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**Rhode Island Department of Education**

**Research Agenda**

***Updated January 2022***

Background

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) believes in data-driven decision-making. RIDE’s [strategic plan](https://www.ride.ri.gov/boardofeducation/ri2015-2020strategicplanforeducation.aspx) includes the core value of Results, defined as, “We focus on outcomes, but are flexible in our approaches to achieve them.” With that in mind, RIDE is interested in continuously evaluating the efficacy of our current initiatives and learning from research to identify more effective ways to serve students.

RIDE will use quantitative and qualitative data to answer questions in this agenda to inform policy change and resource allocation, reduce equity gaps, and advance education in the state.

This document is a compilation of the agency’s current research priorities. The research questions contained in this agenda are organized according to the priorities outlined in [RIDE’s Strategic Plan for PK-12 Education (2021-2025)](https://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Inside-RIDE/Commissioner/RIDEStrategicPlan_2021-2025.pdf?ver=2021-04-22-145533-767).

RIDE welcomes outside researchers to partner with RIDE to help answer the questions outlined in this document. If you are interested in starting a research partnership with RIDE please contact Peg Votta, [Margaret.Votta@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Margaret.votta@ride.ri.gov).

## RIDE’s prioritized research areas for 2022:

* Improving student success in mathematics
* Understanding the teacher pipeline (recruitment, movers, stayers, and leavers)
* Supporting multilingual learners and differently-abled students

# Summary of Key Research Questions

## **Priority 1: Equity**

***Identifying and Closing Gaps in Access and Outcomes***

*Do all RI students have equal access to a broad and robust set of opportunities at the local level? In cases where access, experiences, and outcomes are inequitable, why does this occur?*

***Resource Equity***

*Do schools mobilize the right combination of resources to create high-quality learning experiences for all students?*

**Priority 2: Excellence in Learning**

***Educational Trajectory***

*To what extent are RI schools and districts offering and implementing high quality educational trajectories for students K-12, and what is the outcome of those trajectories?*

***Social Emotional Learning (SEL)***

*What conditions promote the mental, physical, social, and emotional well-being of RI students?*

***Curriculum and Instruction***

*How does the nature and quality of curriculum and instruction relate to student achievement/growth in RI?*

***Spending on Education and Outcomes***

*Is there a relationship between spending on education and educational outcomes?*

**Priority 3: Engaged Communities**

***Family Engagement and Supports***

*Do RI parents’ involvement in schools lead to positive school culture and/or improved student outcomes and how?*

**Priority 4: World Class Talent**

***Teacher Pipeline***

*What policies, programs, and practices for in-service preparation, professional development, recruitment, and retention of RI educators improve educator competence, professional satisfaction and, ultimately, student learning and achievement?*

***Supporting School and District Leaders***

*How effective are efforts to support school leaders and districts in RI?*

# Detailed Research Questions

## **Priority 1: Equity**

***Identifying and Closing Gaps in Access and Outcomes***

*Do all RI students have equal access to a broad and robust set of opportunities at the local level? In cases where access, experiences, and outcomes are inequitable, why does this occur?*

* How does test performance, growth, and participation vary among various student groups/categories (e.g., IEP, MLL groups, discipline, attendance) compared to students not in these groups?
  + Does this vary by gender, race/ethnicity, disability type, LRE (Least Restrictive Environment) categories, or other demographics?
  + Do outcomes vary across districts, types of assessment test taken, or socioeconomic categories?
    - For example:
      * What are the districts with more than 1% taking Alternative Assessment?
      * What are the characteristics of Alternative Assessment testers (DAS category, courses taken, services, service hours, race, gender, discipline, etc.)?
      * Does assignment to Alternate Assessment differ among districts?
* How do outcomes (e.g., graduation/dropout/retention, assessment proficiency, IEP exit status) vary among student groups (e.g., IEP, disability type, MLL groups, attendance) compared to students not in these groups?
* To what degree do various disciplinary rates and behaviors vary across RI?
  + What are each district’s suspension policies? Are they applied equitably? What effect does suspension have on academics, attendance, dropping out, etc.?
  + Are children from different demographic categories (e.g., racial/ethnicity, differently abled, homeless) more or less likely to receive certain types of disciplinary actions?
* Is there a relationship between intervention methods (e.g., Coordinated Early Intervening Services [CEIS]) and outcomes (e.g., performance, discipline) among different demographic categories?

***Resource Equity***

*Do schools mobilize the right combination of resources to create high-quality learning experiences for all students?*

* Does education spending in Rhode Island align with student, school, and community needs?
* How does education spending in Rhode Island vary by school poverty level?
* Is the funding of school capital projects equitable?
* Are school and district improvement efforts equitable? That is, are school and district improvement resources targeting students who most need support?

**Priority 2: Excellence in Learning**

***Math Achievement***

*What conditions contribute to students’ success in math?*

* Which student factors (e.g. prior learning, attendance, social emotional skills, proper accommodations) correlate with math proficiency and how?
* Which teacher factors (e.g. instructional skills, math content knowledge, classroom management, experience, student relationships) correlate with math proficiency and how?
* Which curriculum factors (e.g. curriculum on grade-level, alignment to assessment, lesson, unit and course planning, cultural relevance and real world applicability) correlate with math proficiency and how?
* Which school/district factors (e.g. resource allocation, staffing models, counseling into proper courses) correlate with math proficiency and how?
* How does the contribution of these factors vary by district and school?

***Educational Trajectory***

*To what extent are RI schools and districts offering and implementing high quality educational trajectories for students K-12, and what is the outcome of those trajectories?*

* What are the strongest elementary school indicators of success or failure in the transition from elementary school to middle school (e.g., what are the elementary school profiles/courses taken of students who succeed or fail in middle school)?
* Does the development and implementation of an Individualized Learning Plan lead to stronger educational success for students? What parts of the process drive these impacts?
* What is the extent that access to and participation in specialized programs (e.g., Advanced Placement; Dual/Concurrent, Readiness, ACN, CS4RI, etc.) lead to educational success (such as college and career readiness) and more equitable student outcomes?
  + Are the students who need the programs and services receiving them, and how does this vary among student groups or demographics?
  + Are course grades in these programs aligned to proficiency?
* What are the demographic, mobility, program, class, grade, and course trajectory profiles of students who do and do not achieve proficiency and what are their outcomes?
* Is participation in Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways correlated with positive postsecondary outcomes both in terms of community college, college, and university completion rates as well as post-graduation wage gains and career retention patterns?
  + For example, specific to CTE:
    - Do student outcomes differ between participants and non-participants?
    - Are outcomes different for students who reach “concentrator” status relative to students who are only “participants” or who do not participate?
    - Is there a relationship among CTE approved program requirements (credentials, WBL, internships, pre-apprenticeship) and college and career readiness categories?
* How important are non-core subjects, including the arts and physical education, to college and career readiness?
* How many years after a student enrolls in a charter school does growth improve?

***Social Emotional Learning (SEL)***

*What conditions promote the mental, physical, social, and emotional well-being of RI students?*

* How does ILP (Individualized Learning Plan) engagement differ by school, grade level, and student groups or demographics, and how does it relate to student outcomes?
* How does receiving school-based support services relate to students’ SEL competencies and outcomes?
* How does school SEL climate relate to student outcomes?
* Which intervention model (CEIS or IEP) is associated with better student outcomes? What are the characteristics of the students who benefit more from one intervention than the other?

***Curriculum and Instruction***

*How does the nature and quality of curriculum and instruction relate to student achievement/growth in RI?*

* What curriculum programs are Rhode Island districts currently implementing?
* What schools and districts are implementing with fidelity? Is the quality of implementation associated with professional supports?
* What are the instructional practices of the highest-performing Rhode Island teachers? To what extent can practices be identified that can be translated to other school or district contexts?
* How many teachers meet the requirements of the Right to Read Act?
* How does Right to Read Act relate to professional development (e.g., proficiency (structured literacy), and awareness (science of reading)) How does this impact student literacy and performance? How does the relationship vary by district and student groups or demographics?

***Spending on Education and Outcomes***

*Is there a relationship between spending on education and educational outcomes?*

* How do districts compare to each other (benchmark) in the way they spend their resources?
* Can district/school spending patterns help explain student growth/achievement in Rhode Island?
* How can RIDE conduct cost effectiveness analyses to better understand the cost of projects/initiatives relative to the outcomes they yield? (What data do we have/need to perform these analyses)
* How do we compare the cost effectiveness of initiatives between districts?

**Priority 3: Engaged Communities**

***Family Engagement and Supports***

*Do RI parents’ involvement in schools lead to positive school culture and/or improved student outcomes and how?*

* To what extent have districts been successful in engaging a diverse and representative group of parents and the community in the creation of the Community Advisory Boards (CABs)?
  + Have the CABs helped parents and the community to better understand district educational goals for children and district progress in meeting those goals?
  + Is there evidence of increased parent engagement in critical school planning decisions?
* What types of parental/community involvement programs or policies lead to improved school climate and student outcomes?
  + What are effective strategies for engaging parents/communities in schools?
  + What types of activities do parents feel would increase their engagement and involvement in the education of their children?
  + What types of parental involvement programs, policies, and/or practices lead to increased parental satisfaction with the education of their children?

**Priority 4: World Class Talent**

***Teacher Pipeline***

*What policies, programs, and practices for in-service preparation, professional development, recruitment, and retention of RI educators improve educator competence, professional satisfaction and, ultimately, student learning and achievement?*

* Do Ed Prep teachers differ from those who arrived through reciprocity pathways in their effectiveness and perceptions?
* How prepared do emergency preliminary certificate educators feel to meet the demands of their classrooms?
* How can bias against teachers of color on teacher certification exams be measured and addressed?
* What support models yield the best performance outcomes for beginning teachers?
* What type and level of support do different LEAS offer their beginning teachers?
* What LEAs and schools are best at retaining their teachers long-term, and why? How do teachers’ perceptions of their students, schools, and personal strengths relate to their retention?
* To what extent do teachers (and support professionals) feel valued, satisfied, and connected within their schools?
* How do teacher characteristics (teacher diversity, professional development, retention, teaching experiences) vary between charter and public schools?

***Supporting School and District Leaders***

*How effective are efforts to support school leaders and districts in RI?*

* What effect does participation in the National Institute for School Leaders program have on school leader outcomes? Is it worth the investment to put every school leader in the program? How do we continue to support school leaders after the program?
* How can we measure the implementation and impact of the new District Support Program over the next two years?

**Priority 5: Governance Structures**

*No current research priorities*