualization tool to provide interactive information about the curriculum used across schools and districts in Rhode Island. Users can click on a local

community to see the curriculum used by that LEA in English language arts and Math across grade levels, as well as a quality rating for that curriculum. RIDE used a variety of factors, including information from EdReports.org, to determine the final quality rating for each curriculum.

92. Provided over 100 educators across Rhode Island an overview of EdReports.org at a summer 2019 event focused on high-quality curriculum and the importance of professional learning to support the implementation of high-quality curriculum. EdReports.Org is an independent nonprofit organization that's widely recognized as a national leader in reviewing and evaluating instructional curriculum.
93. Provided ongoing support to a cohort of 13 districts to assist them with both selecting and adopting high-quality curriculum, as well as planning for high-quality professional learning to support long-term effective implementation. This is the third cohort of districts to go through the adoption process with support from EdReports.org.
94. Developed guidance for waiver options available in the Education Accountability Act related to financial hardship, third party review, and 75% proficiency rate.
95. Developing Request For Proposals for professional learning providers offering curriculum-specific professional learning.
96. Awarded mini-grants to three districts to work with Instruction Partners to implement high-quality curriculum, with a focus on

gathering data through instructional walk-throughs.

97. Sought feedback regarding vision for Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education along with guidance for reviewing high-quality curriculum for cultural responsiveness.
98. Collaborated with Instruction Partners, and the Highlander Institute on a pilot study to understand the connection between personalized learning and high-quality curriculum. Through this work, the collaborating organizations are working with 15 fellows, all of whom are current practicing educators implementing Eureka Math.
99. Began developing a definition of curriculum frameworks and the first RI curriculum frameworks in ELA and math. RIDE will gather stakeholder input on the curriculum frameworks. Once finalized, RIDE will establish a timeline for development of frameworks in the other core subject areas.
100. Provided support and assistance to LEAs in using new review tool to evaluate quality of K-12 curriculum in addressing foundational skills.
101. Highlighted schools that adopted high-quality curriculum and materials through the Schools in Action site visits.

Implementing High-Quality Curriculum - In Providence

102. Convened more than 100 teachers to work together on recommendations for a unified, cohesive approach to curriculum and professional learning to introduce it into the classroom.



- 103. Supported PPSD in the selection of elementary curriculum in ELA and middle level curriculum selections for both ELA and math that will start to be implemented across the district in the 2020-2021 school year. The curriculum implementation will include a plan for deep professional learning for educators in the use of the newly selected curriculum materials as well as elementary math materials purchased selected and purchased earlier.
- 104. Developed model of instruction for the middle level ELA and math curriculums to be shared with PPSD teachers prior to the start of the school year.

Implementing High-Quality Curriculum – Science

- 105. Established the Science Leaders Network made up of science educators meeting quarterly to share best practices in science curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- 106. Piloted new OpenSciEd Science curriculum with 11 teachers across four schools.

Connecting High-Quality Curriculum with Supporting Multilingual Learners

- 107. Presented the Honors Colloquium quarterly series with district leadership teams. The se-

ries' focus for this year is on improving outcomes for multilingual learners by examining and improving access to high-quality curriculum for all learners. Average attendance at each session is 80 members from district leadership teams. Speakers have included Mary Bridget Burns and Teri Marx from American Institutes for Research, whose topic was "Ensuring Access for Diverse Learners when Implementing High Quality Curricular Materials;" Dr. Jin Sook Lee, Renae Skarin, and Crystal Gonzales, whose topic was "The Immense Potential of Rhode Island's Multilingual Learners and the Role of HQCM in Realizing it;" and Dr. Henry Suarez, whose topic was "Valuing and Leveraging Multilingual Students' Ways of Communicating About the Natural World."

- 108. Deliberatively included effective curriculum materials that align to the needs of Multilingual learners as part of the ongoing Multilingual Learner Blueprint Initiative

Maintaining High Expectations and Standards for Core Content Areas

- 109. Reviewed content standards in mathematics, science, social studies, and English Language Arts for curriculum legislation from the 2019 legislative session, communicating early

guidance to prepare districts for adoption high-quality curriculum.

110. Began development of literacy and mathematics blueprints to provide instructional principles and strategies as a foundation to curriculum frameworks and establishing state expectations for high achievement.
111. Conducted content standards review, with stakeholder engagement, culminating in December 2019 Council on Elementary and Secondary Education endorsement of Common Core State Standards in ELA/Literacy and Mathematics, the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), RI Social Studies Grade Span Expectations, National Core Arts Standards, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, and the RI Early Learning and Development Standards.
112. RIDE began facilitating literacy, math, and science advisory boards that are comprised of K-12 educators, leaders, and higher education partners.
113. In September 2019, RIDE also invited RI educators to participate as members of a new RI History & Social Studies Advisory Committee. This Committee will both advise RIDE and be ambassadors to the education community on matters of history, civics, and social studies education. This committee will also serve as a work group for a variety of initiatives.

Administering the RI Statewide Assessment System

114. Led administration of all state assessments in spring 2019 (RICAS, RI NGSA, ACCESS, DLM,

PSAT/SAT School Day), including first year of new science assessment and second year of the RICAS assessment through RI Assessment Data Portal.

RIDE developed a framework for each school system to create a PrepareRI Readiness Action Plan, after the release of 2019 PSAT and SAT results in fall 2019. The objective of each school system's readiness action plan is to analyze performance results from the PSAT/SAT and identify strategies to help increase student participation and overall proficiency.

115. Improved second year administration and release of results of the of RICAS, including providing data access to educators and leaders earlier in the school year compared to last year, enabling them to make better decisions to guide student instruction. RIDE also developed a virtual tool and in-person sessions that provide training to district staff that shows them how to review released items and student work to inform instructional priorities and teaching shifts.
116. Updated state assessment reporting system to improve public user experience that enables educators and community stakeholders to leverage data visualizations to help understand their assessment results. Updates also include the confidential educator reporting

portal to provide more actionable data to educators. The new assessment portal will be available in summer 2020 and the new educator portal will be available in fall 2020 based off of current assessment information.

117. Prior to RIDE seeking a federal waiver for administering assessments in spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 health crisis, RIDE hosted eight monthly webinars for test coordinators from May 2019 to February 2020 to support the originally planned administration of state assessments. More than 130 individuals attended the webinars. RIDE also provided 12 in-person trainings to school and district test coordinators for the originally planned statewide tests, including RICAS, NGSAs, and PSAT/SAT. More than 230 individuals attended.
118. Submitted state test results for the ACCESS, RICAS, SAT, and DLM to the U.S. Department of Education for peer review and feedback and support to improve the way Rhode Island students are taught and assessed.

Supporting School Systems to Establish PrepareRI Readiness Action Plans

119. RIDE developed a framework for each school system to create a PrepareRI Readiness Action Plan, after the release of 2019 PSAT and SAT results in fall 2019. The objective of each school system's readiness action plan is to analyze performance results from the PSAT/SAT and identify strategies to help increase student participation and overall proficiency. RIDE supports LEAs using assessment results data to create clear action plans to improve student outcomes.

120. RIDE is actively surveying each Providence high school to help share current best-practice strategies in place across high schools to ensure prioritization of goal setting and action prior to the 2019-2020 PSAT10 and SAT school day assessments. The results of this survey will also inform how RIDE can build our statewide practices and expand our resources to support long-term implementation.

CLOSE EQUITY GAPS AND INCREASE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL

Reorganizing RIDE to Support School System Transformation

121. Initiated an agency-wide re-organization that reinforces RIDE's commitment to transform into a support-driven organization that works with educators, school systems, and communities across the state to improve outcomes for all of Rhode Island's students. These organizational changes were also part of the Commissioner's efforts to position RIDE to successfully implement recent legislation focused on curriculum and accountability.
122. As part of this re-organization, RIDE established a new Division of System Transformation, which included the Office of School Improvement and the new Office of School System Planning and Improvement. Through this Division, RIDE is better positioned to support Rhode Island's lowest performing schools, while also reinforcing strategic supports for school systems across the state. The Commissioner appointed Dr. Kelvin Roldán to this role, who previously held multiple

senior education and government roles in Hartford, CT, and also served as a former CT state representative. RIDE appointed Jennifer Carney to lead the new Office of School System Planning and Improvement. Jennifer Carney was previously the Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment at Pawtucket School Department and led their district-wide implementation efforts, often regarded as a state model for implementing high-quality curriculum and supporting that implementation with professional learning.

123. RIDE also appointed Ana Riley to the role of Deputy Commissioner of Instructional Programs. This role oversees RIDE's Teaching & Learning, Innovation, Legal, and Finance & Operations divisions, and helps ensure that all divisions are aligned with the Commissioner's singular vision for supporting and improving student outcomes. Deputy Commissioner Riley was also the former superintendent in Portsmouth, RI, and also held a variety of educational leadership roles in Massachusetts.
124. RIDE is continuing to evaluate how it can best align its resources and capacity to the Commissioner's vision for supporting and driving transformative change in Rhode Island's schools.

Supporting Schools and School Systems with Improving Student Outcomes

125. RIDE, in partnership with the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, DataSpark at the University of Rhode Island, and the Annenberg Institute at Brown University, won a

competitive \$3.24 million federal Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) grant to improve equity in education across the state. RIDE and partners will use the funds, which were provided by the U.S. Department of Education, over the next four years to improve the use of data to boost K-12 student performance in Rhode Island, including the development of a district-wide strategic data planning tool.

126. Developed model framework to assess and evaluate district accountability information for the first time for release in fall 2020, based on prior accountability/data information.
127. Awarded more than \$2.7 million in federal school improvement funds to qualifying, low-performing schools in Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, Woonsocket, Chariho, and several charter districts to implement Comprehensive School Improvement Plans.
128. Established a partnership with SchoolWorks LLC to monitor and support schools that are currently implementing Comprehensive School Improvement Plans. The process and protocol were developed based on feedback from national experts and RI educators to ensure that RIDE's approach is supportive and adds value to schools.
129. Hosted two meetings to bring together superintendents, principals, and community members from districts home to low-performing schools to help support them to collectively develop strategies to improve outcomes in their schools.
130. Provided technical assistance sessions for schools and districts to expand accountability and improvements through technology. Over

22 sites were visited over the course of these sessions.

Intervening and Reimagining Education in the Providence Public School System

131. Convened a team of local and national experts, facilitated by Johns Hopkins University, to conduct an in-depth review of the Providence Public School District in May 2019 with a report issued in June 2019. In July 2019, the Council on Elementary and Secondary



Education unanimously voted to invoke the *Crowley Act* and authorize Commissioner Infante-Green to directly intervene in the Providence Public School District.

132. Convened nine public community forums to inform and hear from the community regarding the Johns Hopkins report findings during the summer of 2019. These forums drew nearly 1,100 attendees, including students, parents, teachers, and community leaders, and gathered over 20 hours of public comment.

133. Issued an Order for Control and Reconstitution of the Providence Public School District in August 2019 leading to a show cause hearing in September 2019, in which neither the mayor, City Council, nor School Board objected to state intervention. As a result, RIDE formerly intervened and assumed control of PPSD effective Nov. 1, 2019.

Improving Outcomes for Multilingual Learners

134. Repurposed RIDE resources to prioritize hiring an additional Multilingual Learner specialist at RIDE.
135. Launched Rhode Island Blueprint for Multilingual Learner Success in extensive collaboration with a stakeholder group of community members and educational experts to identify evidence-based principles for high quality instruction and prioritize key policy areas. The blueprint will articulate a shared vision, identify principles for high quality instruction and services, and prioritize key policy areas that will drive educational progress for MLLs in Rhode Island. The blueprint will set evidenced-based principles of high quality instruction, and include a combination of key strategies to ensure that educators are properly supported to serve MLLs, including curriculum, professional development, teacher recruitment, and preparation and funding.
136. Expanded Ambassador Program to include five new multilingual learner ambassadors. The multilingual learner ambassadors bring in experts from the field to help RIDE develop additional resources and tools to support educators across the state to better serve multilingual learners.

137. Improved statewide resources and protocols for identifying multilingual learners, including a Home Language Survey, as part of supporting Providence to comply with 2018 U.S. Department of Justice Settlement Agreement.

Improving Outcomes for Differently Abled Students

138. Launched free online professional learning platform BridgeRI in February 2020 to help educators and school systems with their implementation of Multi-Tiered Systems of Sup-



port (MTSS). BridgeRI is both a website and a learning management system designed to support educators implementing MTSS practices, data, and systems. A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a systemic, continuous school improvement framework in which data-based decision-making is practiced across all levels of the educational system for supporting students.

139. Honored as one of nine states accepted into the Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE) state cohort

to work over three years on improvements to the State Special Education Written Complaint policy.

140. Supported 17 participants in improving math results for differently-abled students through the Math Intervention Project. This initiative provides on-site training specific to data-based individualization, evidence-based practices in mathematics, and strategies for working with diverse learners. Additional coaching includes topics such as collecting assessment data with fidelity, interpreting data and making instructional changes, and implementing intensive mathematics intervention.
141. Worked with PPSD in exiting the U.S. Department of Justice vs. State of RI and Providence Public Schools Interim Settlement Agreement (ISA) for Employment First, resulting in closing sheltered workshops and converting programs to community-based supported employment.

Expanding Early Learning

142. Added 320 new Pre-K seats across public schools, community-based programs, and Head Start in the 2019-2020 school year, bringing total Pre-K seats for the state to 1,420, in 78 classrooms. These programs are in a total of 13 communities, including new classrooms in Coventry and Warren for the first time. RIDE provides ongoing technical assistance and professional learning to all classrooms. Topics include formative assessment, Conscious Discipline and RI Early Learning and Development Standards.

- 143. Received a \$4 million federal Preschool Development Grant and a \$27 million three-year renewal of a federal Preschool Development Grant, both in partnership with other state agencies. These grants will be used to fund additional seats for early childhood programs, including Family Home Visits (FHV), child care and RI Pre-K, family support programs through the Health Equity Zones (HEZs), high-quality professional development for early childhood professionals, enhancing data systems, and other B-5 system improvements.
- 144. Provided technical assistance to six districts and community partners to support children and families transitioning from Pre-K to Kindergarten.
- 145. Increased class size to 20 students, with a ratio of 10 students to 1 instructor, to provide more access to high quality programs as part of revised Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Regulations
- 146. Required early learning programs to select from a list of RIDE-approved curriculum.
- 147. Received 33 applications responding to a Request for Proposals for new RI Pre-K classrooms to continue RI Pre-K learning opportunities across the state from 18 communities for 40 classrooms. Awards will be made later in the spring.

Increasing Literacy Outcomes across Rhode Island, with a Focus on Dyslexia

- 148. Received a Comprehensive State Literacy Development (CLSD) grant from the US Department

of Education of \$20 million over 5 years. LEAs and community-based early learning programs will be able to participate in a competitive application process to receive funding to support adoption of high quality literacy curriculum and professional learning, improve access and quality of literacy supports for multilingual learners and differently abled students, and increase family engagement in literacy activities. The majority of CLSD funding will be distributed through sub-grant awards to LEAs for the development and implementation of comprehensive literacy instruction, including professional learning opportunities for teachers and principals. LEAs and community-based organizations will also receive sub-grant awards to engage families and empower them to support literacy at home.

- 149. Recruited and hired 5 Literacy Ambassadors who will work with RIDE to develop resources to support awareness of and guidance on best practices in supporting students with dyslexia, enhancing literacy instruction, and addressing requirements in the Right to Read Act. Modules developed by these ambassadors include awareness modules about dyslexia and evidence-based interventions and accommodations for students with dyslexia.
- 150. Created a Literacy Specialist position and brought in a new team member with expertise in dyslexia to support work of the *Right to Read Act*.
- 151. Issued request for applications for more providers from higher education institutions, professional learning providers, nonprofit organizations and vendors to offer professional

learning opportunities leading to a Literacy/ Dyslexia Endorsement.

152. Supported 84 classrooms across 10 districts in implementation of Boston Public Schools Kindergarten curriculum, including professional learning, school visits, and administrator webinars and meetings.
153. Developed plan to offer Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) Structured Literacy Professional Learning for 40 preschool educators and 40 early learning leaders. RIDE could not accept all applicants seeking the training. The two-year training process will begin as a virtual training in June 2020 with the option to shift to in-person. RIDE also intends to offer LETRS Professional Learning to 80, K-2 educators and leaders beginning this spring and extending through fall 2021.

Focusing on Equity – within RIDE

154. Engaged WestEd comprehensive center to develop a draft of protocol to guide RIDE staff in decision making on equity issues that will be forwarded to an internal workgroup for feedback by August 2020 and launch by December.

Increasing College Readiness through the PrepareRI College Readiness Project

155. Launched the PrepareRI College Readiness Project – a strategic partnership between K-12 education and Rhode Island’s colleges and universities to ensure every student graduates from high school ready to enroll in credit-bearing coursework that leads to

on-time college completion. The readiness project has consisted of six work streams: academic readiness, alignment of requirements, CTE college credit, FAFSA completion, communication, and major-aligned college credit.

156. Developed the Math Readiness pilot at six high schools to prepare 225+ students to graduate high school with the ability to enroll in college credit-bearing coursework. Pilots launched in the late winter and early spring of 2020 and continue to operate under distance learning.
157. Reviewed K-12 math pathways to provide guidance to districts regarding appropriate course taking sequences, with a focus on how high school math pathways help and might prove a barrier to college readiness.
158. Published a document that, for the first time in Rhode Island, tracked areas of misalignment between requirements for K-12 graduation and public postsecondary admission, and has drafted two memos on how each system, K-12 and postsecondary, can better align themselves to benefit students in Rhode Island.
159. Included dedicated funding streams in the Perkins V budget to encourage postsecondary articulation agreements for credentials in eight prioritized CTE Board Standards in STEM fields.
160. Published a transition to college eGuide to help students, parents, and families better navigate the transition to college.

161. Created a static spreadsheet for students choosing dual/concurrent credits that align with requirements of their desired college major, with plans for an interactive tool to better present information on the RIDE website.

To help gain a better understanding of how Providence is preparing its high school students for college and career success, RIDE partnered with Springpoint and Ernst & Young's Parthenon, two nationally-recognized organizations, to conduct an intensive analysis of all PPSD high schools. EY-Parthenon provided a detailed, quantitative analysis about graduating students' college readiness and Springpoint provided a qualitative analysis of all schools, based on comprehensive school visits. The effort was funded by the BARR Foundation through collaboration with the Rhode Island Fund for Public Education.

Evaluating and Improving Providence's High Schools

162. To help gain a better understanding of how Providence is preparing its high school students for college and career success, RIDE partnered with Springpoint and Ernst & Young's Parthenon, two nationally-recognized organizations, to conduct an intensive

analysis of all PPSD high schools. EY-Parthenon provided a detailed, quantitative analysis about graduating students' college readiness and Springpoint provided a qualitative analysis of all schools, based on comprehensive school visits. The effort was funded by the BARR Foundation through collaboration with the Rhode Island Fund for Public Education.

163. Held recurring work sessions for Springpoint and EY-Parthenon to meet senior RIDE and PPSD staff to share findings and discuss potential solutions. Evaluators continue reaching out to stakeholders — including schools' leadership, students, parents, and community groups — to share review findings that will guide development of specific recommendations to benefit Providence's high school students.

BUILD PATHWAYS ALIGNED WITH STUDENT INTERESTS, NEEDS, AND CAREERS

Redesigning the Future of High Schools through the XQ+RI Challenge

164. Awarded planning grants to 20 different high schools in May 2019 to compete in a first of its kind statewide XQ+RI Challenge to redesign their high schools to prepare students for the jobs of the future. XQ is a national organization recognized as a leader in rethinking the high school experience so that every student graduates ready to succeed in life. While XQ has conducted nation-wide competitions before, the XQ+RI was XQ's first state-wide specific initiative.

- 165. Hosted five design camps to support development of XQ+RI plans throughout the 2019–2020 school year. Each school analyzed their data and reviewed the impact of their course-taking patterns on student proficiency, college readiness, and college completion.
- 166. Two schools received \$500,000 grant awards and will be a part of the national XQ network. Two schools received accelerate awards of \$125,000 that will support their promising school design for one year with the opportunity to become a part of the national XQ network. Sixteen schools received momentum grant awards of \$20,000 to support them in strengthening their plans over the next school year. Each of the 20 schools will continue to be supported by RIDE and XQ.

Developing New Apprenticeship Programs

- 167. Piloted two youth apprenticeship programs – the PrepareRI Youth Apprenticeship program (PRIYA) and the Propel America program— offering pathways directly into a career while still in high school.
- 168. Provided 23 PRIYA high school seniors with the opportunity to earn pay from part-time employment in a specific career pathway while still in high school in the program’s inaugural year. PRIYA students work part-time, take classes that directly relate to their employment experience, and work closely with their employer and CCRI to coordinate the beginning of a career path.
- 169. Supported 25 high school student participants in Propel America, a national nonprofit that connects young adults with job-training

organizations and community colleges to pursue a career and higher education within one year of graduation.



Updating RIDE’s Federal Carl D. Perkins State Plan for Career and Technical Education

- 170. Submitted the plan in April 2020 to update the allocation of approximately \$6 million Rhode Island receives annually for the Carl D. Perkins State Plan for Career and Technical Education to align with the recently reauthorized federal Carl D. Perkins law. This federal law governs career and technical education programs.
- 171. Engaged educators, school system leaders, and the business community to develop the updated Perkins V plan that aligns with recent improvements in career education and

the needs of students, educators, and the business community. The plan was submitted for public comment in early 2020.

Promoting Career Exploration for Middle School Students

172. Awarded Career Exploration Grants to middle schools that will use these funds to introduce students to a wide range of future career options. This initiative helps connect middle school with the larger high school strategies already underway to build or expand programs to put more students on track for success in college and career. The grants are intended to accelerate the integration of career exploration activities with existing learning experiences in middle school and will introduce students to a wide range of future career options as part of PrepareRI and its industry partners, such as the Electric Boat.

Ensuring Financial Access to College through the Statewide FAFSA Initiative

173. Supported Rhode Island's statewide FAFSA initiative to increase FAFSA completion by graduating high school seniors who can receive up to \$6,195 per year in Federal Pell grants during the 2019/2020 cycle.
174. Saw Rhode Island ranked first in the nation for year-over-year improvement in FAFSA completion rates.
175. Created a public FAFSA Dashboard that shows how many students are completing the FAFSA in each high school, a FAFSA toolkit that includes information, and helpful resources for schools, families, and students.

176. Worked with the Office of the Post-Secondary Commissioner to launch the FAFSA Portal, which will allow qualified administrators and staff to access student-level completion data online with a valid data-sharing agreement.

Providing Secondary Students Access to College and Career Courses through the Advanced Course Network

177. Expanded the Advanced Course Network (ACN) program for Rhode Island students to directly take advanced-level, credit-bearing courses offered by a wide range of approved providers at no cost to themselves or their families, subject to available state and district funds. Types of courses offered in the Advanced Course Network include work-based learning, career preparation, dual enrollment, and Advanced Placement. Classes are either face-to-face, fully online, or use a blended approach.
178. Enrolled more than 1,000 students in advanced high school courses through the Rhode Island Advanced Course Network.

Developing Alternative Learning Plan Guidance and Redesign

179. Initiated feedback sessions for redesign of Alternative Learning Plan policies for 16- and 17-year-old students to pursue an education outside of a traditional school setting. Often, Alternative Learning Plans have been relegated to GED programs, with little consistency nor processes in place to evaluate a program's quality. This feedback will help inform a comprehensive framework to be developed by RIDE and school districts for evaluating

the needs of students who are 16 or 17 years old and preparing these individuals for success in education and in the workforce.

Expanding the Successful PrepareRI Ambassador Program

180. RIDE, through the PrepareRI Ambassador program, brings in experts from the field to help advance a statewide career education strategy. The Ambassadors come from different parts of Rhode Island's education landscape, such as district leaders, principals, school administrators, teachers, college professors, community leaders, parents, and others. They use their unique perspective and skills to advise the PrepareRI team, create resources and trainings to help their colleagues, and serve as spokespeople for PrepareRI.
181. The PrepareRI program is in its third year of implementation, with 23 ambassadors participating. The PrepareRI Ambassador program has also served as a template for similar ambassador programs in RIDE, including ambassadors for literacy and multilingual learners.

Growing Adult Education Opportunities

182. Funded 20 adult, basic education programs for the 2019–2020 school year that served 5,942 adult learners statewide, exceeding federally negotiated targets for enrollment and standardized test results. RI's test results placed it in the top quartile among states nationally, and made it the highest performing state in New England.
183. Increased cross-agency engagement and coordination this program year. RIDE con-

venes weekly interagency meetings that include representatives from key partner agencies (GWB, DHS, OPC, as well as the Governor's Office) to better align policies and practices, and to strengthen the systems serving lower-skilled adults in the state.

184. Established a coordinated system for delivering high-quality professional development for the adult education grantee network. New this year, a RIDE-funded Director of Adult Education PD (at CCRI) has developed a comprehensive array of training and peer sharing opportunities specifically for adult educators. The PD Director works closely with the Tech Hub (at Providence Public Library), which provides training related to digital literacy skills instruction and the use of technology in the classroom.

TAKE A WHOLE-STUDENT APPROACH AND PRIORITIZE SCHOOL CULTURE

Improving School Culture through the School Climate Transformation Project

185. Implemented the first year of the U.S. Department of Education School Climate Transformation Project in nine school districts with a competitive \$2.5 million federal grant.
186. Through this initiative, school-based teams with district leadership and support from a cross-agency RIDE team, have completed a deep data analysis and are in the process of developing school climate improvement plans for implementation in 2020. Goals of the project are to foster critical aspects of a positive school climate through environments that are predictable, safe, positive, and con-

sistent. District and school teams will identify an academic equity gap, complete root-cause analysis, and develop an improvement plan.

187. Participating districts and schools were selected by a competitive application, and include Coventry, East Greenwich, East Providence, Exeter-West Greenwich, Johnston, Newport, Warwick, Westerly, and Paul Cuffee charter school.

Developing and Expanding Tools to Help Reduce Student and Teacher Chronic Absenteeism

188. Expanded the Student Attendance Nudge Tool from one pilot district to over 120 schools across 23 districts. This tool helps schools track student attendance and uses behavioral science to send targeted “nudge” messages to those at-risk of being chronically absent. This tool is completely free for districts.
189. Created additional student chronic absenteeism data tools, including a public dashboard that actively shows the chronic absenteeism rates of each school in the state throughout the school year. School leaders and school communities throughout the state can compare their student attendance rates to identify strategies to increase attendance.
190. Engaged city and community leaders to launch initiatives that will positively recognize and promote student attendance within their respective school communities.
191. Partnered with Harvard’s Student Social Support R&D Lab (S3 Lab) to improve teacher

attendance. The S3 Lab is a national leader in improving student and teacher attendance using data and behavioral insights. This year, the lab conducted an analysis of teacher attendance patterns in Rhode Is-

Partnered with Harvard’s Student Social Support R&D Lab (S3 Lab) to improve teacher attendance. The S3 Lab is a national leader in improving student and teacher attendance using data and behavioral insights. This year, the lab conducted an analysis of teacher attendance patterns in Rhode Island and the impact of teacher attendance on student outcomes. Next year, the S3 Lab is partnering with RIDE to pilot a number of research-backed solutions to improve Rhode Island teachers’ attendance rates. RIDE includes teacher attendance on its yearly School Report Cards, and launched an additional tool this year that helps superintendents better analyze that data.

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ditional tool this year that helps superintendents better analyze that data.

Developing Social and Emotional Learning & School Culture Tools

192. Hosts Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) community of practice events three times per year to showcase best practice in SEL in the state, region, and nationally. These events average 60-70 educators per event. All activities managed by RIDE are aligned to the RI Standards for Social and Emotional Learning and grade span competencies.
193. Maintained a SEL list serve of over 300 educators statewide.
194. Sent out a SEL newsletter that provides resources, professional development opportunities, and information to educators.
195. Created school culture tools with participants at monthly meetings of the statewide Edu-

cators in Action group during the 2019-2020 school year with goal of releasing tools in time for the 2020-2021 school year.

MAINTAIN 21ST CENTURY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Executing Record Number of Approvals for School Construction Projects in collaboration with RIDE's School Building Authority

196. Executed 37 Memorandums of Agreements with districts for the management of \$136 million in pay-as-you go offerings from the \$250 million statewide bond.
197. Reviewed and approved the second largest school construction approval on record of approximately \$234 million for Pawtucket schools.
198. Managed 25 districts in the Necessity of School Construction Application pipeline with targeted approvals in FY20 and FY21 while conducting ongoing design reviews for existing approvals totaling more than \$700 million.
199. Offered new statewide incentives through housing aid and distributed technical assistance awards totaling \$1.5 million to districts across the state.
200. Continues to review and prepare recommendations for new school construction projects, including Stage II applications submitted in February and preparing a recommendation to the Council of Elementary and Secondary Education for spring approval totaling approximately \$400 million.



Implementing supports to help enhance the school construction process for districts in collaboration with RIDE’s School Building Authority

- 201. Supported the creation of a cash-flow tool for districts to assist financial officials in the planning and calculation of projected pay-as-you-go and housing aid reimbursement.
- 202. Conducted training for Owner’s Program Managers on school construction regulations and processes, financing, and implementation of the statewide school construction bond.
- 203. Designed and implemented a pre-qualification application process and generated a list of prime contractors for school construction projects.
- 204. Developed two Master Price Agreement (MPA) lists to assist districts: Owner’s Program Managers specific to School Construction projects and Educational Facilities Master Planners.
- 205. Presented the School Building Authority (SBA) Legislative changes to the League of Cities and Towns, RI School Committees Association, RI Association of Business Officers, Auditor General, and at the RIDE Data Summit.
- 206. In an effort to provide supportive guidance and feedback to LEAs, for the first time sent letters to LEAs and municipal leaders intended as a courtesy notification of a potential shortfall in meeting the maintenance requirement and as a new support to districts with their maintenance planning. The notification included a reminder of the statutory requirement along with the specific financial target for each district.

- 207. Supported regionalization discussions on Aquidneck Island with visual supports for the superintendent, presenting at public meetings and participating on a panel discussion.
- 208. Launched a listening tour with superintendents currently embarking on necessity-of-school-construction approvals to gather information on their experiences and input on how RIDE and the SBA could shift efforts from a heavily compliant approach to more supportive. Feedback gathered will shape efforts and resources moving forward.
- 209. Presented at the first virtual school committee meeting held in South Kingstown in early April 2020 at the request of the superintendent to support advancing their school construction project.
- 210. Provided contract review and analysis support to all districts, especially those in high-need communities and guidance for superintendents on advancing projects through the approval process, regular meetings, and visual documentation.
- 211. Collaborated with PPSD and the city of Providence to re-envision Providence’s school \$278M capital plan to improve facilities for students, communities, and educators.

Ensuring Access to School-Based Meal Supports

- 212. Supported food providers by sharing current knowledge and best-practices for changing and high-profile requirements, such as breakfast-in-the-classroom and Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) reviews, and

how they apply to the spectrum of providers, which includes school districts, charter schools, state schools, non-profits, and for-profit organizations that run school lunch, school breakfast, child and adult care, and summer food programs.

- 213. Conducted annual trainings on USDA laws and regulations for all 85 school meal sponsors and all 100 child and adult care food sponsors.
- 214. Inspected school, child, and adult care meal sites (with each program on a 3–5–year review cycle) for compliance with all aspects of USDA laws and regulations about meal composition, program operations, and fiscal operations.
- 215. Hosted and responded to three separate on-site monitoring visits from USDA personnel, including preparing materials and answering questions, following up on issues raised, and promptly correcting any discrepancies found.

Expanding Support and Access to Internet and Technology

- 216. Negotiated for internet access for schools and libraries throughout Rhode Island through the Rhode Island Technology Education Access Fund, resulting in greater bandwidth at less cost.
- 217. Provided telecommunications and internet access Request For Proposal bid analysis (i.e. Rhode Island Technology Education Access Fund (RITEAF) for E-Rate).
- 218. Launched Wireless Classroom Initiative Phase III valued at \$1.5 million for districts seeking to expand technology infrastructure.

- 219. Negotiated both the annual federal Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) on behalf of all LEAs requesting one and internet access services for all LEAs through the federal E-Rate program funded by the Rhode Island Technology Education Access Fund (RITEAF).
- 220. Provided technical support to districts for all reporting and data compliance related to the Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA)

RIDE's Legal Support Services

- 221. Conducted appeal hearings on issues arising under RI education law, including teacher termination and discipline, tenure, salary placement, certification, distribution of education aid, local education contributions, maintenance of effort, student discipline, entitlement to courses, graduation/diplomas, enforcement of anti-bullying laws and policies, interim orders, transportation obligations, school operations, and classroom safety and staffing; heard appeals arising under federal laws delegating such functions to the SEA, e.g. civil rights, homelessness, etc.
- 222. Prepared advisory opinions to provide clarity for school system leaders and education stakeholders on matters relating to education law and regulations on behalf of the Commissioner.
- 223. Supported key agency functions, such as providing legal counsel and advice to all departments and divisions within RIDE, drafting and revising education regulations, and supporting key additional functions such as contract review.

Section IV: Engaged Communities

From her first day in Rhode Island, Commissioner Infante-Green has sought to create a culture of listening at RIDE. The agency has sought to use the voice of students, families, educators, district leaders, and the community at large to initiate thoughtful, collaborative change.

ESTABLISH GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES THAT RESPOND TO FAMILIES

Publishing User-Friendly Data Tools to Help Communities Engage in their Schools, and Ensure Schools are Responsive to their Needs

224. RIDE is committed to developing and annually publishing a series of user-friendly tools and data visualizations that will arm families, students, and other community members with the helpful information they need to productively engage in policy decisions about their schools. Through these tools and engagement, school systems should in turn be responsive to the needs of these critical constituencies.
225. One such resource RIDE annually publishes is the School Report Card. This report card includes an easy-to-understand “star” rating of 1-5 which helps directly convey a high-level overview of a school’s performance. The report card then additionally provides detailed and interactive data-visualizations on a variety of topics, ranging from accountability information, assessment results, civil rights data, educator data, and financial data. This information is provided visually at a school,

school system, and statewide level. This report card was developed entirely by RIDE staff.

226. RIDE significantly enhanced its public reporting of the performance of multilingual learners, providing more detail and data than ever before. For the first time, RIDE reported RICAS results for multilingual learners, broken

RIDE significantly enhanced its public reporting of the performance of multilingual learners, providing more detail and data than ever before. For the first time, RIDE reported RICAS results for multilingual learners, broken down by different subgroups, such as showing the performance of students who were both multilingual learners and differently abled students, as well as comparing results of current multilingual learner students with those that have exited that designation.

down by different subgroups, such as showing the performance of students who were both multilingual learners and differently abled students, as well as comparing results of current multilingual learner students with those that have exited that designation.

ACCESS assessment results, which measure overall English proficiency levels, were presented in a new way to show results for students broken down by how long a student had been designated a multilingual learner. Finally, for the first time, RIDE also reported how RICAS performance levels for multilingual learners compared to their English proficiency levels from the ACCESS assessment.

Increasing Financial Transparency and Responsiveness

- 227. Promoted financial transparency in RIDE day-to-day practices to enhance public understanding of state education aid, federal fund usage, capital budget investments, and fiscal functions.
- 228. Supported the Special Legislative Task Force to Study Rhode Island's Education Funding Formula by providing information and testimony, and will continue to work with the General Assembly to review and implementing key findings from the Task Force's report to help better understand the impact of the critical investments Rhode Island makes within its education system, and how those investments might be enhanced to further improve student outcomes.
- 229. Released the results of a financial analysis of the Providence Public School District in December 2019. This 10-week deep dive, conducted by Ernst & Young LLP, painted a picture of a district where the status quo has kept investments from reflecting student needs.
- 230. Leveraged results of PPSD financial analysis to shift funding closer to students after re-

vealing that less than 4% of funds allocated to schools were in the control of school leaders.

- 231. Updated and published an annual series of financial data visualizations depicting each school system's expenditures, revenues, budgets, and spending summaries at the school and district levels.
- 232. Engaged stakeholders in development of operational improvements to statewide transportation programs to increase efficiency of transportation services to districts and students while minimizing costs.
- 233. Issued Request For Proposals for statewide bus vendors and providers seeking more enhanced performance management contracting to ensure efficient transportation operations that serve students and school systems.

Rigorously Overseeing Rhode Island's Charter Schools

- 234. Published annual report on charter schools, which includes a summary of each charter's academic, organizational, and financial performance.
- 235. Reviewed five charter schools as a part of the charter school renewal framework. RIDE's recommendations, which were unanimously approved by the K-12 Council, include some of the most stringent charter renewal recommendations in Rhode Island's history. As a result of these recommendations, for the first time in Rhode Island's history, a charter school — the Academy for Career Exploration — voluntarily turned in its charter and will close at the end of the 2019-20 school year.

RIDE has supported the parents and community of this school to help enroll these students in new schools for the upcoming year.

236. Conducted a rigorous review of five proposals for new charters. One of the five proposals, University High School at Roger Williams University, met RIDE's high bar for charter authorization. University High School received preliminary approval from the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education in December 2019.

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ELEVATE THE STUDENT AND COMMUNITY VOICE

Extensively Engaging the Community to inform the Turnaround Action Plan for Providence

Established the Community Design Teams — a diverse and well-rounded group of 45 Providence community members to contribute to the Turnaround Action Plan for the Providence Public School District. RIDE received 222 nominations of individuals to be part of the Community Design Team. CDT

members include parents, students, educators, and additional community members.

237. Supported the Community Design Teams showcase at Providence's Asa Messer Elementary School on March 7, 2020, attended by hundreds of community members, including students and families, and members of the media seeking to learn about their work and offer feedback for teams to consider in finalizing their proposals.
238. Compiled final recommendations from the Community Design Teams, to be shared publicly in early April.
239. Reconstituted the Providence Parent Action Committee under RIDE's support and underwent a proactive recruitment campaign, resulting in significantly increased attendance at PAC meetings.
240. Developing a Parent Bill of Rights in collaboration with Providence Parent Advisory Council and RI Center for Justice to empower families to be effective advocates for their child's interests. The initiative will serve as a template that can be replicated across the state.

Bringing in the Community through the School Improvement Process

241. Supported creation of Community Advisory Boards for each of Rhode Island's low-performing schools to bring community stakeholders into the process of school improvement.
242. Directly supported recruitment and training for three Community Advisory Boards in Providence with more than 60 members.

Focusing on Continuous Engagement with Student and Parents

- 243. Met with more than 250 students via in-school conversations in Providence schools on an ongoing basis before COVID-19. These informal student meetings have also occurred statewide.
- 244. Worked with youth leaders to plan and host public forums and events for students. Held more than 8 weekly meetings with students as part of the planning process. This included planning the Stand-Up Youth Summit originally set for March 14, 2020 as an in-person event, but revamped as a virtual event in April.
- 245. Facilitated the Stand-up Youth Summit on April 25, 2020, providing students from across the entire state an opportunity to virtually engage with each other and the Commissioner. While originally planned for an in-person event, RIDE worked with students to continue this event virtually during the COVID-19 crisis.
- 246. As a follow up to the Stand-Up Youth Summit, RIDE will assist students in planning a late spring 2020 Providence-only student focused group to discuss the Turnaround Action Plan for Providence and other city-specific initiatives. Through this effort, RIDE will help ensure that students understand the Turnaround Action Plan, its effect on them, and what role they can play in its success.
- 247. Reinvigorated RI Parent Advisory Council and RI Student Advisory Council monthly meetings with the Commissioner to elevate student and parent voices in the policy decision making process.

- 248. Held monthly Educators in Action meetings with Providence teachers to provide a more intimate opportunity to share their current challenges and highlight what is going well within their school community.
- 249. Met and collaborated with faith-based leaders to better engage families where they congregate.



BUILD WRAPAROUND SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Promoting Mental Health through Project AWARE

- 250. Launched the first year of Project AWARE to train more than 500 educators and support personnel in Mental Health First Aid in Providence, Pawtucket and Woonsocket with a \$9 million federal grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Advocating for Expanding Counselors and Mental Health Supports in Rhode Island Schools

251. Proposed \$1 million in its FY21 budget to increase the number of counselors, social workers, and other mental health professionals in schools using funds previously allocated for School Resource Officers to strengthen school culture.
252. Proposed \$590,000 in FY21 budget for voluntary mental health training for teachers across the state to support Social Emotional Learning (SEL) within classrooms.
253. Honored two staff members at RIDE who received the RI School Counselors Association's 2019 Advocate of the Year award.

Relaunching the Early Warning System

254. Started user testing in East Providence of the updated Early Warning System (EWS) dashboard in collaboration with the Brown Policy Lab and DataSpark to identify 9th through 12th graders at risk of not graduating on time. Using a series of indicators, 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. The dashboard should be used as a starting point for identification of at-risk students who may require intervention.

Expanding Civic and Community Engagement through Rhode Island

255. Awarded \$1.5 million in grants to 11 community-based organizations — seven working directly with Rhode Island public schools —

to implement community service programs throughout the state.

Awarding Grants to Support Homeless Students

256. Awarded approximately \$331,000 in federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act Education for Homeless Children and Youth sub-grants to support homeless students in eight school systems that demonstrated how they would provide temporary, special, and supplementary services.

Allocating Federal Funds that Support Wraparound Services and Community Involvement

257. Enhanced the application and review of Title IV-A funds for districts to better understand how to use these funds to improve a well-rounded education, improve conditions for learning, health and safety, and improve use of technology in instruction.
258. Supported 43 programs in 13 school districts serving high-need students with extended school day and school year academic enrichment programs through the 21st Century Community Learning Center (Title IV B) program.

Ensuring efficient statewide transportation, especially for homeless students and students in foster care

259. Engaged diverse group stakeholders, including superintendents, the Department of Children Youths and Families, and school administrators in development of operational improvements to the statewide transportation program.

260. Issued Request For Proposals for statewide bus vendors and providers that built in enhanced performance management contracting. Through this enhanced performance management contracting, RIDE will ensure efficient transportation operations that serve students and school systems.

FORGE PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY

Developing a Collaborative Long-term Vision for Rhode Island Education

261. In partnership with the Rhode Island Foundation, participated in and supported the Rhode Island Foundation's long-term education planning committee, consisting of educators, policy makers, community members, and other leaders to craft a shared vision for Education in Rhode Island. As part of this effort, RIDE supported the *Make it Happen: A World Class Public Education for RI* community brainstorming session to get feedback on the proposed shared vision and plan. In early 2020, this group released a 10-year plan for improving education in Rhode Island. *Chart a Course, Stay the Course: Rhode Island's Path to a World Class Public Education System.*

Investing in Classrooms through DonorsChoose

262. Announced full funding of 261 teacher projects totaling \$131,648 in November 2019 through the online crowdfunding website DonorsChoose.org, made possible through the generosity of the Partnership for Rhode Island and Theresia Gouw, a board member of the Corporation of Brown University and

DonorsChoose.org. In total, these projects impacted 24,612 students.

Bringing Industry and Education together to Ensure Quality Career and Technical Education Programs

263. Supported career and technical education in partnership with industry and educators to meet the needs of Rhode Island employers and help prepare students to succeed in the 21st century economy. This partnership is actively overseen by the CTE Board of Trustees, consisting of representatives from both education and industry.

264. Continued assisting the CTE Board of Trustees, which meets on a frequently basis throughout the year to facilitate initiatives such as P-TECH CTE programs, CS4RI, and the PrepareRI Internship program.

265. Awarded Computer Science for Rhode Island (CS4RI) High School grants to expand computer science pathways in Rhode Island. The CS4RI grants, supported through a \$2.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education, provided \$20,000 each to 20 high schools, as well as professional development for teachers and opportunities for additional computer science coursework for students.

Establishing the Fund for Rhode Island Public Education

266. RIDE established the Fund for Rhode Island Public Education in partnership with the Rhode Island Foundation. This special fund is a direct way to accept donations from individuals, corporations and foundations inter-

ested in improving PK-12 public education statewide.

267. The fund launched initially launched with a \$20,000 commitment from the Rhode Island Commodores, a non-profit, non-partisan organization that promotes economic development in the Ocean State, and has since been used to help raise resources to improve education across Rhode Island and help expand technology access to assist with distance learning during the COVID-19 crisis.

Release a strategic plan to increase volunteer and national service programs

268. Released, in collaboration with ServeRI, the Rhode Island State Service Plan 2020-2023, developed over the course of eight months with input from more than 500 Rhode Islanders to increase volunteer and national service programs, like AmeriCorps, that benefit Rhode Island communities.

Increasing RIDE's Capacity for Community Engagement

269. Re-prioritized fiscal resources to establish a Community Engagement team that can more directly engage and support students, educators, and the community.

INVITE FEEDBACK AND CREATE RESPONSIVE POLICIES ACCORDINGLY

Hosting Statewide Focus Groups to Inform Community-Demanded Policies

270. Hosted 13 statewide focus groups and work sessions to engage community in developing solutions on problems issues identified by

the community, such as cell phone guidance, school culture resources, and creating safer schools.

Engaging Educators to hear their Feedback

271. Held monthly Educators in Action meetings with teachers to provide a more intimate opportunity to share their current challenges and highlight what is going well within their school community.
272. Held weekly meetings with Providence teachers to provide them the opportunity to share with the Commissioner their current challenges and highlight what is going well within their school community. RIDE has continued these meetings virtually during COVID-19.

Launching 2020 SurveyWorks to Evaluate School Climate and Culture

273. Launched the 2020 administration of SurveyWorks statewide school culture and climate survey to collect critical feedback from students, families, and educators after nearly 126,000 stakeholders participated in 2019 survey on topics including school safety, professional learning for teachers, respect between students and teachers, and school environment.
274. Solicited question suggestions for SurveyWorks from Providence parents for a Providence-specific administration of SurveyWorks.



The Pursuit of Excellence Has Only Just Begun

Commissioner Infante-Green has worked hard to build relationships with superintendents, lawmakers, business leaders, and school leaders. But above all, she has worked to build a direct line to students – the people at the center of all of RIDE’s work.

Students have remained at the center of all decision making at RIDE over the past year, through the COVID-19 crisis, the intervention of Providence Public School District, and the transformation of school curriculum to meet the needs of 21st century learning environments.

Students at the center: That will not change in the year ahead.

She has listened at morning coffee hours at schools and in meetings with students and educators who wanted to share their honest thoughts and ideas. She has worked to listen carefully and earn trust through community engagement – one conversation at a time.

The Commissioner puts the students of Rhode Island behind every effort to develop and strengthen the agency she leads. She remains committed to improving teacher development and diversity through expanding world-class talent. She pledges to continue the important work of improving student outcomes by focusing on excellence in learning. Through it all, she will make sure that students are the first and last factor considered in every decision at RIDE.





RIDE Rhode Island
Department
of Education