

Building a “Transformative” Partnership between Charter and District-Managed Schools in
Rhode Island: Design and Implementation of RIDE’s District-Charter Collaboration Grants

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Building a “transformative” partnership across sectors

On August 13, 2021, Rhode Island Education Commissioner Angélica Infante-Green convened the Urban Core Education Summit. For the first time in recent Rhode Island education history, leaders of the Providence Public School District, the Central Falls School District, and charter schools in the two cities met to share their views on education improvement, identify common challenges, and listen to each other’s insights. As Commissioner Infante-Green opened the Summit, “When you are making changes, there is always noise. If you are not hearing the noise, you have got to wonder what you are doing. This is noisy work, making changes for kids.” Indeed, the Summit signals a transformative pathway toward student learning and schooling success.

Having leaders across the sectors of charter schools and district-managed schools is a disruptive act. The dominant practice has been intersectoral competition between charter and district-managed schools. Competition tends to permeate every core function of the education policy system, including student enrollment, teacher hiring and retention, principal leadership, and, of course, funding and facilities. Given the competitive environment, school leaders in the two sectors seldom have the opportunity to discuss issues of professional practice. The Summit aims to change the current business-as-usual practices by enabling cross-sector communication and exchange. Leaders and practitioners across the school workplace have much to share and collaborate to better serve the students and families of their respective communities. “This partnership represents the possibility that someday we can all look at the community and say that these are all of our kids.” - Angelo Garcia (Founder/Head of School at Segue Institute for Learning)

Since the inaugural Summit in August 2021, state and local school leaders have made concerted efforts to build a “transformative” partnership across sectors. The partnership is characterized by several conditions:

- Leadership and commitment by the Commissioner of Education Infante-Green to foster district-charter collaboration in a series of meetings as part of the Urban Education Summit.
- Meetings of the Summit were well attended and involved broad leadership representation from both charter and district sectors in Providence and Central Falls.
- At the Urban Education Summit meetings, leaders in the two sectors shared their views and practices on common challenges, such as student attendance and professional development to support MLLs, among others.
- Leadership engagement in the Summit enabled RIDE to purposefully design the Request for Proposal for competitive grants to implement specific initiatives that involved charter and district collaboration.
- The exchange of ideas has turned into collaborative actions across sectors, as indicated by the launching of four projects supported by the charter-district collaboration grants.

- As of April 2023, the Rhode Island Department of Education has awarded \$200,000 in grants to four charter-district partnerships, with the explicit purpose of creating and sustaining collaboration in the two sectors.

Literature Review

Rhode Island's effort in building collaborative, cross-sector partnerships is informed by practices in several cities, including Denver, Washington D.C., Boston, and Central Falls, RI.

Denver has been working on district-charter collaboration since 2008 and has reaffirmed their commitment to making its district accessible, transparent, and open to all families. One way in which they have led in this area is by adopting a Unified Enrollment model for their district. Before unified enrollment, the application process was confusing and hard for parents to navigate. Denver is unique in that students can opt to go into a district outside of Denver, and in 2009 46% of the district's students went to non-traditional public schools, which include magnets and charters (A+ Colorado, 2019). Before instituting unified enrollment, Denver had no data that traced students across the dozens of magnet and charter school application processes (A+ Colorado, 2019). Taking this into account, Denver's School Choice Transparency Committee became one of the first of two school districts (the other being New Orleans) to implement a unified enrollment system in 2012. This process promoted transparency and held Charter schools accountable for serving all students within the district.

Before Unified Enrollment the Denver School District created SPF, School Performance Framework. This outlined a common set of school quality indicators for both district and charter schools for families to evaluate. This enabled Denver to participate in the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's District-Charter Collaboration Compact, which they signed in 2010 with goals surrounding equity, access, and transparency (Stern, 2016). One highlighted project is Compact Blue, an information-sharing event in which DPS teachers and administrators meet with their charter counterparts to share data, participate in professional development, and collaborate on curriculum plans and interim assessments (Stern, 2016). Data sharing is such a vital component of cross-sector collaboration. If the students' well-being is truly the motivation, sharing best practices and student information amongst schools to best prepare for incoming students is essential to their success. Other initiatives from the compact include simplifying the charter renewal process and the district's support in providing charter schools with unused city buildings (Stern, 2016).

Another city making strides in charter-district collaboration is Washington D.C. In D.C., the mayor controls charters, traditional public schools, and the school board. In the past 10 years, their NAEP scores have risen by 8% and enrollment has grown by 20,000 kids, which points to a shift in public confidence in the public school system. Families are all given the option to attend out-of-boundary schools or public charter schools, and 48% of their students are served by 123 charter schools (Allender, S., Browning, A., Chait, R., Dwyer, C., Keirstead, C., & Nabors, A., 2019).

Similar to Denver, to strengthen cross-sector collaboration, D.C. focused on sharing data, equitable access for families to all school options, improving academic program quality, and facilitating student knowledge (Allender, S., Browning, A., Chait, R., Dwyer, C., Keirstead, C., & Nabors, A., 2019). Their first initiative was in 2010 when OSSE, DCPS, Individual charter schools, and charter management organizations came together and won a federal “Race to the Top” grant. After this, the district started the Student Growth Task Force, a district data share initiative. Building on this they created equity reports which provided easily digestible data to families surrounding schools. This transparency helped to dispel myths that community members had about both charter and public schools. Another data-sharing project they had is called “The Bridge to High School Data Exchange and Kid Talk.” This focused on sharing gaps between schools from middle to high school. The project stemmed from research from cross-sector leaders about the lack of data that schools received and their successive failure to address incoming student needs. Raise DC, a D.C. nonprofit, and OSSE facilitated an annual event for cross-sector discussions about incoming students and how to determine the best support strategies. After 3 years, with 98% school participation, Raise DC transferred project ownership to OSSE for sustainability and funding purposes.

DC also launched a common application in 2013, that had a 99% school participation rate. A third-party consultant led this, and it was funded by both DCPS and different foundations, but now is funded by OSSE with a full-time director of partnership and engagement. To date, DC finds that this initiative has been their most successful partnership. (Allender, S., Browning, A., Chait, R., Dwyer, C., Keirstead, C., & Nabors, A., 2019).

There have also been some unsuccessful cross-collaboration efforts in DC. A cross-sector task force was created in 2016. The first pilot project was somewhat successful, where they worked on mid-year transfers, providing school options for transfers and student context for receiving schools. The second pilot project provided students in crises in DCPS with a special placement officer. Unfortunately, it was unsuccessful due to mistrust of information sharing, as well as the need for a quick turnaround time for student placements which was impossible without smooth communication between schools. Another initiative that was started but ended after 1 year due to lack of continued funding was a cross-sector partnership using money from Race to the Top to work on common core collaboration.

Getting a bit closer to Rhode Island, Boston has also seen some cross-collaboration efforts. The Boston Compact sought to build a consortium of high-quality schools by combining best practices in instruction, organization, and governance under the guidance of leadership from The Boston Public Schools, The Boston Charter Alliance, and Catholic schools in Boston. The governance model is made up of a steering committee consisting of 15 members from all 3 sectors and a 4-person executive committee from the mayor’s office, the Archdiocese, and public and charter schools. Since it holds many stakeholders, it has been able to continue its work regardless of administrative turnover in BPS.

To improve learning outcomes for students across all sectors, stakeholders identified their instructional strengths and common problems of practice. One initiative of the Boston Compact focused on sharing instructional approaches was the Boston Educators Collaborative (BEC). To structure this work, BEC partnered with Teach Plus, “a national organization with a mission to

elevate teacher's voice, to host a series of six by-teachers, for-teachers PD courses, with plans to expand the program to 34 courses in the 2017-2018 school year” (Mass, T., & Lake, R., 2018, p. 5).

Teach Plus Massachusetts works with teachers to build the leadership skills necessary for developing and implementing effective PD models (Teach Plus, 2022). Their work with BEC included the identification and training of teachers from all three educational sectors in Boston. Trained teacher-leaders then created and delivered professional development sequences specific to the common issues faced by teachers across sectors (Boston Compact, 2021). While participants in this model reported satisfaction with professional learning and improved relationships between cross-sector colleagues, one notable drawback is a lack of consistent evaluation tools to measure success because the structure of the program does not require full participation.

In addition to the BEC, The Boston Compact also hosted Networked Improvement Communities (NICs) to promote collaboration among educators. Two NICs have supported cross-sector partnerships in Boston. The Roxbury Special Education Network partners with The Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy to train Roxbury educators in root cause analysis and identifying best practices to address common needs. Additionally, the Boston Eskolta Network partners with Eskolta School Research and Design to address the needs of students who are off-track for graduation (Boston Compact, 2021).

A few key factors allowed for the successful implementation of initiatives under The Boston Compact. The work was led by representatives from all sectors with a balance of representation and voice. Teachers were engaged as thought partners in identifying common areas of need and in developing peer-to-peer learning models. In the case of the NICs, specific, targeted intervention plans were developed to address common student needs. Across all initiatives, third-party providers engaged with cross-sector educators and administrators to facilitate conversations and structure professional learning to build internal capacity for sustained collaboration (Allender, S., Browning, A., Chait, R., Dwyer, C., Keirstead, C., & Nabors, A., 2019). There was also a true commitment amongst all parties to support other kinds of schools in their needs, this can be seen in these two examples: The Archdiocese and BPS have leased much-needed buildings to charter schools, and charter schools have adjusted school days to align with BPS to save the city money on transportation.

Outside of the Boston Compact, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has set standards for charter renewal and performance reviews that require charter schools to disseminate best practices to surrounding community schools. DESE offers 2-year competitive grants if a charter can prove they disseminate effective practices. Following this success, to address issues in early-grade literacy, DESE offered grants to schools to share best practices, resulting in 17 funded projects.

Finally, a local past example of collaboration is Central Falls, RI. Much of the public-facing information regarding the 2011 Central Falls Compact has been removed from the district's website, but past reviews of the district-charter collaboration, particularly concerning the Growing Readers Initiative, are available through archival news stories and an interim report

published by the Center on Reinventing Public Education. The compact, signed in 2011 under the leadership of Superintendent Frances Gallo, sought to address a series of common challenges, “including implementing a new statewide teacher evaluation, educating a high number of students living in poverty filling in gaps where funding is inadequate, recruiting and retaining strong teachers, providing services in all schools for special education students, ensuring strong instruction for English language learners, and sustaining multiple pathways to graduation” (Yatsko, et. al., 2013, p. 30).

The primary focus of the compact was to bring best instructional practices to scale by engaging in communities of practice across sectors, building upon a previously established partnership in reading through The Growing Readers Initiative (Yatsko, et. al, 2013, p. 30).

The Growing Readers Initiative was a partnership between The Learning Community, a charter school located in Central Falls, and the Central Falls School District, beginning in 2007. The results of this initiative were dramatic. During the Growing Readers pilot program, reading scores among Central Falls elementary students increased by 30%. Additionally, 75% of elementary students were at grade level by the second year of the program (Bright Spots, 2012; Leitsinger, 2012; Yatsko, et. al. 2013; Nocera, 2012). To achieve these results, the Growing Readers Initiative addressed four components: “professional development, quarterly assessments, a safety net run by reading specialists for struggling readers, and the ‘Reading Workshop,’ a model popularized by Columbia’s Teachers College that ramps up peer-to-peer and student-teacher interaction in the learning process” (Leitsinger, 2012, p. 2).

Central to the success of The Growing Readers Initiative was the clear four-component structure and a commitment from the Central Falls school district to support sustained collaboration. Initial discussions provided space for “venting” resentments or resistance (Nocera, 2012) to establish a common goal and move past preconceived notions about each sector. This laid the foundation for strong, ongoing working relationships that resulted in a shift in the way teachers used data and approached professional collaboration. Teachers from Central Falls public schools had opportunities to observe teaching practices in The Learning Community’s classrooms, and beyond structured professional development, The Learning Community provided ongoing, individualized coaching. While The Learning Community served as a PD provider for Central Falls teachers, participants stressed that the communities of practice encouraged a two-way exchange of ideas (Bright Spots, 2012; Leitsinger, 2012; Nocera, 2012). While the Central Falls Compact and Growing Readers Initiative partnerships are no longer current, there are some key takeaways regarding how they were able to achieve measurable results when they were in place.

Current Landscape

In Rhode Island, there are 41 charter schools currently in operation, under 25 different authorized charters, with the possibility of more opening up in the future. These Charter schools allow for some innovation at the local level and create the possibility of refining and developing

new types of students and school support that could benefit all communities in Rhode Island. The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) spent the past few years creating cross-collaboration partnerships that were laid out in their previous Urban Core Education Summit in the Summer of 2021. Through communication with community partners and stakeholders, RIDE set aside money to be distributed in grants.

In 2019, the Johns Hopkins Report on Providence Public Schools District (PPSD) revealed some disappointing results regarding student achievement and learning objectives under their contemporary model. The subsequent state takeover of Providence Public Schools and the stated goals are outlined in the Turnaround Action Plan. The Turnaround Action Plan lists numerous goals that pertain to improvements in community engagement, teacher recruitment and retention, learning, and making more efficient district systems. The District-Charter Partnership presents a perfect opportunity for Providence and all Rhode Island school districts to collaborate and innovate to create meaningful change for the greater school community in the state.

Current Grant Projects

Four projects are currently underway and utilizing the grant money provided by RIDE. Three of these projects are in Providence and one is in Central Falls. The schools applying for these grants proposed projects that met three criteria:

- Included a partnership between a Charter School and either Providence or Central School Public Schools.
- Increased the effect of successful instruction and leadership on students with disabilities and English learners.
- Established or strengthened a partnership between a charter and a traditional public school (or schools) that uses the expertise and resources of all participating schools to benefit all participants.

RIDE has led this effort of collaboration by providing the entire funding for the District-Charter Collaboration Grant. RIDE's education grant-making has supported several partnerships between public charter schools and traditional district schools, in publicizing this grant opportunity. The following projects are listed below:

- Blackstone Valley Prep (BVP), Blackstone Academy, Segue Institute for Learning, The Learning Community, CFSD, and the City of Central Falls all applied to focus on strengthening and sharing afterschool programs across the city of Central Falls through the hiring of a shared afterschool program coordinator.
- Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts (TAPA) and Providence Public Schools (PPSD) applied to lead the next phase of work on Unified Enrollment, including reviving stakeholder engagement and contracting a landscape analysis to inform all charters on what is needed to move toward a robust Unified Enrollment system.

- Charette Charter, Village Green, Nowell Academy, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College, Providence Preparatory Academy, UCAP (a non-charter state-funded collaborative public school located in Providence), and PPSD applied to hire a shared MLL Specialist to lead shared professional development and consortium work geared towards supporting multilingual learners.
- Achievement First and PPSD, in partnership with Lifespan medical providers, applied to host a physical and social-emotional health program, run by Lifespan, at the co-located Achievement First and Fortes-Lima site.

Summary of the Collaboration Grant Projects

Name of the Grant	Key Partners	Amount of Funds Each Grantee Received	Intended Number of students/families/teachers affected by the grant
After-School Programming	Blackstone Valley Prep (BVP), Blackstone Academy, Segue Institute for Learning, The Learning Community, CFSD, and the City of Central Falls	\$75,000	All families in Central Falls
Multilingual Learning Teacher Professional Development	Charette Charter, Village Green, Nowell Academy, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College, Providence Preparatory Academy, UCAP, and PPSD	\$50,000	All MLL families in charters and Providence Public Schools District
Shared Health Services	Achievement First, Lifespan, and PPSD	\$15,000	Two full grades (~120 families)
Unified Enrollment, EnrollRI	Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts (TAPA) and Providence Public Schools (PPSD)	\$60,000	All students in Pre-K-12 schools in Rhode Island

The Grant Application and Selection Process

Grant Application Components

- **Statement of Need (35%):** Is the collaborative work student-centered, future-focused, and motivated by equitable outcomes for all students and/or geared towards a specific population of students? Is this a demonstrated need in both the charter and traditional district sectors? Does the statement of need clearly state how this plan will address learning loss tied to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- **Scope of Work and Work Plan (35%):** Is the approach or model exciting, challenging, and community-focused? Is there evidence that it is aligned with authentic engagement with students and community members? Is there a clear theory of action that justifies the approach or plan? Do the goals and milestones align with the statement of need?
 - **Proposal Goals:** Under the Scope of work, please clearly define your goals for the proposal. State what you are aiming to accomplish, and how the work outlined will yield better outcomes.
- **Demonstrated Capacity (10%):** Does the team have a clear structure for collaboration? Is there a plan for shared workload and collaborative decision-making?
- **Budget (10%):** Does the proposed budget cover activities and needs that are reasonable and necessary to accomplish the visioning, planning, and launching of concepts?
- **Leadership Commitment/Operational (10%):** Is there endorsement from leadership in the charter and traditional school district sectors? Is leadership committed to supporting and implementing the project over time?

Grant Approval Themes

Following the success of the “Urban Core Education Summit” in the Summer and Fall of 2021, RIDE entered the next phase of its work on District-Charter Collaboration with the release of an application for District-Charter Collaboration Grants. Through these grants, RIDE is encouraging increased cross-sector and cross-district collaboration between urban charters and urban traditional school districts to benefit the children of Providence and Central Falls. To be eligible for grant funding, applications had to be co-submitted by at least one school leader in the charter sector, and one school or district leader from either Providence Public Schools and/or Central Falls Public Schools. RIDE prioritizes funding for projects that focus on building positive relationships and creating a system of long-term sustainability for resource sharing and

communities of practice among educators and stakeholders across all sectors. Decisions will be made by early June 2022. With the support of these grants, schools across different sectors can learn together, share effective practices, and create the path forward for the benefit of all our kids. All grants are for up to \$75,000.

Grant Application Feedback

Discussions with current grant partners reveal themes of appreciation with the RIDE team and the specific consultations. Partners explicitly mention how much they appreciate the prompt responsiveness of the support team overseeing the decision-making processes and answering any potential questions. However, since this is the first time that cross-sector collaboration grants are made available, it is not surprising that partners mention the difficulty of meeting the grant requirements in the present time frame and often note feeling rushed or confused at points when waiting for more information. Stakeholders in both district and charter sectors would need to adjust their usual practice to jointly apply for the grants. Possibly more consultation could be necessary or a more streamlined process to mitigate some of the application difficulties.

Description of each Partnership

Strengthening Afterschool Programs

Partners: Blackstone Valley Prep (BVP), Blackstone Academy, Segue Institute for Learning, The Learning Community, CFSD, and the City of Central Falls.

After a lengthy budgeting and review process, the Central Falls School District identified additional initiatives that would greatly benefit the educational advancement of its students. One of these was generating access to more comprehensive and aligned extracurricular opportunities available to all students in the area, regardless of the schools they attend. A cohesive afterschool program can help families coordinate their children's after-school programming more efficiently.

Over the past several years, the City of Central Falls has received numerous grants to renew and repurpose many of its public spaces, including tennis courts, futsal courts, and the Blackstone Valley landing (kayaking), to name a few. To take advantage of and expose the students to the renewed spaces in Central Falls, the Director of After-School Programming has been responsible for coordinating after-school programs that utilize the city's public space.

The role of the Director of After School Programs includes the creation and connection of after-school programs for all grade levels, open to all students from charter and public schools. The Program Director, managing a broad scope of projects, aids in eliminating silos while bringing cohesiveness to the City's after-school programming. This would be the beginning phase of creating a cohesive, "one-stop" approach to help eliminate silos between charter and district schools to support all families. Through this partnership, the city of Central Falls is on the

climax of a transformative moment in the city's history. They have never been more prepared and eager to continue collaborating on this exciting initiative to improve student engagement and outcomes.

The participants in this program have greatly appreciated the participation by RIDE and believe it lends some legitimacy to the program. They have benefitted from the opportunity to connect with professional colleagues. The program has emphasized the importance of being transparent across schools and districts in the state and allows educators to take responsibility for a wide population of students. Additionally, the added benefit of having a consultant working with all participating schools means that there is a one-stop shop model and that administrators, teachers, and families know whom to go to with questions.

Charter participants in the program had significant suggestions for improvement of the program. They claimed that there is a lack of specific direction from RIDE and that money and consultants can only go so far. They insist that extracurricular initiatives will not stick unless serious pressure is placed on schools and leaders to follow through on these programs. Consultants coming in need to have specific directives and goals, so they are better able to address these issues and track the outcomes to determine the efficacy of the program. Another area of improvement is the lack of awareness in the community. Many parents and families are unaware of the programs offered.

The participants have been encouraged by other aspects of the initiative. They have discovered that no matter how much conflict may exist at the administrative level, those involved do want to see all the students succeed, both in charter schools and in Central Falls School District. Additionally, professional connections have benefitted teachers at all schools. However, certain key players have noted that not all schools are participating equally. Some schools want to hold onto their resources more rather than pool them into collaboration. As a result, the overall relationship between charter and public schools has not changed significantly.

Participants in the program have found increased engagement among many key players throughout this program. Districts and charter schools have communicated at all levels, including principals, after-school workers, families, and other community committees. The schools involved have found these connections and conversations to be useful. Specifically, charter participants believed that these connections have enabled school leaders to become more connected to the local community. They are hopeful that the longer and more established charter schools become, the more educators state-wide will realize the importance of non-academic needs in school. There are more opportunities for learning in the city outside of the four walls of the classroom. For the benefits from the program to truly take effect, participants insisted that there needs to be more direct involvement from RIDE. This will ensure that all schools are contributing equally to the program. Additionally, grantees felt that there was a lack of specific direction from RIDE which contributed to the disparity in involvement from the schools.

The following deliverables have been/are used as measures of success and accountability for the project concerning the After School Programs:

- Collaboratively develop a job description for the role to be on the city team and support all CF kids across the district and charter.
- Recruit and hire for After-School Program Director for the City of Central Falls.
- Plan and collaborate with District, Charter, and City leaders to develop the scope and scale of offerings for the Fall after-school program.
- Weekly strategy sessions between the respective after-school coordinators in Charter and Public schools meet with the Director of After School Program (will include developing a way to gather stakeholder input).
- Recruit staffing to support programming (includes new staff orientation with representation from district, charters, and City).
- Recruit students to programs.
- Conduct pre- and post-surveys.
- Review, plan, and collaborate with District, Charter, and City leaders to develop the scope and scale of offerings for the Winter afterschool program.

Unified Enrollment

Partners: Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts (TAPA) and Providence Public Schools District (PPSD).

Students in Providence have a wide array of educational choices to meet each of their unique needs. The complex systems can be time-consuming, confusing, and redundant for students and families to navigate. Furthermore, which families know about the full array isn't always equitable; what one family may understand about their choices could be very different from what another family knows. The lingering effects of the pandemic have made it even more challenging for the most vulnerable families to find the best educational options for their children. Now more than ever, educators need to explore how best to provide equitable access to all learning opportunities and support families in finding the best options for their children. This work is especially crucial due to limited staff capacity across charter and district teams, the teams need assistance to inform the next phase of a unified enrollment experience for families.

Grand Isle Group (GIG), now known as Civic Solutions, successfully managed the first phase of unified enrollment in the charter space by supporting the launch of the first-ever Family Information Tool (FIT) and the first-ever charter public common application, and they are eager to continue to offer support. The expansion of statewide enrollment through including the largest public school district requires significant front-end work with district officials and the charter leaders who operate in those districts. Before any further staffing or technology solution investments are made, schools must first understand what the needs are and how best to address them. It is also an opportunity to do meaningful stakeholder engagement with families to build processes and make recommendations for continuous improvement that is responsive to their needs and experiences.

Upon completing this project, Providence Public Schools District and charters will clearly understand the processes, policies, staffing, and ongoing outreach necessary to improve the family experience.

Grantees have seen preliminary positive results from this partnership. It has united educators in a common goal and has started to remedy many of the animosities that existed between district and charter schools. Participants have been brought together by the desire to improve the enrollment experience for families.

While the outlook is positive, key players did note that there are some improvements to be made. Grantees have stated that they haven't received sufficient funds or time to address root issues and get a program off the ground. Additionally, certain participants have felt that not all key participants have been contributing equally and that certain key players have been difficult to reach. These participants would appreciate more direct and mandatory supervision from RIDE. The largest hurdle for the grantees was a lack of direction in the beginning. They were unsure of how to utilize the funds. However, bringing in a consulting group with the funds helped the program tremendously in terms of direction and communication with key partners, including RIDE.

The schools and families have shown significant support and interest in the outcomes of this partnership. Grantees have found that communicating and educating with the local community has enabled more support and excitement over the program. However, the program has been more of a top-down approach and as it is still in the early stages, the grantees are still working on how to support direct family engagement. Overall, the program is showing promise and support, and participants are excited about its future.

The following deliverables have been/are used as measures of success and accountability for the project concerning the Unified Enrollment Program:

- Creation of core team and meeting cadence.
- Development of interview guide and focus group materials.
- Approximately 30 interviews of PPSD/school administrators, parents, and community members via Zoom or teleconference.
- 1-2 parent focus groups via Zoom (and in person, if possible).
 - Consolidation of notes and understanding of themes.
- Creation of presentation of a PowerPoint deck outlining findings from stakeholder engagement and recommended next steps.
- Meeting Facilitation: work with district leadership and Enrollment Steering Committee to develop a long-term vision for unified enrollment that is fair and equitable for families and schools.
- PPSD Landscape Analysis & Understanding: work with PPSD staff to understand current enrollment policies and procedures for the district.
 - Compare the current state against best practices.
 - Codify current best policies and procedures and identification of gaps.
- Develop monthly action items and recommendations based upon core team meetings and revised scope of work timeline as the project evolves.

- Document policy recommendations related to applications, the lottery, and enrollment practices.
- Core team strategic planning and ongoing collaboration for phase two of unified enrollment.

Multilingual Learners (MLL) Specialist

Partners: Charette Charter, Village Green, Nowell Academy, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College, Providence Preparatory Academy, UCAP, and Providence Public Schools District (PPSD).

The partnership of Charette Charter, Village Green, Nowell Academy, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College, Providence Preparatory Academy, UCAP, and Providence Public Schools District (PPSD) applied for and received a grant from the Rhode Island Department of Education to hire a shared MLL Specialist to lead shared professional development and consortium work geared towards supporting multilingual learners. This partnership represents how crucial it is for Rhode Island to prioritize the learning needs of historically underserved students, especially multilingual learners who, like all students, greatly suffered learning losses due to the pandemic. For this consortium of schools to address this need, they are collaborating on refining best practices, taking full advantage of superior professional development, and implementing interventions that will best serve their students. This partnership's work is motivated by the need to improve the existing teaching practices. The work aims to improve teaching practices, build capacity, and ultimately strive to achieve more equitable outcomes for MLL students no matter their school.

The Charter Consortium has been expanding its focus on school reform by implementing a high-quality curriculum to meet new requirements demanded by school accountability measures. This lift demands much from the individual schools and the teachers. Building off of prior efforts between the Consortium and the Providence Public Schools District makes the tasks much more doable. Improving the use of high-quality curriculum, while providing sustained professional learning for teachers will allow the schools to better serve their students.

Ultimately, the aim is to ensure that multilingual learners receive the support that they need in the form of rigorous instruction, materials, and academic choices within the Providence school's community. All the parties involved emphasized the need to support students at all levels with this support by bringing equity into their curriculum.

In a check-in with the participants of this program, they stated that one of the main pain points was applying for and writing the grant. They were frustrated by the short timeline given to collect a wide variety of new information and prepare the school for the tasks required by the grant. While charter schools can move relatively quickly, public school districts like the Providence Public School District could be slowed down by bureaucracy and red tape. The participants commented that moving forward, a streamlined and more user-friendly application process would be beneficial.

The greatest impact of the program thus far has been the ability of these different schools to collaborate and share initiatives. For example, a teacher from PPSD was able to participate in a professional development program at one of the charter schools. Additionally, a PPSD student was able to meet with an author through this partnership. The exchange of academic content has enabled a unification of MLL learning across the schools, and the ability that the teachers have to exchange information means that they can learn from a large pool of students and develop a strong MLL curriculum. Overall, the MLL classroom consultant provided to the consortium was able to support more teachers at all the schools. This resulted in more schools, even smaller schools with fewer resources, supporting MLL students.

Charette Charter is currently planning a webinar that will include all the participants in the program, include a professional development aspect, and bolster interest and improvement of the program. The MLL Specialist Program has proved that both charter and public-school teachers have an admiration for the students and families of Providence and will continue to find unique ways to work for their betterment.

Many of the participants found that the MLL Specialist program has enabled teachers to become more proactive and dedicated to making the program successful. Many teachers have gone above and beyond to engage in the program. The exchange of information between the MLL Specialist and schools has allowed teachers to stay educated on what is going on in the field, and Providence specifically. Many participating teachers have appreciated the ability to connect with other local teachers and gain a better pulse on the activity in their city.

Moving forward, participants would like to improve their parent engagement in the program. Thus far, parent invitations to engage in or learn about the program have fallen flat. Parent engagement in learning is very important to a student's success, especially those who are learning in multicultural environments. If participants can continue in the program, they will strive to develop strategies that better include parents in the program.

The following deliverables have been/are used as measures of success and accountability for the project concerning the MLL Specialist:

- Broad year-long review.
- Ad is placed on School Spring and other tools available in the urban community for an MLL Specialist. Hired for the 2022-2023 school year. A signed contract will be a deliverable.
- MLL Specialist attends the first monthly Consortium meeting and provides professional development to members on identified interventions and goals. The agenda and minutes will be deliverables.
- Meet with the Administrative Teams at each of the participating schools. The plan of Action will be deliverable.
- Ongoing, sustainable, monthly one-hour meetings where the MLL Specialist attends the monthly Consortium meeting and provides professional development to members development to members on identified interventions and goals. The agenda and minutes will be the deliverables.

- Midpoint and year-end check with each school's Administrative Team to measure outcomes. A revised Plan of Action, if necessary, will be deliverable.
- Weekly check-ins with Ms. Carolyn Taylor (of Charette Charter, who served as the project lead), schedule, and notes from the meetings will be the deliverables.
- Curriculum review for each school including a review of all MLL resources.
- Regular school hours at Charette with off-campus time at member, schools are to be determined by a plan of action with the expectation that flexibility and accountability will be required.
- Adherence to the Educator's Practice guide and utilizing evidence-based intervention approaches in the academic classroom.
- Professional development will be offered throughout the school year to teacher teams in various forms according to need.
- Utilizing Culturally Responsive School Checklists to identify areas that need professional development and the frameworks for curriculum provided by RIDE.

Social-Emotional Health Program

Partners: Achievement First, Lifespan, and Providence Public Schools District (PPSD).

Approximately 22,440 children are enrolled in grades PreK-12 in Providence each year, and many of these are our most at-risk youth in the state of Rhode Island. In an already vulnerable population, the COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating effects on Rhode Island's children by impacting family economic well-being, physical and mental health, safety, access to education, and educational outcomes. With greater magnitude in BIPOC communities, racial and ethnic disparities may reflect barriers to accessing necessities.

In the first Charter/Public co-location in Providence, Achievement First, Promesa Elementary School, and Fortes Lima Elementary School serve the same Providence students with the greatest severity of needs. Although two separate schools operate under one roof, the students embody the same demographics and disparities.

To assist children/families at the Achievement First Promesa and Fortes Lima Elementary Schools, the partnership with Lifespan gives both schools access to Lifespan's Connect for Health Program. There is abundant evidence demonstrating the bio-psycho-social basis of health and Providence education leaders repeatedly cite that they "cannot do it alone" and would like to integrate education, health, and wellbeing interventions. Connect for Health screens for health and education-related social needs like food, housing, transportation, and commodities, and provides navigation assistance to remove barriers and build family efficacy. Connect for Health connects patients with the resources they need to be healthy.

Knowing that there currently are significant learning losses and unmet needs among both student bodies, Connect for Health leans on more than two decades of effective collaboration with academic partners. The program's Advocates are primarily from Brown University,

Providence College, Rhode Island College, the University of Rhode Island, and Grand Canyon University.

Participants in the Social-Emotional Health Program identify the collaboration across districts as the most significant benefit of the public-charter school partnership. Educators in the program have been very willing to collaborate, and the funding has greatly increased their capabilities. PPSD partners have been exposed to the flexibility of charter schools and would appreciate incorporating those aspects into their district. However, participants noted that although good conversations are occurring surrounding problems, not many solutions are being implemented. There needs to be more direction and a focus on creating concrete solutions to the problems discussed.

The PPSD and partnered charter schools have strong similar values that have contributed to the beginning success of the program. These values include an emphasis on putting students first, being open to change, and the ability to be honest without facing judgment. Additionally, some of the participating schools occupy the same physical space and have the same diverse makeup of students. Thus, being able to share resources and knowledge has benefitted the students present in all schools.

One of the participants' main priorities for the fund was enhancing the family experience through the enrollment and registration process in the C4H Program. They wanted to streamline that, so families feel as if they are being taken care of effectively and efficiently. Overall, PPSD has seen that this collaboration provides opportunities for students, families, and the community overall to be more empowered in their child's education. Additionally, interviewees noted that for the program to live up to its full potential and to increase involvement from all grantees, then there needs to be more direct participation and coordination by RIDE.

The following deliverables have been/are used as measures of success and accountability for the project concerning the Social-Emotional Health Program:

Goal: Pilot and scale a student success/family wellbeing initiative that leverages community resources to mitigate social factors that influence students' well-being and educational outcomes.

- Contract with Lifespan's Connect for Health (C4H) program to provide screening and navigation support to address student/family social determinants of health & education.
- Hire C4H Coordinator for Providence schools' pilot.
- C4H Program Coordinator attends Back to School/Orientation events for Achievement First Promesa and Fortes Lima Elementary Schools.
- Achievement First Liaison(s), Fortes Lima Liaison(s), and C4H Coordinator meet to (a) review the work plan; (b) review policies and procedures; (3) learn each school's academic, social-emotional, and cultural & climate goals for the year; and (4) finalize performance measures to track for the pilot.
- Select and train C4H Advocates who will be dedicated to serving the students and families at Achievement First Promesa and Fortes Lima Elementary Schools, selecting for experience, skills, languages are spoken, and cultural alignment with the student population.

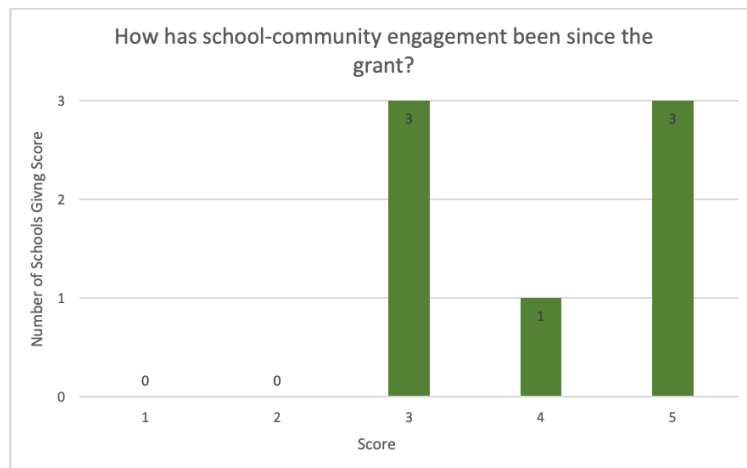
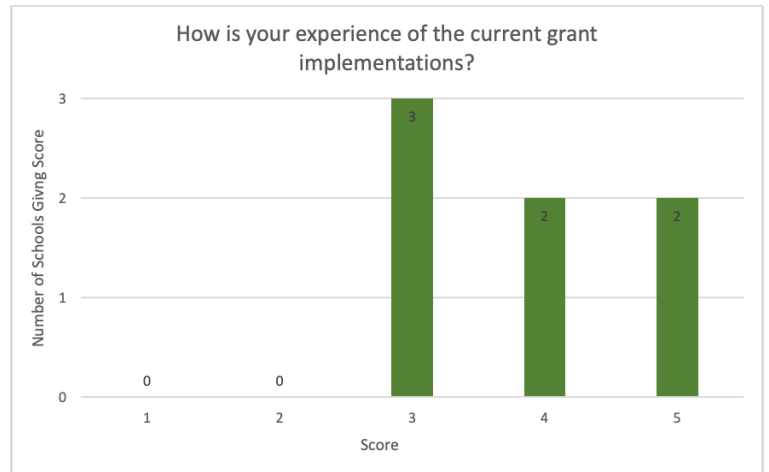
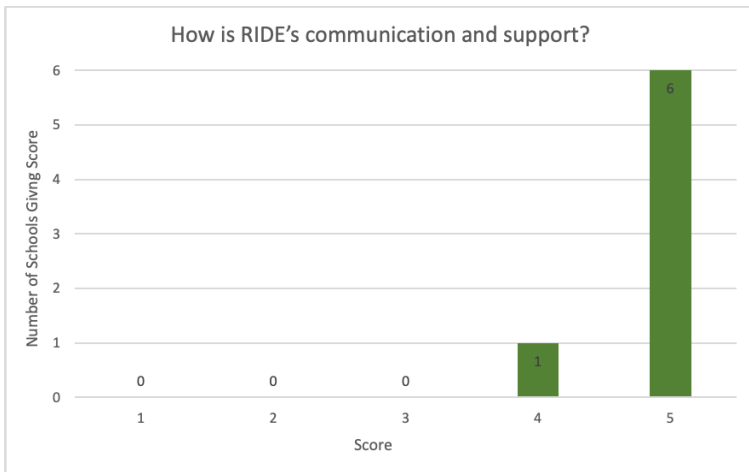
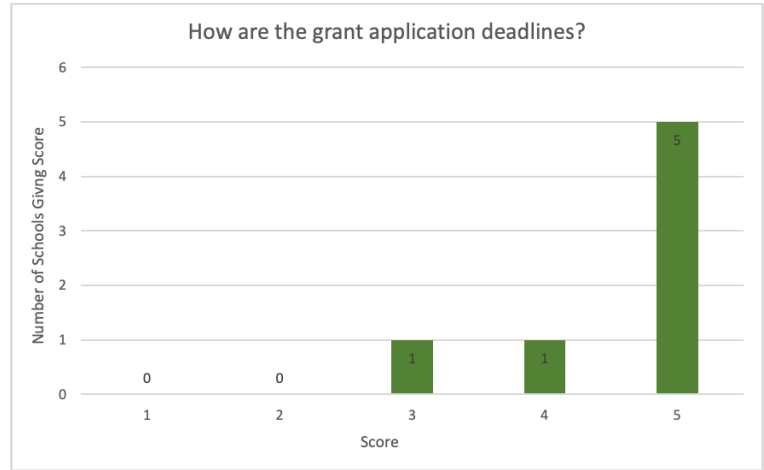
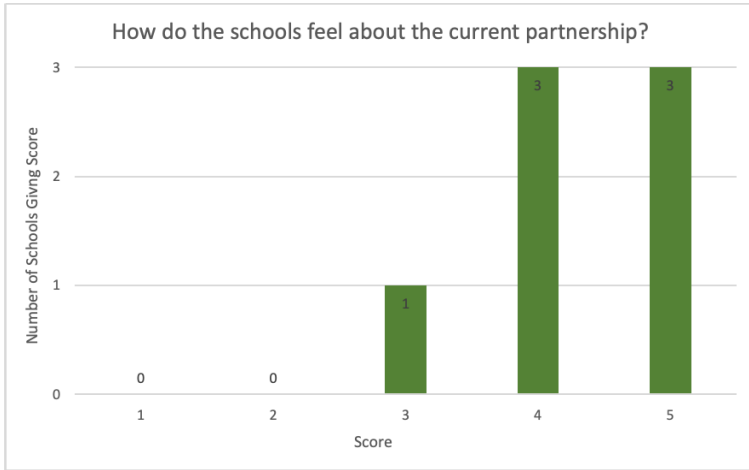
- Quarterly progress report submitted to RIDE, Achievement First Promesa School, and Fortes Lima Elementary School.
- C4H pilot launches with Advocates "open" for service at Achievement First Promesa and Fortes Lima Elementary Schools.
- Monthly pilot oversight and data review meetings.
- Final report submitted to RIDE, Achievement First Promesa School and Fortes Lima Elementary School.

Interview Summary

Overall, the participants have viewed favorably the district-charter partnership and the support that they have received thus far from RIDE. The grantees seem to believe in the work that they are doing, not only in their school but with their respective partners as well. It is very comforting to see educators from all backgrounds coming together and prioritizing the students within their communities. A program like this inspires hope that more schools and partnerships can eventually be formed and bring these benefits to all Rhode Island students. Another general takeaway is how crucial the support from RIDE has been. Without RIDE, these partnerships probably would not have arisen organically, but now after RIDE's guidance, if the partnership were to falter for any reason, many of the educators involved would still collaborate independently.

Two common suggestions for improvement mentioned in the interviews thus far have been surrounding the grant application process and the utilization of the funds. Given its newness, the grant application process has been a bit challenging for some of the partners to deliver promptly. Issues have been raised surrounding the amount of documentation required and how to gather data quickly. Second, participants suggest that there needs to be a clearer direction as to how to utilize the funds instead of just hiring a consultant. The partnership needs to set specific goals and benchmarks to monitor progress and guide the allocation of funds for real tangible changes.

Survey Results from All Stakeholders Meeting



<p>What are the most pressing issues that you think can be alleviated through further engagement in the community of practice across sectors?</p>
<p>Funding and Sustainability. Serving Multilingual Learners. Discerning how to best use funds. Communication regarding barriers to enrollment. Engaging more PPSD Schools. Deeper dive into barriers of implementation. Not losing sight of mission and goals.</p>

<p>What are some ways this partnership can be sustained?</p>
<p>Sharing outcomes related to data. Continued funding. Further conversations on level of commitment from city, school department over a period of time; not just duration of the grant cycle. Especially during summer. Experienced guidance and key decision makers from both sectors at the table.</p>

<p>What might be the anticipated number of families that might benefit from this partnership?</p>
<p>2 full grades (around 120 families). All families with students enrolled in public and charter schools. 288 MLL families. All Providence families. PPSD serves over 20,000 students. Charters across the state over 10,000.</p>

Relationship with RIDE

Overall, the interviewees seem mostly satisfied with RIDE for enabling this partnership. The partners generally appreciate the communication and responsiveness of the staff at RIDE and feel that the partnership is a worthwhile experience under RIDE’s direction. The one common issue presented refers to the turnaround time between the grant becoming available and the time and resources required to apply. In the interviewees' words, this can create issues and take time away from the prep necessary for the school year. Another common, but minor, suggestion is that RIDE should provide more technical assistance to the individual partners throughout the grant process. Additionally, some partners in the program would like more directed tasks and goals from RIDE to help guide consultants and participants.

Recommendations for Sustaining the Partnership

Grantees' Perspective

(Providence Public Schools District)

The PPSD stakeholders mention that the partnership must enable the whole community and have everyone involved for sustainability to be achieved. There needs to be more students, parents, teachers, and administrators to carry out these meetings without necessarily having to rely on scheduled events. PPSD also suggests ongoing financial support for partners in maintaining the collaborative partnership.

(Charette High School)

The monthly consortium meetings have been very helpful where people can come together and collaborate. Monthly check-ins are huge, and they appreciate the stipends. It feels very valuable. The benefit for a teacher to come in, be respected by their colleagues, and share their stories is invaluable to have teachers feel that way.

(Segue Institute)

This partnership can be more sustainable if it becomes a bit more microscopic in what needs to be the commitment (too many cooks). Identify a person to enable a monthly meeting and have a critical friend group and multiple times available for the monthly meetings to allow more people to partake. Money always helps but sometimes it hinders if there is no direction or little discretion on behalf of the stakeholders. Central Falls is allocated a ton of money, but autonomous accountability can be frustrating for the school, maybe more discretion in redirecting the money they are already allocated. Segue Institute would like to see school decisions done with them but not done to them. Investing in the adults in the school to be change agents and engage parents at all levels.

(Central Falls Public Schools)

The program could be sustained and significant only with increased intervention from RIDE. The consultants need more specific direction and achievable goals. Additionally, consistent communication and participation from RIDE would keep all the schools involved equally and ensure that no schools are being unresponsive. Funding should be transparent and continuous to allow the district, schools, and consultants to make necessary improvements and adjustments.

(Achievement First)

Schools in the program are willing and ready to help the partnership succeed, but more support from RIDE and all partners must be needed. To generate success, there needs to be more funding. Potentially hundreds of students could be benefitted from this partnership, but RIDE needs to play a bigger role, and this includes facilitating the connection and expectation of partnership between the schools and Lifespan.

(Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts)

While there has been some good initial movement, the participants fear that not enough has been done to propel the partnership forward. The longer the program set-up takes, the colder interest will be from participants and families. They are concerned about the longevity of the funds and the involvement of RIDE. If they need to reapply for the grant, it will further stall the development of the program. Key players here agreed that RIDE needs to be more directly involved to increase participation and provide guidance and consistency.

Additional Consideration

For this partnership to be sustained, the following recommendations are listed below:

- A reliable flow of funds to grantees.
- To broaden educator engagement, create monetary incentives for teacher engagement in the program. Suggestions for this program could include a lottery of awards, and a teacher's chance at winning is increased each time they participate in a part of the program.
- Allow for multiple time slots to conduct monthly meetings and check-ins to allow for more flexibility in scheduling.
- Focus future funds on schools that invest in building communities of practice and are proactive in maintaining the partnership.
- Hold open houses and informational events for families of all partnered schools to share information with them on the opportunities of the program.
- RIDE must host regular, mandatory meetings with the consultants and coordinators hired with the partnership grant money, especially in the beginning.
- A project can continue even if one of the original partners drops out.
- A more streamlined application process for grant renewals.
- Allow for more overlap between the processes required for all participating organizations.
- Schedule regular meetings with RIDE, partners, and consultants.
- Additional partners may be allowed to join the existing partnerships.
- Partnerships should be formed a year before receiving the grant, during that time, planning and logistics can be sorted out so that by the time the money comes in, the projects can be started immediately with the proper funding.

All things considered, this report suggests that the Rhode Island Department of Education's District Charter Collaboration initiative consider a continuation of the grant program.

Conclusion

The Rhode Island Department of Education-led District-Charter Collaboration represents a unique opportunity for all schools involved and other states to use as a model for a sustainable partnership that benefits all students. While it is still in the early stages, the District-Charter Collaboration has shown promise and potential to create real, significant change for the students of Rhode Island. Thus far, participants have noted a great amount of interest among schools, teachers, and families to take advantage of the benefits created by this collaboration. Teachers have benefitted through networking and professional development, which decreases their burnout and creates educators making a longer-term commitment to teaching in Rhode Island Public Schools. Additionally, district schools and charter schools have started to find common ground amongst each other, which is helping to reduce divisiveness and bring communities of practice together. Overall, the participants in the collaboration have optimism about the future of the collaboration and are excited to work more closely with RIDE to improve the program continuously.

Special Thanks to the Collaboration Grantees for Providing Information to the Reporting Team:

- Segue Institute
- Providence Public Schools District
- City of Central Falls
- Central Falls School District
- Achievement First
- Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts
- Charette High School

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