



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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www.ride.ri.gov



Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner

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Dear Friends of Education,

As we work together to transform education in Rhode Island, one of our priorities is to invest our resources wisely in order to improve student achievement. I am very pleased to let you know that we have taken a major step toward meeting that goal.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE), in partnership with the Auditor General and all school districts in the state, has now implemented an unprecedented financial reform called the Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA).

The UCOA is a system of numbers and a method of accounting that provides transparency, uniformity, accountability, and comparability of financial information for all schools and districts. For the first time, school leaders, teachers, parents, legislators, and other education stakeholders can compare financial data across school districts in a reliable, consistent manner.

From here on, our school districts will use UCOA to track revenues and expenditures in their day-to-day accounting and to inform their financial decisions. UCOA will help districts ensure that they are using their investments to improve instruction and to advance learning.

At RIDE, we will use UCOA to identify effective practices. We are entering the UCOA data into the RIDE Data Warehouse, which already contains a wealth of data on student achievement. We soon will be able to examine our data to see where investments in education have led to improved student achievement. More important, we will share this information in order to help all schools and districts invest their resources wisely.

All Rhode Island districts, charter public schools, and state-operated schools are part of the UCOA system. In order to be sure that UCOA data are accurate and valid, independent accounting firms, which the Auditor General will monitor, will audit UCOA data annually.

You can find more information about this important initiative on the RIDE Web site, at: <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Finance/funding/Uniform%20Chart%20of%20Accounts/Default.aspx>. I believe that you will find UCOA data to be accessible, informative, and useful. The UCOA data may raise many questions about how districts invest their resources. I encourage all users of the UCOA data not to make assumptions based solely on the data. Ask us or your local school officials about expenditures in order to get a full understanding of the financial picture.

I want to thank our partners, including the superintendents and school business officers from across the state, for their commitment to the success of this important initiative. Working together, I am confident that we can make Rhode Island the home of America's best public schools.

Sincerely,

Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner

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