RHODE ISLAND
Urban Education
Task Force

Final Report of the Rhode Island Urban Education Task Force

# Building Our Future

## An Agenda for Quality Urban Education in Rhode Island

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*Produced by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island*

*Copies of this report and additional information about the work of the Rhode Island Urban Education Task Force are accessible at www.annenberginsititute.org/UETF*

# Contents

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Several Task Force members served as working group chairs, volunteering additional time and energy to develop the recommendations and action steps. We thank Tom Brady and Sharon Contreras, Providence Public Schools; Sarah Cahill, Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance; Rosanna Castro, formerly of Brown University; John Simmons, Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council; and Ron Wolk, the Big Picture Company. Elaine Budish, RI KIDS COUNT, and Elizabeth Jardine, Rhode Island Department of Education, stepped in to chair the Multiple Pathways working group when their chair made a transition.

Many local leaders participated in working groups and in Task Force meetings, adding considerable expertise and needed perspectives. While they are too numerous to mention here, we have listed them in appendix A1. We are grateful for their support and input.

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Finally, the Task Force wishes to thank Governor Donald L. Carcieri for his vision of developing a statewide solution to the challenges of urban education in Rhode Island. We were honored to be part of the process to develop an agenda for urban education in our beloved state; now we commit ourselves to supporting the implementation of the ideas herein.

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# Introduction to the Task Force Report

*We need to do better, particularly now with globalization and technology. No single constituency can do it alone. Collaboration is a prerequisite for change.*

Adam Urbanski, April 30, 2009, Task Force Educators' Forum

For the majority of the twentieth century, Rhode Island's families and communities thrived on an economy driven by textile and jewelry manufacturing and fishing. By the close of the century, however, financial services, trade, health, and education had replaced manufacturing and fishing as the strongest sectors of the state's economy. In 2001, for instance, financial services made up $10.9 billion of the gross state product, while manufacturing's contribution declined to $4.1 billion.

From the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 to, more recently, *Tough Choices or Tough Times* (National Center on Education and the Economy 2008), our nation's leading economists, educators, and business, political, and civic leaders have predicted that the U.S. educational system's failure to produce students equipped to participate in the new global economy would have dire economic and social consequences. According to the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce:

> [This economy] is a world in which a very high level of preparation in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, science, literature, history, and the arts will be an indispensable foundation for everything that comes after for most members of the workforce. It is a world in which comfort with ideas and abstractions is the passport to a good job, in which creativity and innovation are the key to the good life, in which high levels of education – a very different kind of education than most of us have had – are going to be the only security there is. (NCEE 2008, p. 7)

Moreover, in a digital age, this different kind of education increasingly involves electronic learning that allows students and their teachers to access knowledge and solve problems by interacting with other learners and information sources from around the globe. Digital learning as a cornerstone for twenty-first-century education and work stands in stark contrast to the typical twentieth-century school, in which learning centered on printed texts as the central tool and on classrooms and/or libraries as the major setting for knowledge development and use.

Unfortunately, too many of our classrooms throughout Rhode Island and our nation still resemble twentieth- rather than twenty-first-century learning environments. And the limited technology available is often used to create electronic texts and workbooks rather than portals to knowledge and learners around the world.

Our collective failure to redesign our state's and our nation's educational system to respond to the new world of learning and work has forced many companies to outsource high-skill jobs overseas, leaving whole communities and families behind in their wake. The warning signs of our collective failure are all around us and have become increasingly acute in the last year.

- Rhode Island has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country (*Providence Journal*, September 18, 2009).
- Rhode Island has the highest proportion of children living in poverty compared to other New England states (*2009 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*).

- Rhode Island is the lowest-ranking New England state in overall child well-being (*2009 RI KIDS COUNT Factbook*).
- Rhode Island has the second-lowest proportion of college-educated workers of any New England state (Crissey 2009).

These statistics present our community with a clear choice: support the educational status quo and continue our downward spiral, or create a future as great as our state's past by transforming our public schools so that they produce young people who can strengthen our economy, our families, and our communities.

## The Importance of Our Urban Core

Such a transformative agenda should be pursued by every school and community in our state. But, as a small and densely populated state, our economic and civic futures are highly linked to the health of our core cities: Providence, Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, and Woonsocket. And no factor is more important to the health of these cities – and hence the state – than education (see profiles of Rhode Island and the cities in appendices B1–B6).

As noted in the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (n.d.) publication *Cities Count*, "by 2020, one in five members of the state's workforce will have come from the State's urban core school systems." Currently, outcomes for students in those cities are improving, but remain unacceptably low. Only about half of elementary and middle school students from these communities achieved proficiency in the 2007-2008 assessment in English language arts, compared with about 77 percent in the rest of the state. Math achievement in these urban districts also lags behind the rest of the state, with only three or four in ten students reaching proficiency in the urban areas, compared with about seven in ten students in the rest of the state. And the graduation rate in Rhode Island's urban districts is 61 percent, compared with 74 percent in the state as a whole (see figure 4 in appendix B7).

Despite making up just under a third of the state's public school population, students in the core districts make up a large majority of the students who are characterized as English language learners and as low income. The core districts also have a high rate of student mobility – 44 percent in 2007-2008, compared with 14 percent for the rest of the state – and contain more than two-thirds of students in the state who qualify for the reduced-price or free lunch program (for details, see appendices B7–B8).

Our current system of urban public education is not a worthy vessel for children and youth in our urban core, nor for the many dedicated educators who work with them. In the words of Peter Cookson (2009), "just as the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, the wall of conventional schooling is collapsing before our eyes." Redesigning the current system to fit the needs of the twenty-first century will require vision, bold action, and an approach that harnesses the state's political, educational, social, and civic resources. It will require a technical blueprint, but one that also recognizes that reform requires concerted political, social, and cultural change.

## The Work of the Urban Education Task Force

To address these many challenges, Governor Donald Carcieri created the Urban Education Task Force in January 2008 and charged us to work with multiple stakeholders to forge a plan to generate action and the political will needed to take the first steps toward its implementation. In response to this charge, the Task Force assembled twenty-six leaders from education, business, labor, cultural institutions, youth

organizations, and faith institutions; our work was guided by a group of six national resource experts representing different perspectives on reform. The Task Force's views and recommendations were also informed by local experts serving on Task Force working groups (see appendix A1) and by several public forums and meetings with key constituents such as teachers, students, parents, and community and civic leaders from across the five core urban communities. We also convened forums in Newport and Woonsocket to glean concerns and recommendations specific to those communities (see appendix A2).

We heard consistently about participants' frustrations with the disconnect between their schools and their district central offices; with territorial politics and poor communication that divide school from community, parents from teachers, and teachers from principals and their school district leaders; and with the lack of consultation with teachers, parents, and students about policies that affect them. They urged not just new policies from their public servants, but the creation of new cultures and practices that would foster trust and engagement in public education (see appendix C1–C2). In the midst of these criticisms, we also heard and saw a foundation for hope and success through our local best-practice visits and our conversations with students, teachers, and parents who are building partnerships to create twenty-first-century schools.

## On Our Way to Twenty-first-Century Schools

There are many promising examples of innovations already in place in our urban communities across the state.

Since 2007, Central Falls High School and the University of Rhode Island have engaged in a collaboration designed to address the persistently low rate of student achievement, and the school now has full accreditation from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The Central Falls School District and the Learning Community Charter School have developed the Growing Readers Initiative, which links Central Falls elementary schools with supports and strategies implemented at the Learning Community. The model embeds professional development in the school day and helps teachers to use data to inform instruction. At the Captain Hunt School, where the program has been in place the longest, the proportion of students scoring at or above the benchmark on kindergarten reading assessments grew by 38 percent from September to March 2009.

This fall, Providence opened two new state-of-the-art education facilities to serve the city's middle and high school students. The Career and Technical Academy opened to 400 new high school students who will work within nine different technical centers. The Nathan Bishop Middle School reopened to welcome 250 sixth-graders from across the city following a three-year, $35 million renovation that included the addition of state-of-the-art instructional technology. Finally, a partnership between the school district, the Providence After School Alliance (PASA), and the mayor's office is working to build a seamless system of rigorous and rich out-of-school learning opportunities for middle and high school students through its after-zones model. This year, PASA received a grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to extend the afterschool model to more of the city's youth.

The Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program (UCAP) is an independent public school that serves 140 seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-graders from the cities of Providence, Central Falls, and Cranston. All UCAP students enter the school having been retained in grade at least once. In addition to an accelerated academic

experience, UCAP students receive the supports and opportunities, both in school and out, needed to succeed in school, college, the economy, and broader society. A recent evaluation of the effectiveness of the UCAP program reported positive effects for UCAP students in both their future high school performance and rate of graduation.

The Pawtucket School Department has partnered with the Rhode Island School of Design, the Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre, and Fusionworks Dance Company, among other partners, to create the Walsh School for Performing Arts. Students can participate in programs focused on visual arts, theater, dance, and music combined with a rigorous course of academic study. Several of the faculty work jointly with the Walsh School and as artists with the partner organizations.

The Newport Public Schools works closely with local community partners to improve student achievement in Newport. The Newport Public Education Foundation, an organization led by local community and business leaders, has helped to fund local literacy activities and excellence grants and to raise funds for the district. Positively Newport Schools is becoming an important community voice organizing for citywide commitment to public education.

The Woonsocket School Department has created the Feinstein E-learning Academy, where students who are behind in their schoolwork or who are at risk of dropping out can earn credits toward graduation. Housed at the Woonsocket Area Career and Technical Center, the e-learning Academy offers a unique combination of online curricula and in-person, teacher-led instruction. Enrollment is flexible and geared toward the needs of the student. Some visit the Academy after school, some are enrolled for a more typical school day, and others work remotely and only visit the center for testing.

The Rhode Island Mayoral Academies (RIMA) is the oversight organization for a new type of public charter school in the state. Working with Cumberland Mayor Daniel McKee and a coalition of Rhode Island mayors and town administrators, civic groups, business leaders, and policy makers, RIMA is creating the supports and flexibility needed to attract successful charter-management organizations to run schools and develop innovations in instruction across the state, including the authority to develop their own salary schedules and health and retirements benefits packages. The first mayoral academy – Democracy Prep of Blackstone Valley – opened at the end of August 2009 with seventy-six kindergarten students and will eventually serve students in grades K–8. It is run by a charter-management organization that leads a middle school in Harlem that is ranked among the top schools in New York City.

And as this report goes to press, we have received news that the national American Federation of Teachers has made a grant from its new Innovation Fund to be shared by the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals and the New York State United Teachers. The grant will be used to establish a multidistrict approach to more rigorous and meaningful teacher evaluation, reflecting the understanding that an effective evaluation system includes multiple indicators and incorporating, among other plans, a peer assistance and review component.

## Building Our Future

We can build on these and numerous other successes by marshaling the will and resources needed to redesign our public education systems as systems to support innovation and enhance efficiency and effectiveness. In the

following report, the Urban Education Task Force puts forward recommendations in seven areas that will create the infrastructure, collaboration, and culture to build the kinds of schools Rhode Island needs to thrive in the twenty-first century. This ambitious endeavor requires business, government, labor, K–12 and higher education, the faith institutions, and community groups to seek common ground to build upon and to sustain our effort over time.

This endeavor also will require us to shift from a culture enamored with differences and conflict to one that seeks unity around shared values and strategies. Despite a diversity of ideologies, experiences, and backgrounds, the members of this Task Force reached consensus around a core set of action steps. The only exceptions to this consensus are included as comments from the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals at the end of the Educator Quality recommendation.

The Task Force process was not perfect – some working groups were not as inclusive as others, member engagement varied, and some constituent voices undoubtedly went unheard. But the experience of the last eighteen months has taught us that differences are obstacles that can be overcome when multiple stakeholders come together over time to engage in dialogue, examine research and best practice, and work toward a common goal – creating an education system that builds our community's future.

Warren Simmons
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*Chair*, Rhode Island Urban Education Task Force

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## Introduction to the Recommendations

Governor Donald L. Carcieri formed the Rhode Island Urban Education Task Force in 2008 and charged it with developing specific recommendations for consideration by the Governor and the General Assembly on ways to strengthen and transform urban education in the Ocean State. The Task Force first met in January 2008 and met as a plenary group nine times over the next eighteen months.

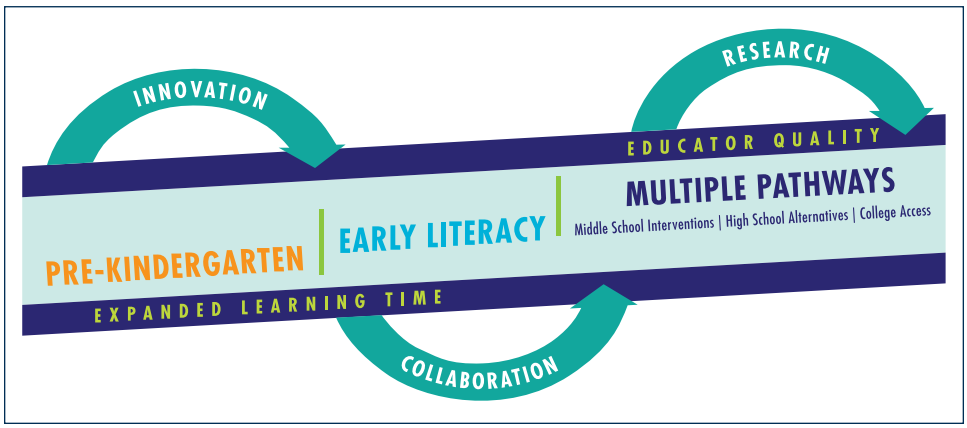
Initially, the Task Force was divided into three subcommittees: Community Engagement, Human Capital Development, and Systems Innovation. These three subcommittees developed a total of seven preliminary recommendation areas that were issued in a report to the Governor in December 2008. Working groups were then formed around each of the seven areas, and local specialists from outside of the formal Task Force membership were engaged to provide their expertise. Each working group was charged with adding detail to the recommendations and developing specific action steps. Funding from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation allowed working groups to also bring in experts from outside the state to present new ideas and review work, as well as to support community forums in which various constituencies could provide feedback. Formal meetings and events of the Task Force are listed in appendix A2.

The Task Force was specifically not charged with addressing statewide education funding. However, Task Force members emphasized that improving the equity of state funding is essential to improving education in the state. Currently, Rhode Island is the only state in the country that does not dispense its basic education aid on a predictable formula that incorporates the number and characteristics of each district's students. Such a formula is particularly important in these challenging economic times.

From the beginning, the Task Force emphasized the need for a set of recommendations that, as a whole, would provide a statewide agenda for improving urban education from pre-kindergarten through high school. Through its subcommittees, working groups, and public forums, the Task Force addressed three aspects of such an agenda:

- Attending to the specific learning needs of our state's children
- Improving learning supports and opportunities
- Developing the infrastructure and ways of working to spur innovation and continuous improvement

The figure below illustrates how the recommendation areas fit together to create a com-



prehensive agenda for urban education in Rhode Island. The pre-kindergarten, early literacy and multiple pathways recommendations attend to the specific learning needs of our state's children. The expanded learning time and educator quality recommendations are focused on helping to improve learning supports and provide additional learning opportunities. The innovation and collaboration recommendations (which encompass the research component) address key infrastructure needs and the new ways of working that will foster continuous improvement in our urban districts and the state as a whole.

Taken together, these recommendations can fundamentally change outcomes for Rhode Island's children. We urge their implementation in the same spirit that they were developed: collaboratively and with great hope for Rhode Island's future.

# 1 Pre-Kindergarten Education

The Urban Education Task Force recommends launching a high-quality pre-kindergarten program in Rhode Island, starting with a pilot program in 2009 and continuing with full implementation after the pilot, giving priority to children in communities with low-performing schools and low literacy performance in fourth grade.

## Introduction

Research has consistently shown that three- and four-year-olds who attend a high-quality preschool are more successful in kindergarten and beyond – both academically and socially. Several longitudinal research studies have shown that providing access to high-quality preschool is one of the most cost-effective investments government can make. Momentum is building across the country to improve access to high-quality preschool programs. Many states have launched major pre-K education initiatives in recent years. Until recently, Rhode Island was one of only twelve states without a state-funded pre-K program.

Participation in preschool education has been steadily increasing during the past decade for young children from middle- and upper-income families. Nationally, 66 percent of four-year-olds and more than 40 percent of three-year-olds were enrolled in a preschool education program in 2005. However, enrollment in pre-K remains highly unequal. Many of the children who might benefit the most from pre-K participation do not attend. Families with modest incomes (under $60,000) have the least access to preschool education.

The quality of preschool education is critically important. Only high-quality programs produce lasting positive outcomes for children. High-quality pre-K classrooms are staffed by a well-educated, appropriately compensated teacher and teaching assistant with a small group of children (twenty or fewer). Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies to engage children in carefully designed, play-based learning opportunities to foster development of language, literacy, math, and social skills.

Pre-K benefits children, their families, and their communities. From improved academic outcomes to the economic savings for schools and states, the benefits of high-quality pre-K are irrefutable. The following summary of the benefits of pre-K from the national organization Pre-K Now, funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, highlights some of the research findings about the positive impact of high-quality pre-K education (see appendix 1S for sources and more detail).

### Successful Students

- Children who attended a pre-K program had higher high school graduation rates (Chicago).
- Pre-K helped children do better on standardized tests as fourth-graders (Michigan).
- Pre-K reduced grade repetition as fifth-graders (Maryland).
- Pre-K reduced the number of children placed in special education (Chicago).

### Responsible Adults

- Pre-K reduced crime and delinquency at age eighteen (Chicago).
- Pre-K lowered rates of teen pregnancy (North Carolina).
- Forty-year-olds who attended pre-K had higher rates of employment, higher wages, and more stable families (Michigan).

### Stronger Communities

- Every dollar invested in high-quality pre-K saves taxpayers up to seven dollars in remedial and special education, welfare, and criminal justice services, according to a number of studies.
- Pre-K improves efficiency and productivity in the classroom in areas such as following directions, problem solving, and joining in activities, all of which allow teachers to spend more time working directly with children and less on classroom management.

## Promising Work under way in Rhode Island

In 2007, RIDE and Rhode Island KIDS COUNT formed a Pre-K Exploration Committee that brought early childhood leaders together to review research and best practices for pre-K in other states and to share ideas on how to launch a pre-K program in Rhode Island. In June 2008, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed the Rhode Island Pre-Kindergarten Act, which directs RIDE to engage in a planning process for a Rhode Island pre-K program, including a pilot/demonstration pre-K program and plans for scaling up the program after the pilot stage is completed. During fall 2008, the Commissioner of Education appointed a Pre-K Planning Committee to do additional work to design the components of the pre-K program in keeping with the required elements set forth in the law.

The core premises for the pre-K program, based on RIDE's recommendations and the Pre-Kindergarten Act, are as follows:

- Pre-K enrollment will be voluntary (children will not be required to attend).
- Pre-K will be offered in a variety of settings, including childcare, Head Start, and public schools (this is referred to as a mixed-delivery-system model).
- Rhode Island's pre-K program will start with a high-quality pilot pre-K project and expand over time.
- The ultimate goal is universal pre-K for all three- and four-year-olds; however, the program will provide pre-K for children in the highest-need communities first (those with high concentrations of low-performing schools).
- Pre-K programs need a consistent and stable funding stream sufficient to meet quality standards. Several states fund pre-K through their state education-aid funding formulas.
- Rhode Island's pre-K program quality standards will meet or exceed the pre-K standards of the National Institute for Early Education Research, including a lead teacher with a BA and specialized training in early childhood education and an assistant teacher with a CDA or equivalent.
- Children aged four will be enrolled in the pilot.

The Pre-K Planning Committee completed its work in December 2008 and sent its recommendations on pre-K program design for the pilot Pre-K Demonstration Program to the Commissioner for consideration by RIDE. The target date for the launch of the Demonstration Program was set for fall 2009.

The Governor included $700,000 in funding for the Pre-K Demonstration Program in his FY2010 budget, and the General Assembly included this funding in the budget that was passed in June 2009. In addition to this funding, the Providence and Central Falls school departments contributed additional Title I stimulus funding in order to add three additional classrooms. RIDE put forth a request for proposals for the Pre-K Demonstration Program and received over twenty proposals from a variety

of possible program sites, including childcare centers, Head Start programs, and schools and chose sites for the first pre-K demonstration classrooms in July 2009. These pre-K classrooms began operations in fall 2009 and are serving more than 100 children from urban and urban-ring communities. To ensure that the Demonstration Program meets high quality standards, the National Institute for Early Education Research will conduct an evaluation.

## Recommendations, Action Steps, and Partner Responsibilities

**RECOMMENDATION** Move beyond the Demonstration Program to implement pre-K in Rhode Island using a mixed-delivery system (childcare, Head Start, schools).

Priority should be given to children in communities with low-performing schools and low literacy performance in fourth grade, given that high-quality pre-K is a core educational strategy for closing the achievement gap that appears at kindergarten entry.

The Task Force recommends that pre-K programs be designed to address the needs of English language learners. Task Force members note that to close the achievement gap it will also be important to start interventions at birth, including high-quality infant/toddler childcare, health care, and child development services. The Task Force also supports progress toward full-day kindergarten in Rhode Island's school districts as a related strategy.

Moving forward, it will be important to build greater support for the work already going on in Rhode Island on this issue and to use communications and other avenues to increase political support for this work.

## Accountability and Sustainability

We will know if this work is successful based on the evaluations of the Pre-K Demonstration Program that will be conducted by the National Institute for Early Education Research, along with ongoing evaluations to measure the gains that participating children make in terms of language, literacy, early numeracy, and social and emotional development. RIDE will be responsible for the ongoing monitoring of this work, in partnership with Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and other community partners.

The federal government will provide new funding opportunities for early education in the form of Early Learning Challenge Grants that are expected to provide $10 billion in new federal funding to states over the next ten years to support state efforts to expand early learning opportunities, especially for low-income and disadvantaged children. This will be an important new funding stream to support Rhode Island's efforts. Another federal funding opportunity is Title I dollars from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that can be used to fund pre-K in Title I school districts. Thirteen states fund pre-K through a mechanism within their state education funding formulas, and the Task Force recommends that, as Rhode Island adopts a funding formula, a method for funding Pre-K be included.

# 2 Early Literacy

The Urban Education Task Force recommends the implementation of a comprehensive system of supports for K–3 literacy, with a focus on English language learners.

## Introduction

In 2005, Rhode Island adopted a pre-kindergarten to grade 12 comprehensive literacy policy that emphasizes the need for differentiated instruction to meet the needs of each learner. As part of the policy, Rhode Island emphasized four key elements:

- Strong literature, language, and comprehension instruction that includes a balance of oral and written language
- Explicit and systematic instruction of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills
- Ongoing assessment that informs teaching and ensures accountability
- Proven intervention programs that provide support for students at risk of failing to learn to read

Implemented effectively, these policies help to ensure that not only do children learn to read and write, but they also comprehend a variety of texts. Comprehension, not just rote skills, is the overarching goal.

The Task Force supports this policy and believes it should serve as the foundation for our literacy efforts. However, additional supports and guidance must be provided to ensure literacy success for all students. This support is particularly critical at the earliest grades and for English language learners: research has shown that children who are not fluent readers and writers by grade three are much more likely to drop out of high school (Snow, Burns & Griffin 1998; full references in appendix 2S).

In our information-based economy, the consequences of limited literacy skills and dropping out are much more dire than they were in the past.

To augment our current policies, we must acknowledge that second-language literacy differs from native-language literacy in important ways. For English language learners (ELLs), the background knowledge students bring to the classroom differs greatly. ELLs draw on first-language skills and experiences to break into English, and they continue to draw upon the home language when they need to, even at advanced stages of literacy development, to facilitate reading and writing in English (August & Shanahan 2006, Riches & Genesee 2006). For ELLs, comprehension is even more critical. According to the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth (August & Shanahan 2006), comprehension must be given priority to ensure that students see reading and writing as meaningful and functional activities. Skills and strategies need to be taught in a meaningful context, not in decontextualized, rote ways devoid of meaning.

Because of the large proportion of English language learners in the five cities that are the focus of this Task Force, we feel the state must take an active role in providing specific supports for this population of students. And while we have focused in these recommendations on the role educators must play to support early literacy, it is important to note that the responsibility is not theirs alone. As a state, we must also support parents, libraries, colleges and universities, community centers, and hospitals as partners in early literacy development.

## Recommendations, Action Steps, and Partner Responsibilities

The Task Force believes that universal pre-kindergarten is an essential step toward early literacy. We support the development of the pilot program that is already under way in our state and urge the state to move forward as described in our recommendations for Pre-Kindergarten Education. It is our hope that the pre-kindergarten pilot will support providers' efforts to include students' home languages in instruction in order to ensure a strong oral-language foundation in kindergarten.

Along with universal pre-kindergarten, the Task Force recommends the following actions be taken to improve early literacy in urban areas throughout the state.

**RECOMMENDATION** Develop a comprehensive, guaranteed, viable early literacy curriculum and mandate its use in districts in corrective action.

There are no easy answers or quick solutions for optimizing reading achievement. But there does exist an extensive knowledge base that articulates the skills students must learn in order to read well. These skills provide the basis for sound curriculum decisions and instructional approaches for all students. The five critical components of reading as defined by the National Reading Panel (2000) include: phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. When working with English language learners, the importance of first-language learning to second-language learning is also critical. A comprehensive literacy curriculum should utilize a multi-tiered approach, including a strong core program with differentiated instruction and intensive intervention.

By making this comprehensive literacy curriculum "guaranteed and viable" (Marzano 2003), the Commissioner of Education could ensure that – no matter who teaches a given course or grade level specific topics, skills, concepts, and strategies will be addressed and that this content can actually be covered in the time available. *Guaranteed and viable* means that every teacher in every classroom at every school is providing consistent, high-quality instruction to every child every day. A guaranteed and viable curriculum promotes coherence, consistency, and equity across a system.

### *Action Steps*

#### Short-term

- The five urban districts should develop a comprehensive curriculum for early literacy, guided by the above description of good early literacy instruction and supports and based on Rhode Island grade-level expectations, Rhode Island Early Learning Standards, PK–12 literacy policy, and the WIDA Consortium's English Language Proficiency Standards for English Language Learners. This curriculum would build on ongoing efforts to develop curricula in the five urban districts, with an emphasis on sharing existing work and best practices. Partners developing the curriculum would also address the following areas:
  - Maintaining high expectations for all students
  - Instructing students based on their developmental needs
  - Monitoring progress
  - Developing growth models
  - Using data for assessment and decision making

### Long-term

- Upon completion of this curriculum, each district in corrective action should have a viable curriculum. This can be achieved without legislative intervention; it is within the current power of the Commissioner.

**RECOMMENDATION** Strengthen oral-language development to support early literacy.

Research on brain development has identified a clear connection between early learning experiences and later success. Traditional schooling is important, but so is exposure to books and stories at home, as well as experiences that expand children's real-world knowledge (such as trips to parks, zoos, and museums) and opportunities to interact with language by talking with peers and adults, singing songs, and drawing and writing. These experiences are critical to children's development and serve as the foundation for literacy.

A lack of vocabulary is a huge barrier to reading proficiency. One of the most persistent findings in reading research is that the extent of students' vocabulary knowledge relates strongly to their reading comprehension and overall academic success (see Baumann, Kame'enui & Ash 2003).

Hart and Risley (1995) identified a "30 million–word gap" in language experience between three-year-olds in professional families and those in families who receive public assistance. The effect of this early gap in words heard grows exponentially throughout schooling (Stanovich 1986). Therefore, it is imperative that we focus on oral language and vocabulary in pre-kindergarten and in the early grades.

The Governor, the Board of Regents, and the PK–16 Council should emphasize and promote the importance of verbal interaction – that is, just plain talking – between children and adults. It is the foundation of literacy. Adults in homes, community centers, libraries, and schools should encourage children to ask questions, discuss ideas, describe their likes and dislikes, etc. As a first step, on a statewide basis, this can be accomplished through public service announcements that help people to understand the relationship between language development and later literacy development and the important role of first-language development in the ability to read, speak, and write in a second language.

#### *Action Steps*

### Short-term

- The Governor should engage a public relations partner to develop early literacy public service announcements to appear on television and radio, on buses, and in libraries and community centers. The public service announcements should be printed/broadcast in multiple languages and should highlight the importance of talking with children to expand their oral-language base and background knowledge.

### Long-term

- Professional development on early literacy is weak statewide. The Commissioner should consider bringing Rhode Island's urban communities together with the regional education collaboratives and other experts to share resources to support cross-district or statewide early literacy activities, such as developing library programs like Every Child Ready to Read, in multiple languages. These activities would be developed in partnership with schools, libraries, hospitals, and community centers and would seek to educate and provide services to parents and children that emphasize the

relationship between first-language learning and second-language development and the importance of verbal interaction between children and adults in literacy development.

**RECOMMENDATION** Develop expertise in teaching emergent literacy.

The latest research about effective literacy practices for English language learners indicates that the components of effective reading instruction that are critical for all early learners – phonemic awareness, phonics, oral-language fluency, vocabulary, text comprehension, and writing – also benefit ELLs, but with necessary adaptations. Such adaptations include extensive vocabulary instruction and oral English language development, cognate connections, and the explicit instruction of idioms and words with multiple meanings.

High-quality instruction is one of the best investments our state can make to ensure that all our students develop sound literacy skills. Classroom teachers should be proficient in teaching beginning readers and writers and specifically prepared to work with ELLs. Beyond the basics of English phonology and grammar and of competence in reading instruction, certified teachers should be required to know the basics of first- and second-language acquisition and understand cultural diversity from a positive, additive perspective. The current requirements for preparing teachers to teach reading and diverse learners need to be strengthened and guaranteed.

***Action Steps***

### Short-term

- In their review of licensing policy, RIDE and the Board of Regents should review current certification requirements for Elementary and Early Childhood teachers and recommend how expertise in teaching English language learners to read and write can be incorporated into the requirements. This might include additional pre-service coursework for the initial Certificate of Eligibility for Employment or the incorporation of professional development on English language learning in the Individual Professional Development Plans (or I-Plans) of those seeking a Professional Certificate.
- Requirements for recertification, as well as for alternate certification, in Elementary and Early Childhood Education should also be reviewed in a similar manner. Renewal of a Professional Certificate might be predicated on teaching English language learners or on participating in specific professional development related to emergent literacy or to appropriate use of assessment data.

### Long-term

- The Commissioner should consider bringing Rhode Island's urban communities together to explore sharing resources to support cross-district or statewide professional development efforts on early literacy. Ongoing school- and district-based professional development planned specifically to support the curriculum (as recommended earlier) should be required of all educators engaged in early literacy instruction and should adhere to the principles of professional development outlined in appendix 2S.

- Since this commitment to professional development is a considerable investment in individuals as well as teams of educators who work together, adequate support for and stability in staffing individual schools should be a very high priority. As much as possible, staffing for early literacy should be guided by the description in appendix 2S. When coaches, teachers, specialists, and assistants have the opportunity to collaborate and grow expertise in a common practice, their students are provided with consistent instructional methods and objectives from year to year. This reduces the confusion that results from frequent shifts in teaching approaches and permits students to focus on learning to read and write rather than on changing routines in the classroom.
- Because of the relationship between pre-service preparation and the quality of instruction, higher-education institutions that prepare teachers should be engaged to build pre-service and in-service professional development opportunities in early literacy.

# 3 Expanded Learning Time

The Urban Education Task Force recommends that Rhode Island launch an expanded learning time initiative in the five urban school districts and implement it through a partnership between the Governor's office, RIDE, and appropriate Rhode Island community-based organizations, with targeted technical assistance from the National Center on Time and Learning.

## Introduction

The Task Force seeks to strengthen and transform the educational opportunities available to students in Rhode Island's urban core communities. Expanded learning time (ELT) is an overarching strategy, going beyond what Rhode Island already offers its young people, to change the way that students learn. Within this overarching strategy, other redesign strategies described in the other recommendations can be addressed and implemented. We believe that ELT can help to align the other recommendations of the Task Force to ensure maximization of effort and impact (see figure on page 7).

In the past several decades, expectations for what children and youth must know and be able to do to be successful have changed dramatically. With higher learning standards in place for today's students, the traditional school calendar has proven to be inadequate, particularly for students who are most in need. These students face many barriers to learning and have limited access to enrichment opportunities outside of school. Support for expanded learning time has grown in recent years as schools across the United States have tested a variety of promising models and experienced, in many cases, improved student achievement.

An expanded learning time initiative means not just extending time, but providing high-quality, engaging, enriching learning opportunities during that time. It is *more time well used*, which helps students, teachers, community-based organizations, and families in many ways.

- Students Provides enhanced academics and enrichment activities that are critical to the healthy development of the whole child.
- Teachers Provides the time for high-quality professional development and the time to teach in a way that deepens the curriculum and/or connects learning to real-world applications.
- Community-based organizations Enhances and solidifies meaningful partnerships with schools and potentially serves more students. Rhode Island has a rich array of high-quality afterschool and summer programs run by community-based organizations, which enables us to build from a strong foundation on their work. If community and school professionals were to cross-fertilize their knowledge and their educational and youth development strategies, the learning experiences for our children could be extraordinarily rich.
- Families Many families have working parents who need their children engaged in high-quality activities until they come home from work.

The additional time can also be used to focus on topics that are critical but have not received the time necessary, including STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) efforts. More time allows for the inquiry-based and project-based learning inherent in science.

Afterschool and summer programs are successfully expanding learning by offering new and different ways of learning that build on youth development principles. The proven afterschool approach to learning, which is necessary to the success of any effort to expand learning

opportunities, embraces the following practices:

- Engaging, relevant activities are often project-based, community-based, or both and are designed to increase student motivation to learn.
- Linkages are made to the school day, but content is delivered in different ways by applying school-day lessons to real-world settings.
- Academic instruction is designed to meet the needs, abilities, and learning styles of students and provide them with a better chance to succeed.
- Student choice is built into the program design.
- Partnerships among schools and CBOs are essential because they bring new and diverse learning opportunities (see appendix 3S).
- Students have opportunities to work both independently and in groups and to assume leadership roles.
- Communication between families and school-day staff is ongoing.
- Youth development practices model positive behavior management strategies that motivate youth and adults to work and learn together.

Partnerships with community-based organizations also help to alleviate any undue burden on teachers alone to implement an ELT initiative. (See appendix 3S for a listing of sample Rhode Island community- and school-based organizations that could join the ELT initiative partnership.)

Expanded learning time can serve as a model for unifying afterschool and in-school learning. See appendix 3S for a diagram from the Program for Afterschool Education and Research at Harvard representing visually the evolution of the relationship between afterschool and the traditional school day.

Research shows that English language learners (ELLs) can benefit from ELT (see appendix 3S). Currently there is not enough time to provide ELL students with all the support they need – particularly those older students who arrive in the tenth through twelfth grades. ELT could greatly benefit these students as well.

## Current Work in Rhode Island

The Task Force believes it is important to recognize and build on structures that already exist in Rhode Island, including the Providence After School Alliance (PASA), RIDE's Childhood Opportunity Zones and 21st Century Learning Centers, full-service community schools, the Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance, the Woonsocket Afterschool Coalition, successful Rhode Island charter school models, and related initiatives already under way in some of the core urban districts. As partnerships between schools and community-based organizations are central to the concept of ELT, model design must consider how to recognize and integrate existing and emerging organizations that can provide supports in a range of areas.

Task Force members feel strongly that in addition to academic supports, it will be critical to include a focus on the arts, recreation, and social services to address a variety of youth development needs. Special consideration must also be given to developing structures and supports for addressing the needs of English language learners and special education students. (Descriptions of existing related work under way in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New York City are in appendix 3S.)

## Recommendations, Action Steps, and Partner Responsibilities

**RECOMMENDATION** Implement expanded learning time at demonstration sites selected through a voluntary, competitive proposal process.

Administered by RIDE, the ELT School-Community Grants will be distributed competitively to Rhode Island communities for the purposes of planning for ELT in the form of longer school days and/or school years. Preference will be given to those districts that consider a comprehensive restructuring of the entire school day and/or year to maximize the use of the additional learning time; to districts with high poverty rates; to districts with a high percentage of students not achieving proficiency as reported through the New England Common Assessment Program; and to districts that incorporate partnerships with afterschool programs, community-based organizations, and institutions of higher education as part of their ELT initiative.

**RECOMMENDATION** Ensure that the planning and implementation process is inclusive.

ELT requires that the planning and implementation be inclusive of all stakeholders. Participants in Massachusetts ELT work (described in appendix 3S) noted the particular importance of working with union representatives early and often in the planning and implementation. In Rhode Island, the stakeholders include, but are not limited to: union representatives, principals, teachers, community-based and school-based afterschool and summer programs, and other community partners, including businesses, higher education, parents, youth, legislators and legislative staff, the Governor's office, and RIDE.

**RECOMMENDATION** Include a series of key design components in the ELT initiative that have been adapted from successful models to the Rhode Island context.

These components include voluntary participation; input from youth; partnerships between community-based organizations and the highest-needs schools and districts; equitable funding between the school and its partners; and creation by candidate schools of a detailed implementation plan, including staffing, breakdown of use of time with specific goals and actions, data systems, a cross-sector planning team, identification of suitable partners, and inclusion of academic and enrichment activities for students and professional development for adults. Details of these key components are included in appendix 3S.

**RECOMMENDATION** Target specific age ranges with appropriate learning opportunities.

Expanded learning opportunities defined broadly can be effective for students in grades K–12; the specific details of the implementation will vary according to the age of the students targeted. For the type of ELT structure we describe in this recommendation, preliminary research has shown that the greatest impact has been seen at the elementary and middle school levels. Expanded learning for high school students will, by necessity, look different because of issues surrounding work schedules, athletics, and other afterschool commitments that high school students typically have more than younger students. Expanded learning opportunities for high school students will more likely involve internships and apprenticeships that tie their academic, in-school learning with real-world, relevant employment (possibly for high school graduation credit), dual enrollment, and other examples of learning

beyond the classroom. Given the potential of ELT to help older ELL students who enter high school from other countries, the Task Force recommends that elementary, middle, and high schools (including charter schools) all be eligible to apply for a planning grant.

**RECOMMENDATION** Implement the ELT initiative at the state level initially by hosting it through a public-private partnership that is governed by a Statewide Expanded Learning Steering Committee, in order to maximize capacity and efficiency and ensure that this initiative is a catalyst for change and not a one-time project. The Task Force recommends that this public-private partnership include the Governor's office, RIDE's Office of Middle and High School Reform, and the Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance.

The Steering Committee will develop a five-year strategic business plan for the initiative. The composition of the Steering Committee will include but not be limited to: RIDE, the Governor's office, legislators and legislative staff, Rhode Island Federation of Teachers, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, higher education, the Board of Regents, superintendents, principals, teachers, Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance, Providence After School Alliance, community-based and school-based afterschool providers, funders, Rhode Island Association of School Committees, and youth.

In addition to the Steering Committee, each school participating in the planning process will implement its own local design team (composition of these teams is described under Key Components in appendix 3S).

**RECOMMENDATION** Engage the Rhode Island higher-education community in the ELT initiative.

University students, faculty, and staff are already active educators in many out-of-school-time programs in Rhode Island. For example, Brown University has over eighty outreach programs; the University of Rhode Island has an intensive partnership with Central Falls; Rhode Island College trains most of the state's teachers; and Johnson and Wales has significant service-learning requirements. Providence College has adopted an AfterZone campus in Providence middle schools supplying over fifty student volunteers each year, office space, research support, and facilities access to the over 200 middle school youth in that particular AfterZone. Colleges and universities in this state are a resource in the learning of our children and youth and there are many ways they could be even more of a resource, particularly within an ELT initiative.

**RECOMMENDATION** Allocate specific roles and responsibilities to the partnering organizations in the public-private management structure according to the functional needs of the ELT initiative.

These roles will be more fully fleshed out in partnership with the Steering Committee, but we include some illustrative examples in this section. In addition, due to the nature of partnerships, some roles and responsibilities will be shared. See appendix 3S for a proposed timeline for these activities.

### Statewide Expanded Learning Steering Committee

- Develop a five-year strategic business plan for the ELT initiative.
- Provide overall oversight of the ELT initiative.
- In partnership with school ELT teams, RIDE, and an external evaluator, develop a three- to five-year evaluation plan with

short-, mid-, and long-term academic and youth development outcomes, as well as process outcomes for planning and implementation.

### RIDE

- Manage the administrative components of the ELT initiative, including the request for proposal process, planning, and implementation process.
- In partnership with the Steering Committee, identify and contract with appropriate technical assistance providers and evaluator(s).

### Governor's Office

- Participate on Steering Committee.
- Assist in the development of policy, sharing of results, and fundraising.

### Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance

- Serve as the liaison for community-based and school-based afterschool and summer programs working with ELT schools.
- In partnership with the technical assistance providers, offer joint professional development for community-based and school-based teachers at ELT schools on both youth development principles and integration of academic standards into experiential learning.
- Partner with the Steering Committee, management agencies, evaluator, and technical assistance providers to share results, fundraise, and develop policy.

**RECOMMENDATION** Offer ongoing technical assistance and professional development to both the local participating schools and the Steering Committee to ensure that practice and policy are responsive to best practice.

The Steering Committee, in partnership with the public-private partnership managing the initiative, will facilitate the selection of technical assistance and professional development providers. Targeted technical assistance will be provided by appropriate organizations with the requisite expertise, including the National Center on Time and Learning, the After-School Corporation, and others to be determined based on local site and state need.

The technical assistance during the first year with schools conducting their planning will include, but not be limited to:

- four to five training sessions for planning schools (e.g., overview of planning process, setting a vision for a new school day, assessing student and school needs, identifying schoolwide academic focus, developing redesign plans and budgets, etc.);
- supporting district and union leadership discussions and negotiations to ensure communication and coordination with the goal of reaching negotiated agreements;
- policy development.

## Accountability and Sustainability

### Evaluation

The Task Force recommends that a comprehensive evaluation of the ELT initiative be conducted by a highly qualified outside evaluator. The specific outcomes will be defined by the local sites during the planning process, in partnership with the Steering Committee, but will include both academic and youth development outcomes. In any work around outcomes, it is essential that the goals and outcomes be aligned with intentionality to the actual design of the program: hence, the importance of developing a logic model for the work. The Steering Committee will work during the first planning year to develop a logic model and outcomes for the initiative in partnership with an external evaluator and the planning teams at the schools that

receive planning grants. The Task Force recommends that the goals and outcomes of the ELT initiative be aligned and integrated with the Board of Regents' goals for student achievement and with RIDE's goals, outcomes, and indicators for its school redesign work.

The Task Force recommends that participating schools in an ELT initiative have the following broad categories of outcomes, to be determined in detail through a logic-modeling process with the Steering Committee, an external evaluator, and the planning teams at the ELT schools (adapted from Forum for Youth Investment 2008, p. 3; full reference in appendix 3S):

- Youth-level outcomes Academic and youth development outcomes
- Program-level outcomes Characteristics that describe and demonstrate the value of high-quality ELT programming, including activity characteristics and structural features
- System-level outcomes Characteristics of well-coordinated systems that lead to improved quality, scale, and sustainability

The Task Force also recommends that a process and outcome evaluation be conducted, assessing both the process implementation strategies and the quantitative outcomes,
and that the evaluation be based on a growth model rather than an annual cohort model. Task Force members feel strongly that the design of the logic model and outcomes be appropriate and realistic and that there needs to be enough funding allocated for a comprehensive evaluation by an external evaluator.

## Required Resources and Fundraising Strategy

- Planning grants $5,000–$20,000 per district
- Implementation funding Based on best-practice research, the annual per student amount will most likely be in the range of $1,300 to $1,800
- Technical assistance and support $35,000 for the first planning year
- Evaluation [to be determined]
- Secured and potential funding sources The FY2010 state budget includes $100,000 for RIDE to implement an ELT initiative, beginning with planning grants for the 2009-2010 academic year. The National Center on Time and Learning is looking for partners nationally to implement ELT initiatives, and Rhode Island has been considered as a potential partner site. If Rhode Island qualifies, federal support for the initiative may be available through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Race to the Top competitive funds and pending legislation. Private foundations have also expressed interest in supporting ELT in Rhode Island. The Statewide Expanded Learning Steering Committee will develop and implement a fundraising plan.

# 4 Multiple Pathways for Student Success

The Urban Education Task Force recommends implementing a number of steps to create multiple pathways to graduation and postsecondary success for young people, such as partnerships with adult education programs, access to AP courses, and courses offered at nontraditional times.

## Introduction

Rhode Island is facing a crisis of completion in our urban districts. The Rhode Island urban district dropout rate is 26 percent, compared with a statewide rate of 16 percent. Students in all racial and ethnic groups in urban districts have high dropout rates, ranging from 24 percent of Black students to 29 percent of Native American students. Rhode Island data show that male students, low-income students (receiving free or reduced-price meals), students receiving special education services, and English language learners are particularly likely to drop out (see figures 4 and 5 in appendix 4S). National research shows that teen parents and youth in the foster care system are also more likely to drop out than their peers.

Students' need for engaging curriculum, involvement with at least one concerned adult, and a path to opportunity begins in the middle grades. Intervening with students who are struggling in the middle grades and who are identifiably at risk for low academic achievement and for dropping out is both less expensive and more effective than later remediation. Both struggling students and those who require greater academic challenges or a clear career path need to be engaged early on. Student involvement in the process of career exploration and choosing their personal pathways is critical to this work. Ideally, an individual graduation plan commences in the sixth grade, so that levels of support and individualized pathways can be designed before the student begins high school.

A proficiency-based education system like Rhode Island's focuses on knowledge and skill development for high school graduation, college preparation and readiness, and employment and career success. The multiple pathways approach includes, but goes beyond, academic proficiency to provide a variety of opportunities and supports for students, particularly those who are struggling in the traditional system, so that all students can graduate from high school and enter meaningful postsecondary education, training, and/or work opportunities.

The Rhode Island education system is going through a time of re-envisioning and reform. Urban districts are implementing wide-scale middle and high school reform efforts in collaboration with RIDE. It is critical to support these efforts at the state and local levels, as it is only through ensuring that the highways of education (our traditional schools) are effective that we can ensure that all students have the potential and equal opportunity for success. In addition to this work, it is necessary to create a safety net for our urban students who are most at risk of dropping out of school through the creation of core alternative pathways.

The U.S. Department of Education has identified essential elements of dropout prevention and treatment that include the use of data, personalization of the school environment, and the development of alternatives for students who are not succeeding in or who have trouble participating in traditional schools (Dynarski et al. 2008; see appendix 4S). None of this can be accomplished without professional development for teachers and administrators on how to support students every step of the way to graduation.

## Promising Work under way in Rhode Island

RIDE and Rhode Island's urban districts are currently implementing middle and high school personalization efforts based on the Board of Regents' new middle and high school regulations and the new Basic Education Program (BEP) regulations. These regulations provide for a number of "prevention" mechanisms, including small learning environments, connections with at least one responsible adult, and academic supports for struggling students who remain within the comprehensive school.

The BEP also requires that each local education agency (LEA) implement a systematic problem-solving approach to address student issues that may interfere with success. This approach uses teams that analyze data on student attendance, disciplinary actions, grades, and course completion. These teams then develop LEA-specific interventions targeted at identified student needs, including interventions both in and out of school as part of students' Individual Learning Plans. Moving forward, efforts that include strategies to increase parent and community involvement will be critical to the success of this work.

## Recommendations, Action Steps, and Partner Responsibilities

Based on state and national data and research on promising practices to support student educational success, the Task Force offers the following recommendations to address the needs of Rhode Island's urban students.

### Using Data to Intervene Early

National research has identified the risk factors that can best predict whether students will drop out of high school. Schools and districts can decrease dropout rates by having systems in place to comprehensively identify a majority of those at risk for dropping out and then implement multiple strategies to support each student on their path to graduation. This includes preventative interventions for at-risk populations, as well as recovery programs for populations that are off-track for graduation. According to the National High School Center (www.betterhighschools.org), the following indicators have been identified as the most valuable for identifying who is most likely to drop out:

- poor grades in core subjects
- low attendance
- failure to be promoted to the next grade
- disengagement in the classroom, including behavioral problems (e.g., a poor final behavior grade for the year)

**RECOMMENDATION** Support districts in creating early warning systems that can be used to identify middle school and high school students at risk of dropping out. Provide tailored supports to students identified using the early warning system and track these students to ensure that they get back on track for graduation within a reasonable amount of time.

RIDE and its partners should use the building blocks that exist in the RIDE data warehouse and the district information systems to develop this model and train local educators and administrators in using the early warning system. The early warning system can be used to identify many students who are at risk of dropping out as early as sixth grade and those who are struggling with the transition from eighth to ninth grade.

#### *Action Steps*

- Identify which districts are already using early warning systems.

- Develop a protocol in which RIDE can support districts in implementing early warning systems and monitor their success.
- Create opportunities and incentives for districts to collaborate in the development of early warning systems.
- Ensure that these data follow the child if and when the child transfers schools.

## Alternatives for Students in the Middle Grades

All students deserve high-quality and enriching middle grade experiences, and most middle-level students do not need intensive interventions and alternative settings as much as targeted and thoughtful supports based on student needs and risk factors. For students who do need more intensive supports, access to appropriate alternatives to the traditional junior high and middle school models becomes essential. Note that alternative middle-level models are not limited to behavior programs, but can also provide a variety of academic and other supports to struggling students in grades 6 through 8.

Aggregate data already show that middle-level students in urban districts are performing less well, have been held back more, and are in school less frequently than suburban students in Rhode Island, putting them at increased risk of becoming dropouts. On any given day, an average of almost 10 percent of urban students were absent (see appendix 4S).

**RECOMMENDATION** Develop more alternatives to the traditional middle school and junior high school models so that all children have reasonable access to schools that are built around the needs of students who are "exceptions to the rule" and are struggling in their schools.

Developing more alternatives could be accomplished by expanding access to educational models with proven track records of increasing student success at the middle level, with a focus on building on local successes and existing programs, and by exploring emerging national models that have successfully worked with struggling students in the middle grades. These alternatives could be developed through the Innovation Zone, described in section 7.

### *Action Steps*

- Expand access to the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program (UCAP), an acceleration program for urban middle school students from participating Rhode Island districts who are at risk of dropping out due to grade retention. UCAP accelerates students who are behind in school to get them back on track for timely graduation with students their age, allowing students in grades 7, 8, and 9 to complete three years' worth of work in two school years.
- Explore the use of expanded learning time models (see the recommendations on expanded learning time), other out-of-school-time programs such as the Providence After School Alliance, models such as City Year, and programs such as the College Crusade that can support student learning at the middle level.
- Support cross-district and regional conversations about increasing access to alternative middle-level models for urban students in Rhode Island.
- Explore public and private funding options at the local, state, and federal levels for expanding access to alternative middle school models for urban students in Rhode Island.

## Multiple Pathways for High School Students

All students in Rhode Island deserve timely access to opportunities for a meaningful high school education that fits their individual needs. Due to the critical importance of a high school diploma for accessing future educational opportunities and for meaningful workforce participation, students most at risk of dropping out of high school are of particular concern. Urban students are more likely than students from more affluent districts to struggle in school and are the primary focus of the work of the Task Force. While eventually all students in Rhode Island will have access to multiple pathways to high school completion, it is critical to start by ensuring access to multiple pathways for the students who need them most.

Youth in Rhode Island's urban core are struggling; more than a quarter (26 percent) of students in the class of 2008 in Rhode Island's urban districts dropped out of high school. Studies show that students leave high school before completion because they are not engaged (often due to limited access to challenging curricula or lack of connection with at least one concerned adult in the school), have poor attendance, face other barriers to academic success (like English-language difficulties or special education needs), have behavior problems or family responsibilities that interfere with participation in traditional school models, and/or have fallen significantly behind in their course work. English language learners pose a particular challenge for the urban districts where they are concentrated, as they often need intensive academic assistance as well as cultural assimilation supports and basic English language instruction (see appendix 4S).

During the 2008-2009 school year, 12 percent of urban ninth-graders in Rhode Island were two or more grades below normal for their age, 9 percent of tenth-graders were over age for their grade, 5 percent of eleventh-graders were over age, and 6 percent of twelfth-graders were over age. Research has shown that students who are retained in school or who have trouble achieving the necessary credits to stay on schedule for graduation are more likely than their peers to drop out (Kennelly & Monrad 2007; National High School Center at AIR Web site; full references in appendix 4S). Models that help these students stay in school, catch up on credits, and graduate on time with their peers are essential for assisting a large group of urban students to complete high school successfully.

We also know that the adult education system is experiencing growth in its population of young adults: from fiscal year 2007 through fiscal year 2008, there was an increase of 15 percent in the number of students between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four. In the current program year, young adults represent 31 percent of all learners enrolled in Adult Basic Education programs. These programs meet a small fraction of the need, as there are 14,975 individuals age eighteen to twenty-four in Rhode Island who lack a high school credential. Finally, in 2008, 75 percent of all GED graduates were between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four.

Rhode Island's urban districts are involved in essential reform efforts to make all high schools places where rigorous learning, growth, and exploration take place, regardless of the student demographics. The state should continue to support this process, continuing to maintain the focus on personalizing learning and the learning environment for all students, universal access to college preparatory curricula (including AP courses and dual enrollment

opportunities), and access to approved career and technical education aligned with industry standards.

The Rhode Island BEP regulations have laid the groundwork for the creation of multiple pathways through the requirement that each district establish alternative programs in partnership with community agencies that include strategies differing from traditional programs. Districts are also required to work with RIDE to ensure that older English language learners who cannot graduate with their cohort have age-appropriate English as a second language opportunities through approved high-quality programs.

Nationally, there are a number of models of successful alternative pathways for students who struggle in traditional high schools and who would benefit from non-traditional educational opportunities (including the New York City Department of Education's Office of Multiple Pathways and Vermont's Department of Education High School Completion Model). Developing these types of alternatives to traditional high schools for Rhode Island students who may be struggling and for those who would otherwise benefit from a diverse array of high school options will increase the number of Rhode Island youth who graduate from high school prepared to succeed in post-secondary education and the workforce.

The following recommendation envisions a range of recuperative and restorative strategies for in- and out-of-school youth. These programs could function across urban districts, thus focusing resources and creating targeted strategies for those individuals in each district who could benefit from these approaches.

**RECOMMENDATION** Develop a Multiple Pathways for Student Success Initiative at RIDE, in consultation with the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education and the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training. The initiative should build on the new BEP elements that address multiple pathways and will be responsible for supporting, coordinating, and monitoring state and district efforts to develop key alternative high school opportunities for Rhode Island's urban students who are struggling in the traditional high school system. The initiative will also be responsible for developing a research-based "on track to graduation" measure that can be applied to each district and monitored annually.

Multiple-pathways alternative high school models will be most successful if they are embedded in existing district structures and if they develop cross-system capacity to provide wrap-around supports for students at greatest risk of dropping out. Potential models include:

- statewide or regional Newcomers Academy or other programs to help older English language learners and newcomer youth learn English and achieve meaningful high school credentials;
- alternative completion models for students who have too few credits to complete high school in a timely manner and for students who have family or personal obligations requiring them to attend school during non-traditional hours or study with flexible timing.

The development of these models can be based on the New York City Department of Education transfer schools for over-age, under-credited students, as well as on the Vermont high school completion model that allows students to access a menu of services provided both by their districts and by local adult education agencies (see appendix 4S).

Also, the initiative could explore opportunities for providing high school credit to students who take advantage of distance learning and e-learning opportunities.

***Action Steps***

- Investigate private foundation and grant funding and investment from the Governor's Workforce Board Rhode Island through its Youth Development Committee to support this initiative at RIDE and the work of the districts in implementing these alternatives. Explore existing state models for funding these types of alternative schools when they are regional or cross-district partnerships (e.g., state-operated schools like the MET, charter schools, or educational collaboratives).
- Meet with urban district leadership to prioritize the elements of this work and to develop an action plan for creating more high school alternatives in Rhode Island.
- Explore Rhode Island and additional national promising practices that can be used as a basis for this work going forward, such as:
  - Diploma Program at Aquidneck Island Learning Center: A credit recovery model where students missing one or two years of credit can focus on those courses and receive a Rogers High School diploma.
  - Providence Career and Technical Academy Second Day for Learning Initiative: Out-of-school youth will have access to the new academy and to GED preparation services.
  - Woonsocket Feinstein E-Learning Academy: An individualized credit recovery program with online courses.
  - The Check and Connect Model: Developed in Minnesota with a focus on districtwide high school dropout prevention programming.

## Access to College and College Preparation

College access and preparation is the main pathway to student success. The unequal expectations in our urban schools about who should attend college deprive many of our youth (particularly urban youth) of the opportunity to attend post-secondary institutions. A statewide commitment to the idea that all students deserve the right to equal access and opportunity for higher education is essential to ensuring that all students in our state graduate from high school prepared for higher education and the workplace with the tools and information they need to make college a reality in their lives.

Rhode Island has recently joined in a partnership with other New England states to form the New England Secondary School Consortium. Goals of the Consortium include increasing state graduation rates to 90 percent, decreasing the dropout rate to less than 1 percent, increasing the percentage of students who enroll in college to 80 percent, and reducing the percentage of college students who need remedial courses in college to 5 percent. To reach these ambitious goals, Rhode Island needs to work together with the other states and start immediately with a commitment to increasing college access for *all* students in Rhode Island, including those in urban districts who traditionally are less likely to attend post-secondary education institutions.

Any college access work in Rhode Island should build upon existing efforts and organizations, including supporting the work being done through the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education Early College Access initiatives, such as:

- summer dual enrollment scholarships to expose high school students to college curriculum early;

- financial support for high school students enrolled in college courses taught at the high school through the Rhode Island College Early Enrollment Program;
- highlighting opportunities at the Community College of Rhode Island such as the High School Enrichment program or Running Start;
- focusing on comprehensive programs such as the Pathways to College program, a summer college experience between the University of Rhode Island and Central Falls High School, or the Pathways through College program, a model designed to offer high school seniors the opportunity complete fifteen to thirty credits toward college while simultaneously completing high school graduation requirements.

We must also encourage ongoing collaboration and communication between the Office of Higher Education and RIDE, particularly encouraging the development of shared policy to direct these efforts. This work should also use the resources available through the Way to Go Rhode Island Web portal administered by the Rhode Island Higher Education Assistance Authority.

**RECOMMENDATION** Create a statewide college access working group which would include, at minimum: RIDE, the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education, representatives from school districts, educators, public and private higher-education institutions, the Rhode Island School Counselors Association, college access programs, college disability support services programs, community organizations working on college access issues, and students and their families to develop and coordinate a post-secondary access agenda for the state.

This working group would be tasked with addressing issues that include, but are not limited to:

- improving professional development related to post-secondary education for middle and high school staff to give them the tools to help students to access higher-education opportunities after graduation;
- increasing student access to financial preparation information to help them plan for ways to make college a reality;
- improving communication and access to information about accessing higher education in urban communities to better inform parents and youth (many of whom may be the first generation in their families to attend college) about college opportunity, access, and success;
- building on efforts that already exist and work with families, community-based organizations, and school staff to create collaborative structures that support schools in providing all students with access to college;
- setting goals and monitor progress on indicators of college access (including, but not limited to PSAT registration and SAT fee waivers requested and used by low-income students, college application and matriculation rates, access to advanced placement and other college preparatory coursework).

### *Action Step*

- Create a statewide college access working group, identify funding, and appoint chair(s) to convene the group.

## Accountability and Sustainability

In meetings with district representatives, college access specialists, community-based providers, advocates, and staff from RIDE and the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education, it became clear that the conversations around the topic of reducing the dropout rate and improving student success have only just started to happen on a statewide scale, in large part due to the Task Force efforts. The initial groundwork laid in the development of these recommendations will provide a roadmap for future dropout prevention work and will help Rhode Island to build a public education system where all students graduate from high school ready to take the next steps in their educational and professional lives.

The next steps for Rhode Island in developing meaningful strategies and interventions to assist all students to be successful throughout high school and into life beyond include developing more-specific action steps, identifying who is responsible for taking on this work, and developing benchmarks to track success and enable educators and those in local communities who partner on this work to continually improve the educational opportunities offered to Rhode Island's urban students.

The opportunity to address some of these questions was an essential element of the Rhode Island Dropout Prevention Summit, sponsored by the America's Promise Alliance as part of a national initiative to improve educational outcomes for youth. The Rhode Island summit was held on October 8, 2009, and was convened by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. (More information on the summits at <www.americaspromise.org/Our-Work/Dropout-Prevention.aspx>)

As identified in each of the above recommendations, there are promising Rhode Island efforts in all of these areas that can be used as building blocks for moving forward with this work.

More needs to be done to identify funding opportunities that can support the development of each of these components of the work. The following funding opportunities should be explored: federal Department of Education grants; federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (stimulus) funds, including Race to the Top funds; federal and Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training funds; private foundation funding; funding from Rhode Island businesses as part of investing in the future Rhode Island workforce; and reallocations of existing state and local education funding to prioritize critical elements of this work.

# 5 Statewide Educator Quality Development System

The Urban Education Task Force recommends collaboration within and across districts to improve educator quality by implementing innovative models that differentiate career paths for teachers and provide more professional growth and evaluation opportunities.

## Introduction

In the private sector, human capital is generally defined as the accumulated value of an individual's intellect, knowledge, experience, competencies, and commitment that contributes to the achievement of an organization's vision and business objectives. When this idea is applied to K–12 education, the "business objective," or bottom line, is student achievement and, more broadly, the development of young people into productive members of our participatory democracy. In public education, *human capital* – or, perhaps more appropriately, *educator quality* – refers to the knowledge and skill sets of our educators that directly result in increased levels of learning and positive outcomes for students. In short, we are talking about their talent level – what teachers, principals, and administrators know and are able to do.

Given this definition, human capital management in a comprehensive educator quality development system refers to how an organization tries to acquire, increase, and sustain the talent level of educators over time. More specifically, it refers to the entire continuum of activities and policies that affect educators over their work life at a given school district. This range of activities includes pre-service/preparation and licensure; recruitment and selection; hiring and induction; placement and reassignment; professional development, mentoring, and support; and evaluation, career advancement, compensation, and the removal of ineffective educators (see examples of human capital management frameworks in appendix 5S). A human capital approach – here referred to as a comprehensive educator quality development approach – to a problem like recruiting, developing, and retaining high-quality educators in urban schools involves districts and states coordinating efforts around each component of the continuum for maximum effect.

Given the time constraints of the Task Force's life, the focus of attention in this area was on those activities or continuum components that most impact the pre-existing and fairly stable workforce of Rhode Island's urban districts. Key areas with the most potential to help current educators improve and, through that improvement, positively impact student learning and outcomes were identified as evaluation, professional development, and ongoing support. The extent to which states and districts are effective in these focus areas has a direct effect on whether they can attract and keep high-quality new teachers. Moreover, success in these areas also impacts how well states and districts are able to provide specific feedback to preparation programs on how to produce the sort of educators these states and districts need, how well they are able to identify and recognize their most effective educators, and, ultimately, how they deal with those who are chronically ineffective. In this sense, these areas form a foundation for the reform of other areas of educator quality development.

Several important components of the educator quality continuum (including recruitment and teacher preparation) are not dealt with directly in this document. However, in the long-term recommendations that follow, the Task Force proposes ideas for addressing these other educator quality development elements at a future

date. We hope that state-level action in the areas identified by the Task Force will assist the urban districts' efforts to create individualized, comprehensive educator quality development strategies that take advantage of specific district strengths and acknowledge specific district weaknesses.

At the core of these recommendations is the conviction that a shared conception of what effective instruction looks like and how we measure it in actual teachers is the cornerstone of all urban educator quality initiatives. We believe that this conception is multifaceted, involving professional standards of practice in areas such as content knowledge, pedagogy, classroom management, and family engagement; a code of ethical conduct; and evidence of student learning and progress. We also believe that a variety of metrics are necessary to accurately and fairly assess the performance of an educator against this conception, ranging from classroom observations and evaluation conferences to formative classroom assessments, student portfolios, and classroom artifacts to subjective and objective evidence of student learning. A commitment to this complicated picture of effective instruction is necessary for real educator quality development reform to work.

## Current Rhode Island Context

To fully understand these recommendations, it is important to be aware of some state-specific contexts.

### State Policy and Regulatory Issues

Rhode Island has put in place the foundational base to develop an evaluation system for all educators that will be based on the Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards (RIPTS) and the Rhode Island Standards for Educational Leadership. Both sets of standards were adopted by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education and are being used in some districts to pilot the use of new evaluation systems. In the fall of 2009, the Regents will accept public comment on the "Educator Evaluation System Framework" that will detail the standards and criteria necessary for every district evaluation system (see appendix 5S). In addition, Rhode Island's new Commissioner of Education has recently released her vision for the state's education system, "Transforming Education in Rhode Island." Central to the agenda accompanying this vision is her plan to ensure educator excellence. The recommendations in this report articulate a direction that is in many ways similar to the Commissioner's agenda; to the extent they do, they should be viewed as an affirmation of that work which has gained momentum since the inception of the Task Force.

While the development and adoption of these standards at the state level are important first steps, the following recommendations suggest ways in which the state might play an even larger role in evaluating and developing educator quality than in the past. In 2008, Rhode Island continued to score near the bottom in prominent national rankings of how states support and regulate teacher quality (see appendix 5S). These recommendations are in part designed to address some of the problems identified in those national report cards, and it is the opinion of the Task Force that these national reports should continue to guide reform within and beyond the scope of these recommendations.

### Fiscal Issues

While some aspects of a statewide educator quality development system should have relatively low, or even no, costs associated with them, others certainly will. Given the current economic downturn in Rhode Island and the lack of state funding currently available for initiatives in this area, these recommendations

attempt to balance low-cost action or changes to regulatory policy with the piloting of promising practices that can potentially be funded with federal grants or outside foundation funding. The hope is that these policy changes and state pilots will inform and shift the Rhode Island conversation about what state programs and/or functions have the greatest potential to positively impact educator quality. Once implemented, the intent of these recommendations is to produce data that will indicate where funds should be allocated to support statewide educator quality as the state emerges from its current economic struggles.

## Recommendations, Action Steps, and Partner Responsibilities

The Task Force offers three short-term recommendations that will address critical aspects of educator quality development in Rhode Island and lay the foundation for four long-term recommendations in this area moving forward.

### Short-term

The Task Force has engaged in a concerted effort to research similar educator quality development systems in other states, close consideration of the individual components of the system in Rhode Island, and a review of the best practices around each nationally. As a result, the Task Force makes the following recommendations.

**RECOMMENDATION** Require the regular, substantive evaluation of all teachers – both tenured and non-tenured – with evidence of instructional effectiveness as a major evaluation criterion. This regular evaluation should be based upon the multifaceted conception of instructional effectiveness laid out above and involve both the RI Professional Teaching Standards and evidence of student learning and progress.

The Task Force believes that educators should be continuously growing and improving and that regular evaluation of individual educator's strengths and weaknesses should drive this growth process. In line with these views, the Task Force recommends that full support be given to the Board of Regents' and RIDE's work on the Educator Evaluation System Framework, along with its proposed requirements of regular evaluation of all teachers and the use of instructional effectiveness as a driving criterion in those evaluations. The Task Force supports the articulation of a multifaceted view of instructional effectiveness that looks at a teacher's performance against the RIPTS rubric during observed lessons and in professional practice, as well as at evidence of student learning and progress.

At this point, local district leaders – in partnership with local union leaders – should determine what objective and subjective evidence of student learning and progress should be used. After an evaluation of value-added data in Rhode Island and the consideration with teachers of what, if any, role the unions can play in providing evidence of student learning and progress in reading and math, the question of the appropriate metrics should be revisited at the state level. Along with this, the issue of how we measure student learning and progress in subjects other than reading and math must also be reviewed. Above all, the implementation of this recommendation depends on getting wide, cross-stakeholder agreement on indicators and on how we measure student learning and progress and determine teacher effect on them. Without widespread concurrence that the ways we measure are both fair and accurate, other reforms based on the assumption that we can accurately identify those teachers who are the most effective are destined to fail.

**RECOMMENDATION** Ensure the enhancement of the current RIDE data-collection system to allow for the collection of all data needed to attempt teacher value-added data analysis.

According to a 2003 study by the RAND Corporation, "value-added modeling (VAM) is a collection of complex statistical techniques that use multiple years of students' test score data to estimate the effects of individual schools or teachers." While it is widely held that there are limitations to what value-added data can and cannot tell us about teacher quality, there is also evidence to suggest that it may be valuable – in conjunction with other measures of effective instruction – in identifying growth areas for educators, contributing to a multifaceted view of educator quality, helping educators tailor instruction to the actual needs of students, and driving district- and state-level reform of quality development systems (more on the Rand study of VAM appears in appendix 5S). While Rhode Island has the two critical components of a longitudinal data system needed to collect and analyze value-added data, it currently does not perform either of these functions. Deriving whatever value this data can provide requires that Rhode Island first collect and review it.

The relative value and reliability of this data will drive how it is used in the future and what role it can play alongside a framework of professional teaching standards, classroom observations, formative assessments, and other tools to evaluate and support our educators. While VAM is not the only way we can measure student learning and progress, it would be an important one if it could be done accurately. Every effort should be made to secure the federal, private, or state funding to make the necessary enhancements to the existing data infrastructure, explore potential value-added models, create a user-friendly interface for accessing this data, and engage the various stakeholders in a conversation about what these data can tell us and how they should be used.

**RECOMMENDATION** Pursue national funding opportunities to pilot several currently available models integrating educator evaluation, support, and professional development in Rhode Island's urban districts.

The Task Force recognizes that the state is moving deliberately in each of the areas mentioned above, as well as in the overall endeavor to define what effective teaching looks like and how it is measured. To edify and inform these efforts, the state should pilot one or more nationally proven models that integrate elements such as job-embedded professional development, using data to drive instruction, teacher leadership, evaluation based on multiple measures, and peer coaching. Done well, these sorts of pilots can help Rhode Island make sure the reforms chosen to be enacted at scale in the urban districts and across the state are representative of national best practices and informed by the cutting-edge innovation embodied in these models.

Currently, there are unique opportunities to secure external funding for existing national models that integrate educator evaluation, ongoing support, and professional development that could inform Rhode Island's own efforts to create systems with this same integration. The American Federation of Teachers' Innovation Fund, the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), and the opportunities represented by the current work of organizations like the Gates Foundation and the Ford Foundation

make it evident that there are unique opportunities to pilot new work around educator quality. In a time when new state or local funding for significant reform is unlikely, Rhode Island must take advantage of external opportunities to foster new work around educator quality that can inform its ongoing efforts to improve in the areas identified previously.

Specifically, the Task Force recommends that Rhode Island apply for federal support, such as a TIF grant, to pilot the TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement in the five urban districts. In addition, the Task Force recommends that Rhode Island secure AFT and/or private foundation funding to pilot some variation of peer assistance and review (PAR) programs currently implemented in places like Toledo, Ohio (additional details in appendix 5S).

Research in the fields of both private sector management and education (see appendix 5S) tells us that to truly build a better educator profession, we need

- consistent performance-based accountability with clear performance standards;
- constructive ongoing support;
- regular opportunities for professional growth and peer collaboration;
- a substantive career path with multiple career options that become available when individuals exhibit excellence and/or specific skills sets (e.g., exceptional teachers with coaching skills might be teacher/mentors, while teachers with substantial technology knowledge might have a hybrid role as a teacher/tech coordinator);
- compensation and incentives in addition to salary that are somehow linked to the way individuals and groups perform and distinguish themselves.

TAP and PAR programs stress these elements and integrate them into a cohesive, building-level program. The Task Force recommends a concerted, coordinated state/local effort to introduce these programs to specific schools and teachers. This effort should include local school district leadership, local and state-level labor leaders, RIDE, and any appropriate external organizations. Assuming the willing participation of particular schools and their staffs, the Task Force further recommends that the state launch a cross-district pilot in an effort to invigorate the dialogue around the issues of evaluation, professional development, and ongoing support necessary to inform RIDE's work in these areas.

In the following section we address how the results of these pilot programs and the state and local collaboration necessary to implement them can be used to inform Rhode Island's efforts to establish its own Educator Evaluation System Framework that integrates these elements and to implement it in an effective way with districts.

### Long-term

The limited scope of the recommendations put forth in this report should not be taken to imply that additional reforms are not necessary. Rather, the Task Force encourages the Board of Regents, RIDE, and the urban districts to finalize a plan for proposing additional reforms that build on what is accomplished and learned from the implementation of the short-term recommendations and address the components of the educator quality development continuum system that were not dealt with there (e.g., teacher and school leader preparation, educator compensation, school leader professional development). This plan should include

not only recommendations for when certain components of the system are piloted, evaluated, revised, and brought up to scale, but also a clear timeline that lays out future legislative and fiscal actions needed if the system is to be fully implemented. Moreover, these reforms should be developed in conjunction with the teachers they will be designed to support. With these stipulations in mind, the Task Force makes the following recommendations.

**RECOMMENDATION** Provide full support for RIDE's continuing work with school districts, their unions, and other partners to develop the Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards and to create model evaluation tools and guides for districts that detail how to use the RIPTS in the evaluation process. Further, Rhode Island unions and the teachers they represent in the urban districts should continue to be consulted throughout this development process.

While a balance between state and local district decision making is important in all areas of educator quality development, the Task Force supports RIDE's work to create a series of statewide performance standards with accompanying model evaluation tools and evaluation processes that build on the RIPTS framework. As these further tools and processes are developed, and as RIDE pilots them in different districts, the Task Force recommends that RIDE, the Regents, local districts, and their unions together review the extent of RIDE's role in this area and decide jointly on a role that is appropriate and possible for RIDE to play. This review of RIDE's role should involve considering whether RIDE has the capacity and authority to

- develop extensive evaluation process requirements statewide;
- establish a statewide rubric for educator effectiveness combining the RIPTS with objective measures of student achievement;
- train local district evaluators;
- ensure inter-rater reliability;
- collect aggregated evaluation data to help districts and schools tailor professional development and ongoing support.

To the extent such a joint review indicates that RIDE has the capacity and support necessary to play any or all of these roles effectively, it should do so. However, where a review of RIDE's role indicates that certain functions are best left to the local districts, RIDE should examine how it can best support the local education agencies in performing them. Undergirding all of these efforts is the continuing need to engage Rhode Island educators in the process of creating these new tools and processes to ensure the investment of those whom these tools are designed to support, as well as the practicality necessary to make these tools useful.

**RECOMMENDATION** Create a cross-stakeholder panel to develop research-based, statewide standards and best practices for professional development and to advocate for the restoration of state funding for professional development.

The panel structure and process used to develop the Professional Teaching Standards was a comprehensive and inclusive effort that resulted in a set of research-based standards for teaching with wide support from all relevant stakeholders. The Task Force recommends establishing a similar panel structure and process with the goal of developing a set of state standards for professional development that would build on RIDE's work on evaluation and the iPlan to drive how individual districts support their teachers. Such a structure and process would ensure that

professional development would be practical, useful, and focused across the state.

Moreover, the Task Force recommends that this body incorporate learning and experiences from the potential program pilots mentioned above, as well as from educators in non-pilot schools, into the conversation about how to best structure support for the state's teaching workforce. This body would also lead the advocacy effort to secure state-level funding for research-based professional development, the establishment of regular feedback opportunities for teachers on the type of professional development offered, and the discussion about how to regularly assess the efficacy of professional development delivered statewide by the districts and unions.

**RECOMMENDATION** Review and revise teacher certification, including the Certificate of Eligibility for Employment (CEE), the Professional Certificate (PC), and the requirements for each.

RIDE and the Board of Regents are currently conducting a thorough review of licensing policy in the state. The Task Force supports the Commissioner's efforts to add a more rigorous cutoff score for the PRAXIS I basic skills test to the state-articulated requirements for obtaining the CEE and consider the possibility of strengthening the requirements and time necessary for advancing from the CEE to the professional certificate. Specifically, the Task Force recommends considering new requirements for advancing from one license to the other that include providing evidence of student learning and progress as well as the consideration of a longer period of time before advancement that would allow for significant evidence collection and professional development before the professional license is awarded.

**RECOMMENDATION** Provide full support for RIDE's and the Board of Regents' efforts to prioritize educator quality development and their work to craft a comprehensive, long-term agenda to maximize state support for increasing educator quality.

The recommendations in this report endorse the solid start to augmenting the state's role in ensuring high-quality educators in Rhode Island's urban schools and classrooms that is currently under way. However, a more thorough review of all components of the educator quality development continuum and how the state can best impact them is necessary to keep this work moving forward. Focusing first on educator evaluation, professional development, and ongoing support will lay the foundation necessary for considering the reform of other components, including educator preparation, compensation, and accountability that rely inextricably on how we define, measure, and nurture teacher effectiveness. For example, once Rhode Island has determined an evaluation rubric for effective teaching and metrics for evaluating teachers against this rubric, it can use this model to determine how to

- reform teacher preparation programs;
- recognize and/or compensate the most effective educators (as identified by a comprehensive evaluation process) and school staffs;
- hone any statewide alternative-route programs or recruitment efforts to screen for characteristics of effective educators as defined by the state;
- incentivize the most effective teachers to teach in schools with the lowest-performing students.

To ensure the effectiveness of such a review, it is incumbent upon RIDE and the Board of Regents to meaningfully engage local district leadership, union leadership, institutions of higher education, and principals and teachers in the work of planning and instituting substantive reforms in areas ranging from teacher preparation reform to incentivizing highly effective teachers to stay in the classroom to creating hybrid roles for teachers to educator accountability and alternative compensation structures. It is the hope of the Task Force that the pilot programs recommended in the previous section will produce a new type of dialogue around these issues, driven by the real experiences of Rhode Island educators who have participated in these programs. The data and experiences generated through quality pilots should prove invaluable in considering how to build scalable initiatives designed to maximize educator quality moving forward.

## Comment on the Recommendations from the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals

The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO, concurs with the recommendations of the Urban Education Task Force with the following comments and cautions:

- Student assessments are neither valid nor reliable in measuring teacher effectiveness. It is currently politically correct to discuss using value-added models for purposes of teacher evaluation and compensation. There is no evidence that teachers perform "better" because of monetary incentives. Further, teachers will not put their basic salaries at risk so that some individuals will benefit to the detriment of others.
- Teacher labor should be included in any discussions of further recommendations affecting educator quality.
- Advancement in certification status should not hinge on evidence of student learning, particularly if this phrase is a proxy for student test scores. The CEE is a certificate of eligibility to be employed. It makes no sense to extend the timeline for conversion to a Professional Certificate from a CEE. Perhaps the suggestion here is that there be a new kind of certificate precedent to the Professional Certificate. Certification and licensure should not be conflated with employment decisions that an employer might make.
- The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals does not agree with the recommendation that "full support be given to the Board of Regents' and RIDE's work on the Educator Evaluation System Framework." The Regents' proposal calls for educators to be evaluated annually. We believe that this is unfeasible, given district and school leadership capacity. Further, new teachers should be evaluated often before being tenured and then after tenure be put in a three-year cycle for evaluation unless there is cause to make evaluations more frequently. Student-achievement assessment scores should not be used in teacher evaluation unless valid and reliable.

# 6 Innovation for Successful Schools

The Urban Education Task Force recommends that RIDE, the urban districts that are the focus of the Task Force, charter school leaders, including the League of Charter Schools, the mayoral academies and charter school directors, work collaboratively to develop the infrastructure and policies that will support innovative practices in our schools. We describe here both a Center for Innovation and a Zone of Innovation as starting points for catalyzing and spreading educational innovations.

## Introduction

The call for innovation in public education has grown steadily louder in recent years as determined efforts to improve schools have had minimal success. Innovation is a fundamentally different way of doing things that results in considerably better, and usually different, outcomes. Both "better" and "different" require change that is meaningful and substantial.

## Recommendations, Action Steps, and Partner Responsibilities

Believing that innovation is critical to the improvement of education in Rhode Island, the Task Force is recommending a plan to disseminate innovations already under way in Rhode Island from one school to others and to create new and innovative schools in Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

### A Supportive Infrastructure

Innovative practices are occurring in many of our urban schools in Rhode Island – in public school districts, in independent schools, and in the charter system. Unfortunately, they occur in isolation, with very little support for sharing them with other schools and classrooms. We cannot expect innovation to spread like a fad; rather, we must be intentional about creating opportunities for educators to learn from each other and providing the supports to incubate reform.

**RECOMMENDATION** Develop a Center for Innovation led by RIDE, which would help identify, develop, support, and spread innovative educational efforts in Rhode Island's urban districts and throughout the state.

RIDE, in collaboration with state leaders, school district and school board leadership, charter school leaders, educators, and other partners should develop the Center for Innovation, which would serve the following purposes:

- Monitor innovative educational efforts throughout both the state and the country and communicate them widely to schools, community-based organizations, and the public. The Center would disseminate information about successful programs and practices through the media, through convening, and through publishing. In addition, the Center would facilitate cooperative efforts among institutions of higher education, government agencies, community-based organizations, and school districts to evaluate and disseminate programs and practices in the new, innovative schools.

- Reach out to educators, community groups, and innovative school models (in-state and national) to help stimulate proposals for new, fundamentally different schools.
- Commission research to identify high-priority unmet student learning needs.
- Ensure that high-quality technical assistance and other public and nongovernmental support is available to assist districts and new-schools developers create high-quality proposals, while providing appropriate oversight to ensure high-quality schools.
- Continually review and make recommendations for both legislative and non-legislative improvements in the state's new-schools initiatives, including recommendations for changes in the provisions for self-governed district schools.

***Action Steps***

- The Center for Innovation would not require a significant state appropriation, but some start-up funding would be needed. Longer term, the Center would be expected to raise a significant share of its budget from the private sector and relevant federal sources.
- The Commissioner for Elementary and Secondary Education would direct this effort under the direction and governance of the Board of Regents, thereby providing experience and continuity in achieving the Center's mission and carrying out its principal activities.

## A Zone of Innovation

The process of innovation is most fruitful when it takes place in an environment that supports challenges to key assumptions about the world and the way it operates.

**RECOMMENDATION** Enact legislation as soon as possible to create a Rhode Island "Zone of Innovation" – which would initially include Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket – that provides a policy environment in which school districts and educational entrepreneurs are encouraged to create new, different schools.

The creation of new, innovative schools is more than an end in itself. In addition to providing a diversity of educational opportunities to students, the new legislation is intended to promote innovation and change throughout the five urban districts and beyond. New schools can exert positive influence on existing schools; they can be a much-needed research and development arm for the conventional system. Innovation means trial and error, risk and reward. Either way, it provides lessons to existing schools. Its successes, especially, have the potential to serve as powerful examples of ideas, policies, and practices that influence student learning.

The heightened awareness in foundations and the federal government of the importance of innovation in education bodes well for obtaining grants to fund a Zone of Innovation. But swift and dramatic action will be essential in competing for those dollars.

The new schools would be of two types: newly created charter schools and self-governing district schools.

### NEWLY CREATED CHARTER SCHOOLS

Thirteen charter schools have been opened under Rhode Island's charter law. Additional charter schools in the urban districts can provide models for self-governing district schools and provide an incentive for school administrators and school committees to create new district schools.

#### *Action Steps*

- As soon as possible, the existing charter law should be amended to remove the cap on the number of new charter schools that can be created in these districts and statewide. In addition, the state should provide start-up funding, technical assistance, and, when possible, physical facilities.
- Rhode Island charter school students are funded separately from other public schools. Because the state lacks a funding formula based on student enrollment, additional state funding must be provided to charter schools, on top of what is already allocated to traditional schools and districts. As the state builds a funding formula for all students, legislative leaders should consider a base state allocation that goes to the school or district that a student attends.

### SELF-GOVERNING DISTRICT SCHOOLS

Most charter schools in Rhode Island are independent of the school districts in which they operate. New, self-governing schools could be created by the districts themselves.

School districts already have the authority to close poorly performing schools and replace them with new, innovative schools, but there has been little incentive or public support for such action. The new legislation recommended here would include incentives to encourage districts to create new schools that would have the same privileges enjoyed by charter schools and would be part of the Zone of Innovation.

#### *Action Steps*

- Creation of self-governing district schools would require the collaboration and approval of school committees, district superintendents, and teacher unions.
- Self-governing district schools could be created new or by converting poorly performing schools.
- The district would request proposals from various sponsors to create or convert schools. The district would set the terms of the agreement in a contract with the school sponsors, and that contract could be terminated for cause.

### KEY SUPPORTS FOR INNOVATIVE SCHOOLS

#### *Action Steps*

- Role of Center for Innovation Just as an organization's application for a charter to start a new school must be approved by RIDE, applications for a self-governing school would require the approval of the state. The Center for Innovation could screen and evaluate applications for charter or self-governing schools and make recommendations to the Board of Regents. Additionally, the Center for Innovation could support schools in the Zone of Innovation to attract new teachers.
- Open Enrollment The new legislation should provide that students in the five urban districts would be free to attend any charter or self-governing school in the Zone of Innovation where space is available. Where applications exceed available seats, the school would be required to admit by lottery.

# 7 Educator Collaboration

The Urban Education Task Force recommends creating new capacity for cross-district and partner collaboration to harness the state's full potential for progress. In addition to achieving greater efficiency of resources and a shared sense of accountability for outcomes, this new capacity would further drive progress in the critical areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and educator quality.

## Introduction

Over the past eighteen months the Task Force has studied promising efforts by the five urban school districts, charter and alternative schools, community partners, the regional collaboratives, and RIDE to improve student and school success. In our consultations with urban education leaders throughout the state, we have heard them express interest in working more collaboratively across school district lines to develop effective strategies, practices, and solutions to the challenges facing urban communities.

- District leaders made the following observations:
  - ✧ Superintendents would be willing to collaborate across district lines on common educational priorities such as English language learners, high school redesign, community partnerships, parent engagement, provided the time and resources are justified by the intended end result.
  - ✧ Superintendents recommended that the Task Force examine existing models of cross-system collaboration operating in other states and urban districts.
  - ✧ RIDE should be centrally involved in any collaborative effort, given the likelihood that the outcomes of any collaboration will be of interest to other school systems, with possible implications for state policy.
  - ✧ The Research Collaborative, a partnership composed of nonprofit research and policy centers, should continue to function as a resource to the cross-district collaborative effort by providing data analysis, documentation, evaluation, and promising-practice research.
- The regional collaboratives expressed interest in lending both capacity and expertise in a broad-based effort to advance the goals of the Task Force.
- Several participants in discussions with leaders of charter schools and alternative schools expressed interest in collaborating with their counterparts in traditional districts in areas of mutual interest (mentioned specifically were educator quality and parent involvement).
- The Research Collaborative has completed research and policy analysis at the request of the Task Force, including a study of student mobility completed by the Providence Plan, funded in part by a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation (see appendix 7S).

Active members of the Research Collaborative are Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, the Providence Plan, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform and the Urban Education Policy Program at Brown, the Northeast Regional Lab at Education Development Center, and Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council. In June, representatives of the Research Collaborative attended a national conference in Chicago designed to promote approaches to research collaboration modeled after the Consortium on Chicago School Research. Representatives from nineteen urban areas attended the meeting and are making plans to form a professional network that could be a source of technical support for the emerging Research Collaborative here in Rhode Island.

## Current Rhode Island Context

There are some notable examples of educator collaboration in Rhode Island, such as the promising partnership between Central Falls Public Schools and the Learning Community Charter School. Also, the mission of the four regional collaboratives is to serve the collective instructional and non-instructional needs of member districts. However, substantial collaboration among educators across district lines or between traditional districts and charters remains rare and episodic.

The main conclusion of the Task Force's fact-finding stage is that there is both interest and willingness on the part of educators for more purposeful, organized, and sustained collaboration. This dovetails with the need for more efficient use of resources in these challenging economic times and the renewed interest of both the federal government and foundations in cross-sector partnerships to support urban education reform.

## Recommendations, Action Steps, and Partner Responsibilities

In the latter stages of its work, the Task Force has grappled with the challenge of sustaining the cross-sector (e.g., education, business, labor, community-based organizations, arts and cultural institutions) dialogue and partnership the Task Force helped to create, while shifting the focus from developing a plan to monitoring and supporting its implementation. And while we recognize that RIDE and the districts are making impressive strides, we firmly believe that it will take concerted and aligned support from all major stakeholders and partners to create the will and capacity to transform our schools and enhance outcomes for all students.

As noted above, education stakeholders throughout the state – in the urban districts, RIDE, charter and alternative schools, higher education, and business and community organizations – have expressed the willingness to work together to reverse persistently low trends in urban school performance noted in the introduction to this report. Elements of the new capacity that needs to be developed include planning and implementation support, fundraising, community engagement and outreach, research and data analysis, communications, and reporting.

In response, we propose the following short-term objectives and action steps to launch such an effort over the next six months.

**RECOMMENDATION** Create an Urban Education Consortium, serving as a public-private partnership, that would be endorsed by the Governor, the Board of Regents, the General Assembly, and the Commissioner of Education but would be supported by private donors and governed by an independent advisory board.

The Consortium would be established to undertake the following proposed responsibilities:

- Serve as an ongoing voice for fundamental education reform in the state through evidence-based advocacy and by building the knowledge and political will needed to take on tough changes in policy and practice.
- Monitor and support the efforts of the education agencies, their partners, and the broader community to implement the Task Force recommendations and new priorities established by the Regents, RIDE, and the districts.
- Produce an annual report on the state of urban education in Rhode Island that focuses on one or more of the recommendations, as well as on the overall performance of urban students.
- Conduct public forums to engage and mobilize various constituencies and shareholders (students, educators, administra-

tors, business leaders, parents, union leaders, elected officials, partner organizations, funders, higher education leaders, etc.) and to channel their concerns and aspirations into constructive action.

Two co-chairs, accomplished and committed leaders representing the business and education communities, would lead the proposed organization. As a consortium, the organization would operate with a small staff, solicit grants to support its work, and draw on the expertise of a core group of partner organizations such as the Providence Plan, KIDS COUNT, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Young Voices, and the Rhode Island After School Plus Alliance, among others. Leadership of the Consortium would help to determine the Consortium's role in relation to the Center for Innovation mentioned in the recommendation on Innovation for School Success.

### *Action Steps*

- Convene a cross-sector design team from existing Task Force members and others to develop parameters for this new entity – its mission and bylaws, a collaborative governance structure, a funding mechanism, and a staffing plan.
- Develop a work scope that addresses the most urgent priorities of the Task Force.
- Convene a team, in conjunction with the Urban Education Consortium, to pursue external core funding from national foundations (Gates, Ford, Carnegie, Broad, and Nellie Mae, among others) to support the implementation of the Task Force recommendations and the organizational capacity needed to support them.

**RECOMMENDATION** Expand the existing Research Collaborative to provide the required analytic and research support to implement the Task Force recommendations.

To date, the Research Collaborative has provided a range of technical support to the Task Force, including analysis of student and school performance data, documentation of student mobility between schools and districts, promising practice scans, documentation and analysis of constituency engagement forums, and production of model program profiles. We recommend that the Research Collaborative acquire institutional partners with the capacity to support the implementation of Task Force recommendations (see appendix 7S).

The Research Collaborative could provide the following types of services in support of work in the field:

- Documentation and evaluation of pilot projects
- Development of planning and implementation tools
- Dissemination of evidence-based promising practices
- Construction of a value-added data system (see the recommendation on a Statewide Educator Quality Development System)
- Development of performance standards and indicators
- Assistance to RIDE with rollout of the longitudinal data system
- Training of end users in the state's vast data-warehouse collection

### *Action Steps*

- Recruit new member organizations to the Research Collaborative to meet the technical and substantive needs to support implementation of the recommendation and action steps outlined in the preceding recommendation.
- Develop a Research Collaborative work scope based on the previous action step.
- Secure funding for the Research Collaborative.

## 1S Pre-Kindergarten Education

Pre-K benefits children, their families, and their communities. From improved academic outcomes to the economic savings to schools and states, the benefits of high-quality pre-K are irrefutable. The following summary of the benefits of pre-K from the national organization Pre-K Now, funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, highlights some of the research findings about the positive impact of high-quality pre-K (Gayl, Young & Patterson 2009).

### Successful Students

- Pre-K increases high school graduation rates. Chicago children who attended a pre-K program were 29 percent more likely to graduate from high school than their peers who did not have pre-K. (Source: Chicago Longitudinal Study)
- Pre-K helps children do better on standardized tests. Michigan fourth-graders who had attended pre-K passed the state's literacy and math assessment tests at higher rates than their peers who had no pre-K. (Source: "State Efforts to Evaluate the Effects of Pre-Kindergarten," Yale University Child Study Center)
- Pre-K reduces grade repetition. Maryland fifth-graders who attended pre-K were 44 percent less likely to have repeated a grade than their peers who did not attend pre-K. (Source: "State Efforts to Evaluate the Effects of Pre-Kindergarten," Yale University Child Study Center)
- Pre-K reduces the number of children placed in special education. Among Chicago children, those who attended pre-K were 41 percent less likely to require special education services than their peers who did not attend. (Source: Chicago Longitudinal Study)

### Responsible Adults

- Pre-K reduces crime and delinquency. Chicago children who did not attend pre-K were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age eighteen than their peers who had been pre-K participants. (Source: Chicago Longitudinal Study)
- Pre-K lowers rates of teen pregnancy. North Carolina children who attended pre-K were less likely to become teen parents than their peers who did not attend pre-K (26 percent vs. 45 percent). (Source: Carolina Abecedarian Project)
- Pre-K leads to greater employment and higher wages as adults. Forty-year-old adults in Michigan who attended pre-K as children were more likely to be employed and had a 33 percent higher average income than their peers who did not have pre-K. (Source: High/Scope Perry Preschool Project)
- Pre-K contributes to more stable families. Forty-year-old adults in Michigan who attended pre-K as children were more likely to report that they were getting along very well with their families than their peers who did not attend pre-K (75 percent vs. 64 percent). (Source: High/Scope Perry Preschool Project)

## Stronger Communities

- Every dollar invested in high-quality pre-K saves taxpayers up to seven dollars. Pre-K results in savings by reducing the need for remedial and special education, welfare, and criminal justice services, according to a number of studies. (Sources: "The Economics of Investing in Universal Preschool Education in California," RAND Corporation; High/Scope Perry Preschool Project)
- Pre-K improves efficiency and productivity in the classroom. Children who attended pre-K at Head Start centers had more advanced skills in areas such as following directions, problem solving, and joining in activities, all of which allow teachers to spend more time working directly with children and less on classroom management. (Source: "The Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

## References

Gayl, C. L., M. Young, and K. Patterson. 2009. *New Beginnings: Using Federal Title I Funds to Support Local Pre-K Efforts.* Federal Policy Series (September). Washington, DC: Pre-K Now, Pew Center on the States. Avaliable for download at <http://preknow.org>

See also:

Chicago Longitudinal Study, <www.waisman.wisc.edu/cls>

Carolina Abecedarian Project, <www.fpg.unc.edu/~abc>

High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, <www.highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=219>

# 2S Early Literacy

## Principles of Professional Development

- High-quality professional development must connect to student learning goals that are clear and accepted by all. Professional development content is aligned with state literacy standards and district curriculum. Teachers focus on theory and practice underlying pedagogical content knowledge.
- Professional development involves active learning for teachers. Teachers make connections for what they are learning in professional development to classroom instruction.
- Professional development is embedded in the context of work in schools and classrooms. Teachers collaborate with instructional leaders such as principals, literacy coaches, and mentor teachers. Teachers are engaged in continuous and reflective processes of diagnostic teaching.
- Professional development is continuous and ongoing. Teachers need adequate time to engage in meaningful activity embedded in the daily routine of the school over an extended period of time. Long-term goal: teachers, with the support of literacy specialists, will continue to reflect on practice after they have participated in extended professional development.
- Professional development is based on an ongoing and focused inquiry related to teacher learning, student learning, and best practices in early literacy instruction. Active participation in professional development must be focused on inquiry and analysis related to their teaching. Through this process, the teacher makes successive intentional shifts in teaching based on the analysis of what students need to know, what instruction will support the students in developing knowledge or skill, and what the students learned through instruction.
- Coherence is evident in all aspects of the professional development. A systemic view in which professional development is seen as part of a focused effort on improving student learning is essential. District and building administrators agree on a course of action, focus resources (funding, technical resources) on that course, and then allow the necessary time for positive outcomes. All the stakeholders – state department of education, university pre-service and in-service program faculty, and district and building administrators – are willing to work together for coherence across the professional development system.

*Prepared by the UETF Working Group on Early Literacy*

## Adequate Staffing to Support Early Literacy

Staffing that ensures the best preparation for children in the early stages of literacy learning needs to support differentiated instruction that responds to the great variation in student profiles and proficiency. First among the requirements to adequately support differentiated instruction is a small student-to-teacher ratio. This can be accomplished by having a cadre of professionals and assistants supporting literacy instruction.

Classroom teachers should be proficient in teaching beginning readers and writers and specifically prepared to work with English language learners. Beyond the basics of English phonology and grammar and of competence in reading instruction, certified teachers should be required to know the basics of first- and second-language acquisition and understand cultural diversity from a positive, additive perspective. The current requirements for preparing teachers to teach reading and diverse learners need to be strengthened and guaranteed.

Reading specialists and literacy coaches should be part of the core faculty where literacy instruction begins. The role of the specialist is critical in supporting differentiated instruction by analyzing frequent assessment data to monitor progress in decoding and comprehension that, in turn, informs appropriate instruction to be delivered to small groups of readers. Specialists are also critical for ongoing, embedded professional development that supports both new and veteran teachers in excellent literacy instructional practices. Especially for early literacy learning, occupational therapists are also critical members of the educational team. The coordination required between gross and fine motor skills and conceptual development takes place in the early stages of learning to read and write.

All districts should implement paraprofessional and volunteer training. Paraprofessionals and volunteers should not be used to supplant instruction. Along with specialists and the classroom teacher, they should participate in a well-articulated safety-net system based on frequent assessments leading to early recognition of potential problems as well as differentiated instruction/intervention made possible by utilizing all relevant adults in literacy instruction and practice.

All members of the literacy team would benefit from having cross-cultural understanding to provide culturally relevant curriculum and instruction and to support communication between home and school contexts.

Ongoing school- and district-based professional development planned specifically to support the instructional model should be required of all educators engaged in early literacy instruction. Since this is a considerable investment in individuals as well as teams of educators who work together, stability in staffing individual schools should be a very high priority. When coaches, teachers, specialists, and assistants have the opportunity to collaborate and grow expertise in a common practice, their students are provided with consistent instructional methods and objectives from year to year. This reduces the confusion that results from frequent shifts in teaching approaches and permits students to focus on learning to read and write rather than on changing routines in the classroom.

*Prepared by the UETF Working Group on Early Literacy*

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## 3S Expanded Learning Time

The Expanded Learning Time (ELT) Working Group worked for six months to develop the action plan described in the full report for an expanded learning time initiative in Rhode Island. This action plan is based on the original ELT recommendation submitted to the Governor in December 2008, the subsequent research on best practices, and outreach to Rhode Island and regional stakeholders. Because it is critical to the success of such an initiative to include all stakeholders from the beginning, the membership of the Expanded Learning Working Group was broad and inclusive (see the end of this supplement for a complete list of members).

The Working Group held mini-conferences with Massachusetts 2020 and the After-School Corporation in New York City, both of which have instituted versions of expanded learning time. Representatives of the ELT Working Group and Massachusetts 2020 have met with almost all of the core urban superintendents and some union representatives in Rhode Island. The Working Group visited an ELT middle school in Massachusetts and held a forum on ELT for community-based organizations on June 15, 2009. The group also conducted outreach with legislators and legislative staff.

### ELT: Not Just an Add-On

A movement has been growing to see ELT as an integral part of the school day, with clear academic and youth development benefits, rather than as an "add-on." As Robert Stonehill and colleagues (2009, p. 9) observe:

> From the education leaders of the New Day for Learning Task Force to the signatories to the Broader, Bolder Approach to Education statement to President-elect Barack Obama, there is growing momentum in the education policy arena to educate the children and youth of the United States in more intentional and aligned ways. This momentum is creating a range of increasingly integrated education approaches at multiple levels, including those that rethink the use of time across the school day and year, such as expanded learning opportunity models. At the same time, increased investments in afterschool and summer learning over the past decade have resulted in a substantial evidence base about the academic, social, health, and other benefits of afterschool programs and have created a strong case that they are important pathways to learning, particularly when they work with schools to support student success. Yet, too often, these supports continue to be seen as "add-ons," not integral to in-school education efforts.

And as Melissa Lazarin (2008, p. 1) notes:

> Expanded learning time . . . can be particularly beneficial for ELLs [English-language learners]. . . . Time plays a unique role in the educational career of the English-language learner. Time affects the facility of learning a new language and the likelihood of high school graduation, especially among immigrant ELLs in high school.

## The Importance of Partnerships among Schools and Community-Based Organizations

The diagram below, from the Program for Afterschool Education and Research at Harvard, prepared in 2002, demonstrates the evolution of the relationship between expanded learning time and the traditional school day. As the diagram shows, partners move from operating as separate entities with separate goals and outcomes to working in conjunction with one another to create an expanded learning system with a shared vision, mission, and outcomes.

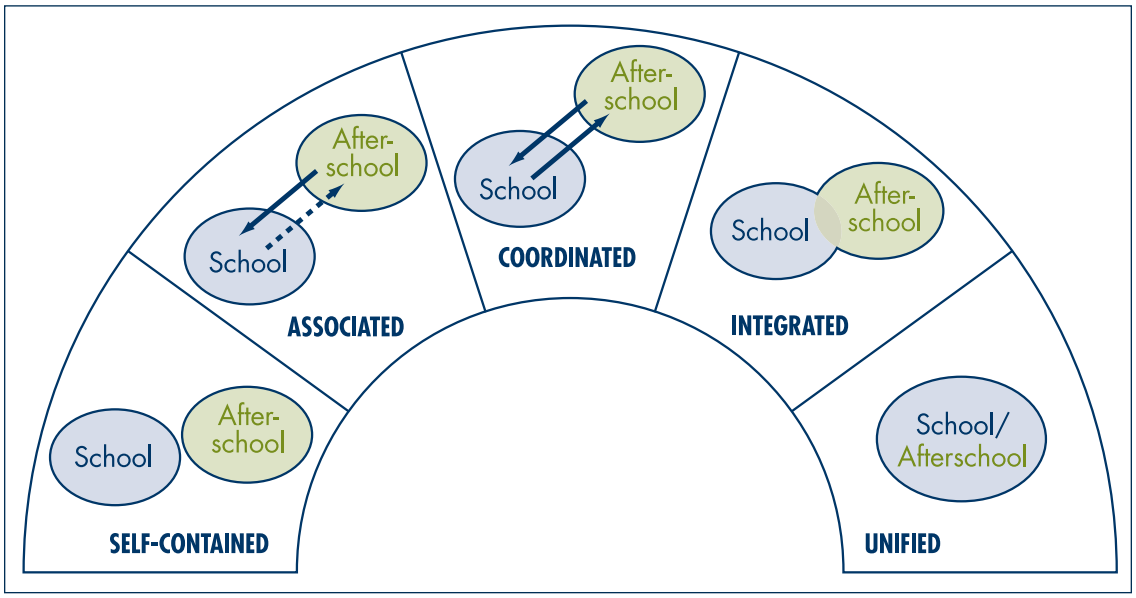
> At the heart of successful expanded learning opportunities are sound, sustainable partnerships among afterschool and summer program providers and schools working together to support learning. Although partnership development does not happen overnight, over time, effective partnerships move from being transactional to transformative in nature. (Enos & Morton 2003)

Five principles support movement toward transformative, sustainable school-afterschool/summer partnerships (adapted from Stonehill et al. 2009, pp. 13–14):

- a shared vision for learning and success, including academic, social, and emotional success;
- blended staffing models that enable crossover among school, afterschool, and summer staff;
- school-afterschool/summer partnerships at multiple levels within the school and district;
- regular and reciprocal collection, sharing, and communication about information on student progress;
- intentional and explicit contrast between school and afterschool environments.

Specifically, partnerships with afterschool and summer learning can help schools to

- provide a wider range of services and activities, particularly hands-on learning enrichment and arts activities that are not available during the school day;




Source: Program for Afterschool Education and Research, Harvard, 2002

- support transitions from middle to high school;
- reinforce concepts taught in school;
- support students who struggle with classroom instruction by offering alternative ways to learn and interact with educators and peers;
- engage students in fun at school, enhancing the learning experience throughout the day and preventing dropout;
- improve school culture and community image through exhibitions and performances;
- gain access to mentors and afterschool staff to support in-school learning.

Partnerships with schools can help afterschool and summer programs to

- gain access to and recruit groups of students most in need of support services;
- improve program quality and staff engagement;
- foster better alignment of programming to support a shared vision for learning;
- maximize resource use such as facilities, staff, data, and curriculum;
- develop targeted strategies to engage youth with attendance and discipline issues.

Finally, strong school-afterschool/summer partnerships benefit students in important ways beyond academic support. They can

- provide continuity of services across the day and year;
- facilitate access to a range of learning opportunities;
- share information about specific students to best support individual learning.

## Implementation of the ELT Initiative in Rhode Island

Following are further details regarding implementation of the ELT recommendations.

### Key Components

- Participation in the ELT initiative is voluntary.
- Input from youth on the design of the new learning day is critical.
- Applications must be submitted by partnerships between at least one community-based organization and a public school/district (including charter schools) with high-poverty rates; and/or districts with a high percentage of students not achieving proficiency as reported through the New England Common Assessment Program.
- Funding will be appropriately and equitably divided among the participating school and its partners and will include alignment of existing afterschool funds at the schools participating in ELT.
- Sites will be expected to use data for continuous improvement.
- To qualify to participate in the ELT initiative, applicants must meet the following guidelines.
  - Applications must contain, but not be limited to, the process the district and its partners will use to create a collaborative expanded learning time implementation plan, the stated intent to add no less than 300 hours to the current school schedule for all students in participating schools, the rationale for expanded learning time including specific goals and outcomes, the data system that will be used to collect relevant data, and the anticipated budget.

- ✧ Schools must demonstrate how they will meaningfully include partnerships with high-quality community partners, including afterschool and summer programs, higher-education institutions, arts and cultural institutions, businesses, and other youth development organizations that have the experience and capacity to serve as a partner in a comprehensive ELT program.
- ✧ Applicants must demonstrate how the expanded learning time will include an appropriate mix of additional time spent on: 1) academics; 2) enrichment opportunities such as small-group tutoring, music, arts, sports, and project-based experiential learning; and 3) time for teacher preparation and/or professional development, including joint professional development with community-based partner staff.
- ✧ Planning/design teams must include teachers, union representatives, principals, parents, community-based partners, and youth, who together share responsibility for ensuring ELT's success.
- ✧ Applicants must demonstrate a staffing structure that includes teachers from the participating school and staff from partner community-based organizations and/or staff from an existing school-based afterschool program partner; a full-time or part-time site coordinator (could be a CBO employee or school employee); and at least one school employee who devotes a portion of the day to ensuring high educational goals, standards, and alignment. Staff-to-student ratios may vary, but average 1:10 to 1:15.

## Proposed Timeline

- Fall 2009 Design and release request for proposals for ELT planning grants
- Late October/early November 2009 Proposals due
- November 2009 Demonstration sites selected for planning
- November 2009 Assemble design teams and map planning process
- Ongoing Communicate with youth, teachers, parents, and community partners
- Ongoing Schedule periodic meetings with unions and community
- Ongoing Provide technical assistance
- Ongoing Secure additional funding
- November–December 2009 Identify clear goals, priorities, and desired outcomes for ELT redesign
- December 2009–January 2010 Prepare preliminary ELT plan to submit to RIDE
- February–April 2010 Map out details such as staffing, budget, schedules, etc.
- February–May 2010 Establish any necessary union/district labor agreements for staffing ELT
- April–June 2010 Prepare final ELT plan to submit to RIDE
- July 2010–June 2011 Implementation of demonstration sites

## Examples of Potential Partner Organizations

Please note: A more comprehensive list is available in the Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance database <www.afterschoolri.org>.

- YMCAs
- YWCAs
- Boys and Girls Clubs
- Providence After School Alliance

- Woonsocket After School Alliance (collaboration of several organizations)
- Newport County Collaborative for Youth
- New Urban Arts
- Newport Community School
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers
- Child Opportunity Zones
- Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance
- Mt. Hope Learning Center
- Traveling Theater
- Apeiron Institute
- Save the Bay
- Volunteers in Providence Schools
- Rhode Islanders Sponsoring Education
- Capital City Community Centers
- Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence
- Urban League of Rhode Island
- City Year Rhode Island
- Girl Scouts of Rhode Island
- Rhode Island 4-H/University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension
- Big Sisters of Rhode Island
- Newport Art Museum
- Kids First
- Dorcas Place
- Plan USA
- Rhode Island Mentoring Partnership
- Rhode Island State Council on the Arts
- Public libraries
- John Hope Settlement House
- AS220
- Providence City Arts for Youth
- Washington County Coalition for Children
- Youth Pride

## Promising Work under Way

The Task Force believes it is important to recognize and build on structures that already exist in Rhode Island. There are also successful programs in Massachusetts and New York that can serve as models to adapt to the Rhode Island context.

### Rhode Island

***RIDE: Graduation Requirements and Basic Education Program Regulations***

Rhode Island is on the cutting edge of secondary school redesign, looking to broaden instructional delivery and definition of student success, all without compromising quality and standards. Clear progress toward meaningful secondary school redesign is currently happening in Rhode Island. Our transition away from traditional Carnegie units to a more individualized, competency-based assessment of student success is highly conducive to the integration of expanded learning opportunities into the overall assessment process.

RIDE has also just finalized the new Basic Education Program (BEP) regulations. There are several provisions that speak specifically to expanded learning opportunities and engagement with community-based organizations. The BEP regulations call for local education agencies to "develop a system for the provision of a broad array of high-quality expanded learning opportunities that will strengthen school engagement, support academic success, and expand all students' educational experiences."

### *District Initiatives*

In all of the five core Rhode Island urban districts, there are robust afterschool and summer programs already working closely with the schools. These partnerships represent a step along the way in the evolution toward enhanced collaboration and integration into a fully redesigned and expanded learning day. In Newport at the elementary level, there are an extended school-day program and an extended school-year program that focus on special education students. At the middle and high school levels in Newport, there is a comprehensive Community School model in place. Central Falls, beginning with the 2009-2010 academic year, will be implementing an expanded day for all sixth-graders.

### *Community-Based Initiatives*

In addition to district initiatives, there are several community-based initiatives under way in Rhode Island.

#### NEW DAY FOR LEARNING INITIATIVE

The New Day for Learning initiative in Providence is a partnership between Providence Public Schools, the mayor's office, and the Providence After School Alliance. The purpose of this three-year initiative is to build upon Providence's afterschool and school systems to design and implement a seamless day for learning that redefines how, where, and when students learn so they can complete Rhode Island's new graduation requirements and succeed in the twenty-first century. New Day for Learning (2009) describes its vision:

> New Day for Learning is not a curriculum or one-size-fits-all program; it's a twenty-first-century vision for learning that builds on a foundation of core academics by leveraging community resources to incorporate strategies such as hands-on learning, working in teams, and problem-solving. Before-[school], afterschool, and summer programs are a few of the places in and out of the classroom that are already using these learning approaches to engage students and increase their chances for success.
>
> If we want our students to excel academically, explore careers, and develop the rigorous knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in today's global society, we need to start thinking and talking about education differently. Imagine all students everywhere fully engaged in learning.

A unique and promising feature of this new initiative is the hiring of a director of expanded learning. The director of expanded learning opportunities is employed by the Providence After School Alliance (PASA); is housed at the Providence School Department; and reports directly to the superintendent, with oversight from the executive director of PASA, the mayor, and the PASA board of directors. For more information, see <www.mypasa.org> or <www.edutopia.org/new-day-for-learning-two>.

#### 21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers are federally funded through the U.S. Department of Education, Title IV, Part B, and administered by RIDE. The purpose of the funds is to provide resources for out-of-school-time programs, especially afterschool and summer programs, for students in high-poverty, low-performing schools. There are programs in Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, Woonsocket, Newport, Cranston, North Kingstown, and West Warwick. Programs operate for ages K–12; there are sixty-

five school/community sites serving about 15,000 students. Each program operates as a partnership between a school(s) and a community partner (community and/or faith-based organizations). The fiscal agents include schools, districts, and community-based organizations.

#### CHILD OPPORTUNITY ZONES

Managed by RIDE, Child Opportunity Zones (COZs) are school-based or school-linked family centers that provide services and supports to students and their families to promote school success and academic achievement. There are ten COZs throughout Rhode Island targeting high-poverty neighborhoods, including centers in Bristol/Warren, Central Falls, Cranston, Middletown, Newport, North Kingstown, Pawtucket, Providence, Westerly, and Woonsocket. COZs work to address the education, health, and social service needs of children, youth, and families to reduce barriers to learning and promote positive outcomes.

#### RHODE ISLAND AFTERSCHOOL PLUS ALLIANCE

The Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance (RIASPA), a statewide policy intermediary organization, is in the process of implementing two projects that incorporate elements of expanded learning time.

- Expanded Learning Opportunities and High School Graduation Credit The Nellie Mae Education Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, in partnership with RIASPA and RIDE, released a request for proposals (RFP) for planning grants for up to two pilot sites to devise methods of attributing credit toward high school graduation to students who participate in high-quality expanded learning opportunities, including afterschool and summer programs. For a full copy of the RFP, please visit <www.afterschoolri.org>.
- Rhode Island Summer Learning Demonstration Project Managed by RIASPA and funded by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the Rhode Island Summer Learning Working Group has been working to identify best practices around summer learning. Their goal is to mitigate summer learning loss of underserved learners through the provision of programming that connects the best aspects of in-school summer programs with the best aspects of community-based enrichment and experiential summer learning. To test their theories, the working group will support pilot summer learning projects among partners who
  - ✧ implement effective ways to link summer programming with public schools to create a seamless system of education that addresses summer learning loss through the use of high-quality, engaging, experiential summer programs;
  - ✧ design programs that integrate learning with engaging, experiential, project-based activities in ways different from the regular school day.

### Massachusetts ELT Initiative

The Massachusetts Department of Education, in partnership with Massachusetts 2020, a private nonprofit organization, began implementation of an expanded learning time initiative in 2006. There are now twenty-six schools in twelve districts participating in the program, serving well over 5,000 students. Schools that are accepted in the program receive state funds of $1,300 per child to implement an expanded schedule. Partnerships between schools and community-based partners are so critical that Massachusetts 2020 recently encouraged joint proposals from ELT schools and external

organizations for multi-year, integrated school-community partnerships meant to enrich the experiences of students, teachers, partnering organizations, and families.

***School-Level Design Principles***

- Significantly more school time: at least 300 more hours per year (e.g., two hours per day)
- All students participate
- Balanced use of expanded time: redesign adds time for: 1) core academics; 2) enrichment; and 3) teacher planning and professional development
- Redesign planning process: small school redesign teams – including teachers, administrators, union representatives, school partners, and parents – create data-driven redesign plans
- Partners to expand opportunities: schools encouraged to partner with community organizations, businesses, higher-education institutions, art and cultural organizations, and health institutions to expand opportunities for students

***Policy-Level Design Principles***

- Voluntary school participation
- Technical assistance for redesign and implementation
- Public financing: implementation funded with public money, ideally through a state policy framework, to ensure future sustainability and connections to the broader reform agenda
- Per child allocation: figure depends on local factors and the amount of added time (in Massachusetts, $1,300 per student)
- Evaluation and continuous improvement: constant review of data to ensure continuous improvement and learning

***Results***

- Students have shown promising gains in achievement.
  - ✧ Two years of data show students across the Cohort 1 ELT schools achieved higher rates of proficiency compared to their historical performance in all three subject areas.
  - ✧ Students in middle grades (sixth through eighth) performed especially well, with six of the seven ELT schools with middle grades narrowing the achievement gap with the state in math and five of the seven in English Language Arts.
  - ✧ Several middle school grades in a number of schools posted particularly impressive gains, narrowing the achievement gap by at least 50 percent in just two years.
- Students express high satisfaction, particularly because of expanded enrichment programs (music, arts, drama, apprenticeships, physical fitness, etc.) and more hands-on learning opportunities. There are over 150 partner organizations that support the enrichment programming.
- Parents and teachers are highly satisfied.
  - ✧ Parents see academic gains for their children and more engaged learning.
  - ✧ Teachers are able to enhance their teaching and believe students are learning more.

## New York City ELT Initiative

The After-School Corporation (TASC) and the New York City Department of Education are just completing the first year of a three-year, privately funded ELT initiative in ten elementary and middle school sites throughout the city.

***Core Elements of TASC ELT Model***

- The principal leads the school's ELT program. The principal includes ELT in the school's vision, sets the expectation that it is part of the school day, and recognizes that the community-based organization offering enrichments is part of the school community.
- A lead community-based organization (CBO) provides learning opportunities for students that are diverse, varied, and engaging. A full-time site coordinator works with a diverse staff (e.g., teachers, CBO staff, AmeriCorps Corps service members) to offer students a variety of academic and enriching hands-on activities across a range of topics.
- Students in ELT/NYC have 30 percent more learning time. Most programs run from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., five days per week.
- CBO and school teachers and administrators collaborate and communicate. An ELT planning team develops and maintains a collaborative plan, and school and CBO staff members communicate regularly about day-to-day issues. A school staff member who is designated as an education liaison ensures continuity between day school and CBO-led activities.
- ELT program meets cost and sustainability models. Overall cost of the ELT/NYC program is $1,600 per student for more than 300 students, and $1,800 per student for fewer than 300 students.

***Leadership and Staffing***

- Ten participating schools, grades K–8
- At least half the school population or 300 students participate in each school (currently student participation is voluntary)
- 30 percent more learning time for students
- Principal has financial and programmatic leadership
- The school and community organization work in partnership; community partner manages at least 50 percent of budget
- Full-time CBO site coordinator
- School staff assigned to ELT
- Diverse staff (e.g., ethnicity, age, professional affiliation, experience)
- Low adult to student ratios

***Approach***

- Additional time aligned to school's culture and goals
- Rigorous, child-centered learning experiences used to support academic achievement and twenty-first-century skills
- Shared planning time and professional development for all staff
- Engages parents as partners
- Expands learning through new experiences not offered during the traditional school day

## Expanded Learning Time Working Group Members

Sarah Cahill, Executive Director, Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance; Chair of Working Group

Jackie Ascrizzi, Manager, 21st Century Community Learning Center Initiative, Office of High School Reform, RIDE

Margaret Balch-Gonzalez, Staff Editor/ Research Analyst, Annenberg Institute for School Reform

Rosemary Burns, Office of Middle and High School Reform, RIDE

Colleen Callahan, Rhode Island Chapter, American Federation of Teachers; Board of Regents

Anna Cano-Morales, Rhode Island Foundation; Board of Regents; Chair of Central Falls School Board

David Cedrone, STEM Education Program Manager, Governor's Office

Tehani Collazo, Director of Educational Outreach, Department of Education, Brown University

Beth Cotter, Senior Policy Analyst to Rhode Island House Majority Leader Gordon Fox

Lynn D'Ambrose, Senior Program Officer, Nellie Mae Education Foundation

Janet Durfee-Hidalgo, Education Policy Advisor to Governor Carcieri

Frances Gallo, Superintendent, Central Falls School District

Jim Hoyt, CEO, Boys and Girls Club of Pawtucket

Robert Kalaskowski, Policy Analyst, Rhode Island Senate Policy Office

Scott Mueller, Rhode Island Association of School Committees

Julie Nora, Principal, International Charter School, Pawtucket

Hillary Salmons, Executive Director, Providence After School Alliance

Roy Seitsinger, Director of Middle and High School Reform, RIDE

Jane Sessums, President, Central Falls Teachers Union

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# 4S Multiple Pathways for Student Success

The Multiple Pathways for Student Success Working Group was made up of district representatives, college access specialists, community-based providers, advocates, and staff from RIDE and the Office of Higher Education. This supplement expands on the rationale, data, and best-practice models from outside Rhode Island that were mentioned in the Recommendations section of the full report.

## The Crisis of Completion in Rhode Island

The U.S. Department of Education's *Practice Guide on Dropout Prevention* lists six recommendations for reducing dropout rates (Dynarski et al. 2008):

- Use data systems to help identify students at high risk of dropping out.
- Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance.
- Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior.
- Personalize the learning environment and instructional process.
- Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve them after they leave school.

### Low Proficiency and Attendance in Middle School

Data from Rhode Island show that middle-grade students in urban districts are performing less well, have been held back more, and are in school less frequently than suburban students in Rhode Island, putting them at increased risk of becoming dropouts.

- In Rhode Island, 45 percent of eighth-graders in urban districts performed at or above the proficiency level on the 2008 state assessments from the New England Common Assessments Program, compared with 74 percent of students in the remainder of the state. The urban middle school attendance rate during the 2007-2008 school year was 91 percent, compared with 95 percent in the remainder of the state (Source: RIDE).

### The Challenge of English Language Learners in High School

English language learners pose a particular challenge for urban districts, where they are concentrated, as they often need intensive academic assistance as well as cultural assimilation supports and basic English language instruction.

- During the 2006-2007 school year, there were 2,468 English language learners in Rhode Island urban public schools in grades 9–12. Of these students, 20 percent came to the United States during the 2005-2006 or 2006-2007 school years. There were 318 students who arrived during the 2005-2006 school year and 170 who arrived during the 2006-2007 school year. Of students who arrived during the 2006-2007 school year, 58 percent attended Providence schools, 22 percent attended Pawtucket schools, 14 percent attended Central Falls schools, 4 percent attended Woonsocket schools, and 2 percent attended schools in Newport (Source: RI KIDS COUNT).

## National Best-Practice Models for Alternative Pathways

In addition to the work that is already going on in Rhode Island (see recommendation 4 of the full report), there are a number of national models of successful alternative pathways for students who struggle in traditional high schools and who would benefit from nontraditional educational opportunities. These models include the New York City Department of Education's Office of Multiple Pathways and Vermont's Department of Education High School Completion Model.

### Vermont High School Completion Program

In 2007, the Vermont legislature created a high school completion model for out-of-school youth. As of spring 2009, this program was also available to in-school youth. The student, parent(s), home district, and local adult education agency collectively create a personalized program for high school completion that best addresses the need of that youth. They select from a "menu" of offerings at the home, school, adult education provider, and other entities (e.g., local training programs, gyms for physical education credit, community service projects). As the student completes each piece of the menu, the provider is compensated for that service. The plan could include creating a career plan and specific courses. The program is showing evidence of success. Approximately 50 percent of the enrolled individuals graduated with a high school diploma or GED in 2008, at an approximate cost of $5,000 per student.

### New York City Transfer Schools

The New York City transfer schools are small, academically rigorous, full-time high schools for students who have been enrolled in high school for at least one year and lack sufficient credits to graduate on time. The schools are a partnership between New York City Department of Education principals and teachers and community-based organizations, who provide case management and internship experiences. Students at these schools have the opportunity to accelerate their learning and make up credits toward graduation. The schools are funded by the Department of Education and the Department of Labor through the Learning to Work initiative.

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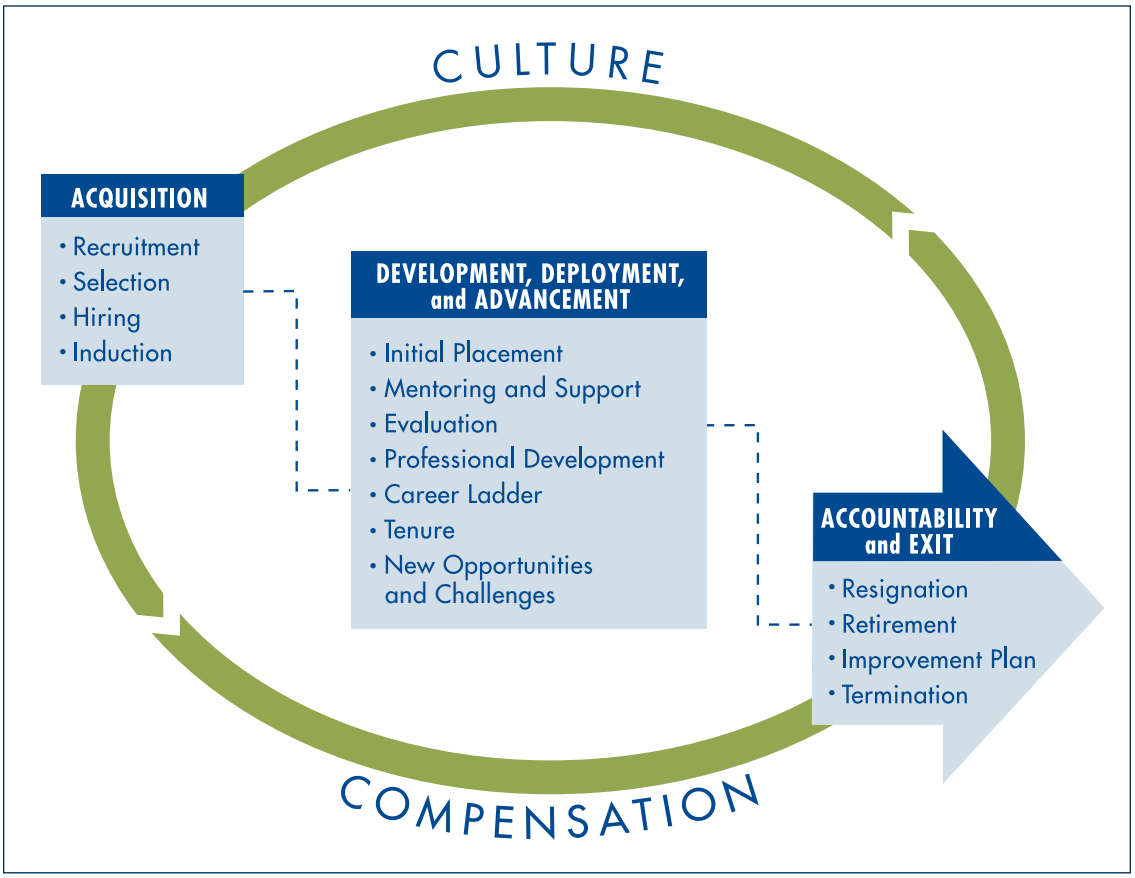
Kennelly, L., and M. Monrad. 2007. *Approaches to Dropout Prevention: Heeding Early Warning Signs with Appropriate Interventions.* Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, National High School Center. Available for download at <www.betterhighschools.org/topics/DropoutWarningSigns.asp>

## 5S Statewide Educator Quality Development System

### Examples of Human Capital Management Frameworks

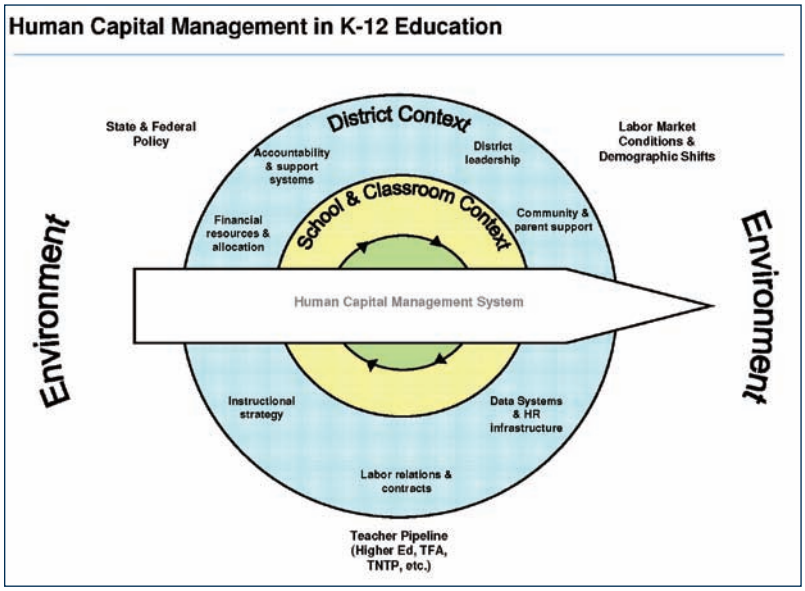
FIGURE 1
Urban Education Task Force: Human Capital Management Continuum

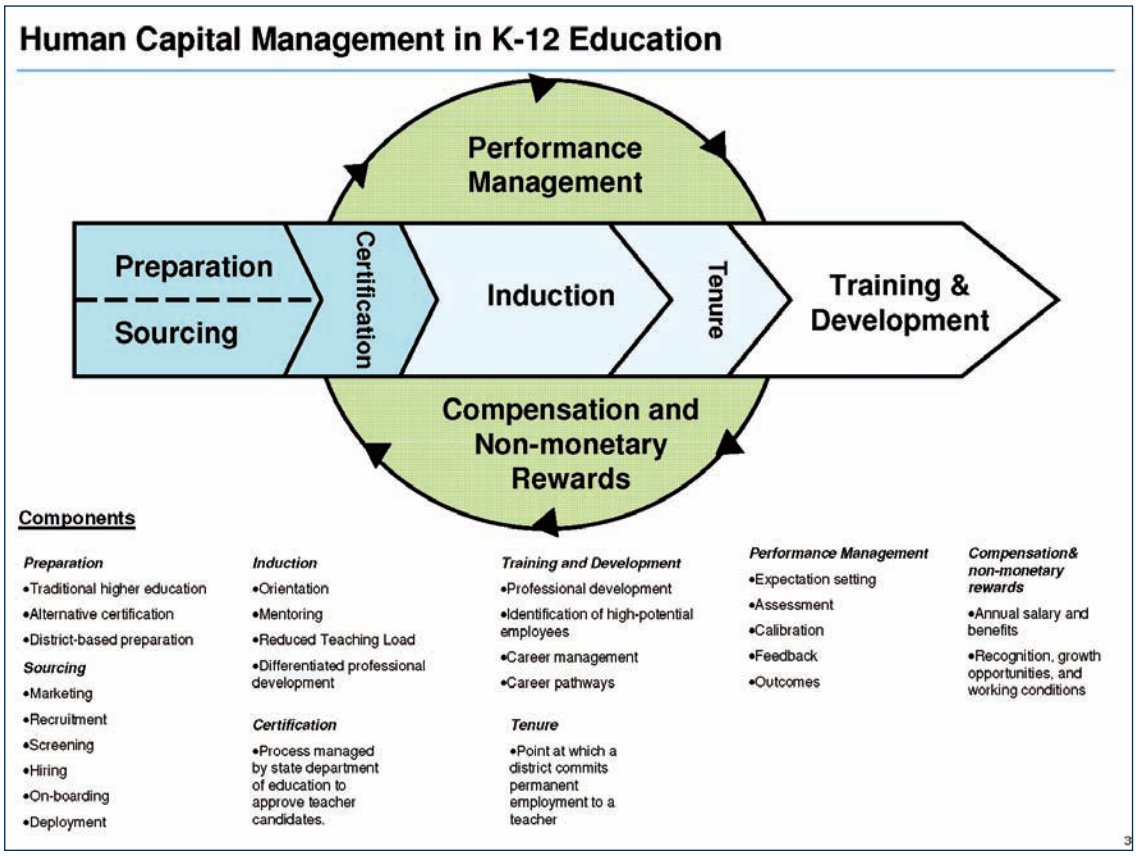



Source: Annenberg Institute for School Reform

FIGURE 2

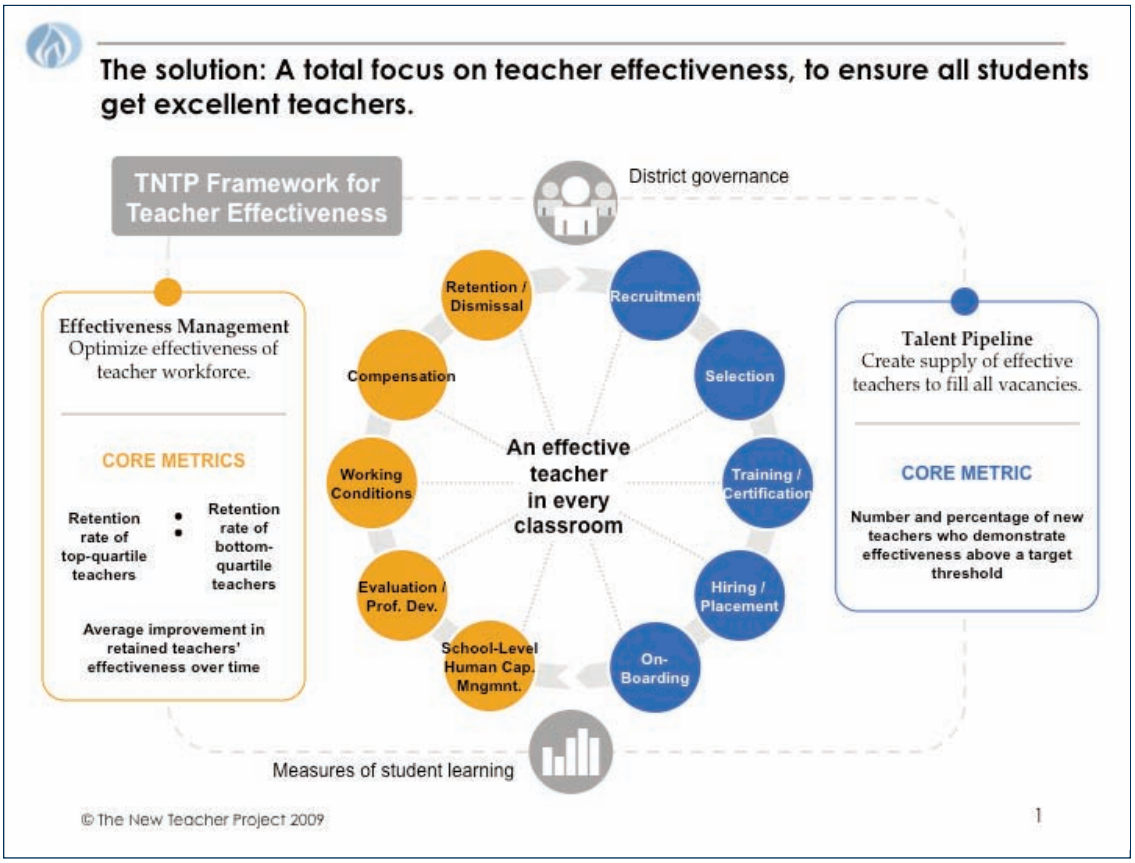
Aspen Institute Framework




Source: Wurtzel, Judy, and Rachel Curtis. 2008. "Human Capital Framework for K-12 Urban Education: Organizing for Success." Working Draft (July). Washington, DC: Aspen Institute.

FIGURE 3.
The New Teacher Project Framework




Source: The New Teacher Project. 2009. *TNTP Framework for Teacher Effectiveness*. New York: TNTP.

## Sources for National Rankings of How States Support and Regulate Teacher Quality

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*Education Week*. 2008. "Quality Counts 2008: Tapping into Teaching." Special issue, *Education Week* 27, no. 18 (January 10).

## RAND Corporation Study of Value-Added Modeling

The 2003 RAND Corporation study cited is *Evaluating Value-Added Models for Teacher Accountability*, by D. F. McCaffrey, J. R. Lockwood, D. M. Koretz, and L. S. Hamilton. Another report that lays out the pros and cons of value-added models is "Teacher Quality in Educational Production: Tracking, Decay, and Student Achievement," by Jesse Rothstein, Princeton University and National Bureau of Economic Research, May 2009 (forthcoming in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 125:1 [February 2010]).

The Rand report explains that there are at least two reasons why VAM has attracted growing interest: 1) VAM holds out the promise of separating the effects of teachers and schools from the powerful effects of such non-educational factors as family background, and this isolation of the effects of teachers and schools is critical for accountability systems to work as intended. 2) VAM studies purport to show large differences in effectiveness among teachers. If these differences can be substantiated and causally linked to specific characteristics of teachers, the potential for improvement of education could be great. The Rothstein report and an accompanying *Education Week* article explains that while the attraction to VAMs is obvious, there are issues with the data.

## Comprehensive Educator Quality Programs vs. Performance-Based Compensation

The U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant program has committed significant new federal resources to increasing teacher effectiveness. The program includes increased funding for teacher performance compensation reform and differentiated pay for new roles and responsibilities.

Systems such as the TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement, an initiative of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, and peer assistance and review (PAR) also include a performance-based compensation and/or evaluation component – but only as one part of a comprehensive system designed to attract, develop, motivate, and retain effective teachers.

### TAP

The TAP system focuses on integrating evaluation, support and professional development, a career ladder for teachers, and the use of data to drive professional development and instructional strategies. It seeks to create an environment with powerful and sustained opportunities for career advancement, professional growth, teacher accountability, and competitive compensation. The goal is to enable effective teachers to advance professionally and earn higher salaries, as in other careers, without leaving the classroom to become administrators.

The system comprises four components:

- Multiple career paths Powerful opportunities for new roles and responsibilities, and commensurate pay
- Ongoing applied professional growth Continuous, job-embedded professional development during the school day focused on specific teacher and student needs
- Instructionally focused accountability Fair and meaningful evaluations based on clearly defined, research-based standards
- Performance-based compensation Salaries and bonuses tied to roles and responsibilities, instructional performance, and value-added student learning gains

The program was introduced in 1999 and has been implemented in areas such as Chicago, New Orleans, South Carolina, and Texas. It currently impacts more than 7,500 teachers and 85,000 students.

For more information, see <www.tapsystem.org>.

Source: TAP. 2009. *TAP, The System for Teacher and Student Advancement: A New Direction for Success.* Santa Monica, CA: National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, TAP.

### PAR

Peer assistance and peer review was first introduced into collective bargaining by teachers unions in the early 1980s. The American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association (1998) describe PAR as follows:

> Peer assistance and peer review are actually two distinct functions. Peer assistance aims to help new and veteran teachers

improve their knowledge and skills. Such a program links new teachers – or struggling veteran teachers – with consulting teachers who provide ongoing support through observing, modeling, sharing ideas and skills and recommending materials for further study. Peer review adds one significant element to peer assistance – the consulting teachers conduct formal evaluations and make recommendations regarding the continued employment of participating teachers. . . .

In a peer review process, the local union shares responsibility with the school district for reviewing teacher performance and making recommendations to the district administration about continuing employment of teachers receiving peer assistance. The final employment decision concerning continued employment, however, is made by the district administration and the board of education. Nonetheless, the recommendations of the joint affiliate/school district governing body should be routinely accepted by the school district or the program does not truly perform a peer review function. In both peer assistance and peer review, the local affiliate is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the process are fair and equitable to participating teachers.

Peer review programs should not be put in place without peer assistance programs, according to the union associations.

PAR programs vary from district to district in some ways, but share a number of features. All PAR programs

- are created through collective bargaining or joint affiliate/school-district agreements;
- require a focus on improving teaching shared by teachers and administrators;
- involve joint decisions by teachers and administrators;
- provide assistance to new and/or veteran teachers at risk of termination due to poor performance and/or to veteran teachers voluntarily seeking to improve their teaching practice;
- have a process for identifying and training outstanding teachers to provide peer assistance, and, in a peer assistance and review program, peer evaluation;
- have resources dedicated to implementing the program.

Source: American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association. 1998. *Peer Assistance and Peer Review: An AFT/NEA Handbook*. Prepared for "Shaping the Professsion That Shapes the Future: AFT/NEA Conference on Teacher Quality," September 25–27. Washington, DC: AFT and NEA.

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## RIDE's Educator Evaluation System Framework

# Educator Evaluation System Standards

### Introduction

*"Improving achievement requires recruitment of talented teachers and principals and stronger instructional practices, which in turn are driven by strategic talent management. Strategic talent management involves the practices of recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining talented and demonstrably successful staff in school districts." (Strategic Management of Human Capital, 2008)*

The Rhode Island Department of Education has reviewed recommendations from the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, which was launched with a focus on identifying strategies, policies, and practices to "attract, deploy, develop, incentivize, and retain top teaching, leadership and management talent," and from the Rhode Island Urban Education Task Force, which has recommended the development and implementation of a statewide educator performance management system to improve educator quality. Anticipating the development of a performance management system that addresses the human capital cycle of acquisition through development, deployment, and advancement to accountability and exit, RIDE recognizes the need to provide leadership to its districts to assure the high quality educator evaluation that is at the core of the performance management system.

Establishing parameters for evaluation systems that are at the basis for the development, deployment, and advancement stage of the model begins with the development of standards for district-based educator evaluation systems. This document presents a set of six draft standards that describe a high quality system. The draft standards identify expectations for all districts. RIDE will develop recommendations for how to support districts as they begin to implement these standards and processes that will lead to how local systems will be reviewed for compliance with the standards. It is important to remember that educator evaluation is only one element of an educator performance management system, but it represents a critical starting point.

The six standards that comprise the ***Educator Evaluation System Standards*** were crafted to support the work of school districts to assure educator quality through a comprehensive district educator[1] evaluation system that:

- establishes a common understanding of expectations for educator quality within the district;
- emphasizes the professional growth and continuous improvement of individual educators;
- creates an organizational approach to the collective professional growth and continuous improvement of groups of educators to support district goals;
- provides quality assurance for the performance of all district educators;
- assures fair, accurate, and consistent evaluations; and provides district educators a role in guiding the ongoing system development in response to systematic feedback and changing district needs.

[1] The term educator is used to designate all district positions that require certification by the Rhode Island Department of Education. The terms of administrator, teacher, and support professional are used to designate three distinct roles that correspond to certification categories. For a full listing of certificates included in each category see http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/DOCS/Certification/list%20of%20certs%20issued.pdf





Source: Rhode Island Department of Education

**Standard 1**: District evaluation systems establish a ***common vision of educator quality*** within a district through clearly communicated evaluation processes that build upon professional standards, emphasize professional practice, impact on student learning, demonstration of professional responsibilities, and content knowledge, and support district initiatives.

1. District administrators, teachers, and support professionals develop and sustain a common understanding of expectations for educator quality through a detailed system for educator evaluation that clearly communicates the purposes, procedures and policies for evaluation, acceptable levels of performance for individual educators and groups of educators, and the ways in which evaluation information will be collected and used.
2. Educator evaluation builds upon the professional standards appropriate to the educator's role within the district.
   - Teacher evaluation builds upon the Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards.
   - Administrator evaluation builds upon the Rhode Island Standards for Educational Leadership.
   - Support Professional evaluation builds upon the professional standards for these positions[2].

     When an educator's specific responsibilities are more appropriately measured by the standards for a different role category a district may elect to evaluate that educator using the more appropriate standards and evaluation instruments[3].
3. Educator evaluation emphasizes the professional practice, impact on student learning, demonstration of professional responsibilities, and requisite content knowledge for all Rhode Island Educators.
   - Teacher evaluation includes evidence of quality of instruction, of student learning, of professional responsibilities, and of subject matter knowledge.
   - Administrator evaluation includes evidence of quality of instructional leadership and management, of student learning, of professional responsibilities, and of the content knowledge of the field.
   - Support Professional evaluation includes evidence of quality of program planning and delivery of service, of consultation and collaboration, of student learning, of professional responsibilities, and of the content knowledge of the area of professional specialization.
4. Educator evaluation is integrated with and supportive of district initiatives and the district's strategic plan. The district and its schools integrate objectives that support the achievement of district initiatives, school improvement plans, and district plans into the evaluation system in ways that assure that the evaluation of district educators supports the attainment of these objectives.



[2] The Board of Regents has not adopted specific standards for Support Professionals. Districts should build on the appropriate professional standards for educators working in these roles.

[3] For example a library media specialist (a teacher certificate) whose responsibilities in one district may be more comparable to running a program, similar to a support professional. In that situation support professional standards and evaluation instruments may be more applicable than teacher standards and evaluation instruments.

**Standard 2**: District evaluation systems **emphasize the professional growth and continuous improvement of *individual educators'*** professional practice to enhance student performance.

1. Educator evaluation systems establish a cyclical process that includes the collection and analysis of information about an educator's performance, the establishment of individual goals for professional development based on the analysis, and the improvement of performance as a result of that professional development.
2. Educator evaluation systems assure that all educators receive detailed feedback on their performance and recommendations for professional growth.
3. Educator evaluation systems create expectations that educators analyze their own professional practice, confer with supervisors[4] about their performance and use recommendations for professional growth in developing professional development goals.
4. Educator evaluation systems collect and analyze data about individual professional development needs and identify patterns within schools and across the district to inform the development of a coherent district staff development plan.

**Standard 3:** District evaluation systems create ***an organizational approach to the collective professional growth and continuous improvement of groups of*** **educators'** (e.g., departments, teams, programs, schools) professional practice to enhance student performance.

1. Evaluation systems establish a cyclical process to collect and analyze data on the collective effectiveness of groups of educators (e.g., departments, teams, programs, schools, districts) and use the data to establish common goals for professional development based on the analysis and to improve performance as a result of that professional development.
2. Educator evaluation systems collect and analyze data about collective professional development needs of groups of educators and identify patterns across departments, teams, programs, schools and the district to inform the development of a coherent district staff development plan.
3. Evaluation systems include a process to identify individual and groups of district educators who demonstrate exemplary professional practice, impact on student learning, and/or professional responsibilities and who contribute in measurable ways to district improvement. The district identifies ways to recognize and capitalize on their talents through differentiated roles and responsibilities, formal recognition, and/or other incentives.

[4] At a minimum, supervisors must be involved in the process, however districts can design systems that involve others (e.g., peers, parents or guardians, individuals with specific expertise) in the process if that meets district goals.

**Standard 4:** District evaluation systems provide ***quality assurance of all district educators*** and differentiate evaluation processes based upon level of experience, job assignment, and information from prior evaluations.

1. All district educators are evaluated at least annually; however due to the cyclical nature of the evaluation the specific procedures may vary based on educator experience, assignment, and the outcome of prior evaluations.
2. Evaluation systems differentiate procedures based on the level of an educator's experience.
    - Educators who are new to the profession, new to the district, or who are new to a role category are provided with intensive support and evaluation in ways that assure that they meet expectations for educator quality within the district.
    - Educators who change assignments within a role category are supported and evaluated based upon a district-developed transition plan that is designed to address the new knowledge and skills required by the change in position, professional development needs identified from prior evaluations, and contextual reasons (e.g., district need, involuntary transfer) for the move.
    - Educators who remain in the same assignment and consistently demonstrate that they meet expectations for educator quality within the district are evaluated in ways that monitor continued quality of performance and emphasize professional growth.
3. Evaluation systems identify all educators who do not meet expectations for educator quality within the district and provide them with intensive support and evaluation specifically designed to improve their performance.
    - The district identifies a team to work with each educator to develop an improvement plan with targeted support and intervention designed to help the educator meet the district's expectations for educator quality.
    - The improvement plan includes clearly articulated objectives, benchmarks, and timelines to improve performance to an acceptable level.
    - The district identifies personnel actions that will result when the educator meets or fails to meet the expectations.
4. Evaluation systems are designed to provide objective information to support meaningful renewal and tenure decisions.

**Standard 5:** District evaluation systems assure ***fair, accurate, and consistent assessment*** of educator performance.

1. The evaluation system is transparent to all educators. The purpose, criteria, instruments, procedures, and expectations for acceptable levels of performance are clearly communicated to educators through handbooks. Districts support educators in developing a thorough understanding of the evaluation system.
2. The evaluation system demonstrates the validity of evaluation decisions by assuring a strong connection between the evaluation instruments and professional standards and educator roles and responsibilities.
3. Evaluation systems incorporate appropriate evaluation instruments, including at a minimum, observations of the educator's practice, evidence of student learning outcomes, and demonstrations of professional responsibilities.
4. Evaluation systems seek information from students, parents and guardians, colleagues, and supervisors, to inform an educator's evaluation and professional development. Evaluation systems use a variety of methodologies that incorporate different types of evidence to address the range of expectations identified in the appropriate professional standards and use multiple measures, to provide a thorough assessment of the educator's performance.
5. Evaluators are selected, trained, and retained based on their ability to make valid and accurate judgments. Evaluators are selected based upon their depth of knowledge and their demonstrated expertise and are assigned based upon the subject matter knowledge, grade-level experience, and other requisite experience required to accurately use specific evaluation instruments. Evaluators are trained in the implementation of the district's evaluation instruments, demonstrate their ability to make consistent judgments, and are reviewed on a regular basis to verify they continue to make accurate judgments.
6. The evaluation system provides safeguards against possible sources of bias to ensure valid assessments. Districts review evaluation instruments for possible sources of bias in the design process and monitor implementation results for possible inappropriate adverse impact. Evaluators raise existing or potential conflicts of interest so they can be addressed. The evaluation system provides procedural safeguards (e.g., appeals) to ensure the integrity of the system.

**Standard 6:** District evaluation systems are an integral part of the district human capital management system and ***are supported by district educators who regularly review and revise the system in response to systematic feedback and changing district needs***.

1. Districts establish and support a District Evaluation Committee that includes teachers, support professionals, administrators, and union representatives and may include others who bring added perspective or expertise. The Committee reviews the effectiveness of the evaluation system, the validity and utility of the data produced by the system, the fairness, accuracy, and consistency of decisions made, and the currency of the system. The Committee uses the information from the analysis to make recommendations for revisions to the system.
2. The District Evaluation Committee communicates data from the evaluation system to district personnel responsible for strategic planning and professional development to work collaboratively towards a coherent approach to educator quality, professional development and continuous organizational improvement.
3. The District Evaluation Committee works with district leadership to assure the resources of time, financial support, and evaluation expertise necessary to maintain the quality of the evaluation system.
4. The district is responsible for meeting the Rhode Island Department of Education's reporting requirements for assuring the quality of educator evaluation.

# 7S Educator Collaboration

Shortly after the appointment of the Urban Education Task Force in January 2008, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University convened a statewide collaborative of local organizations to provide research, technical assistance, and analytic support to the work of the Task Force.

The Research Collaborative currently includes six member organizations: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform and the Urban Education Policy Program at Brown University, the Providence Plan, the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council, and the Regional Educational Lab Northeast and Islands (at Education Development Center). The Rhode Island Department of Education has provided data to support analyses conducted by the Collaborative.

A grant from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation (the main source of funding for the Task Force) included a $20,000 allocation for the work of the Research Collaborative. Additional support from the Rhode Island Foundation allowed the Collaborative to expand its work scope over the final phases of the Task Force and to fund a critical analysis of student mobility and its consequences for the five urban districts.

## Role and Work of the Research Collaborative

The role of the Research Collaborative has been to fulfill specific requests from the Task Force and its subcommittees and working groups. The major types of activity have included:

- Prepare secondary data analysis of student, school, and community indicators for the urban districts.
- Produce promising-strategy briefs in key areas of reform.
- Document all meetings and community forums and synopses of expert testimony and community input.
- Prepare preliminary and final reports.

During its first ten months of work, the Research Collaborative produced two installments of a Task Force Resource Guide, which included the following analyses and research products.

1. Population Indicator Profiles for Rhode Island and the Five Urban Districts Rhode Island KIDS COUNT prepared population profiles for each of the five districts participating in the Task Force, along with a state urban-aggregate table. Profiles featured indicators of student population, performance, and teaching. (These profiles are included in appendix A.)
2. Presentations by the National Advisors to the Task Force Summaries of individual presentations of six leading national education reformers at several meetings of the Task Force were prepared for its members. The advisors were:
   - Barnett Berry, Center on Teacher Quality
   - Frederick Hess, American Enterprise Institute
   - Milbrey McLaughlin, Stanford University
   - Charles Payne, University of Chicago
   - Paul Reville, Secretary of Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
   - Jesse Register, Superintendent, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

3. Information from the October 4 Community Forum The Collaborative documented a community forum sponsored by the Subcommittee on Public Engagement, in partnership with Rhode Island Young Professionals, on October 4, 2008. The purpose of the forum was to seek public comment and input on the major strands of work being undertaken by the Task Force. The documentation included:
   - Agenda and information on featured speaker and panelists
   - Summary of presentation by the featured speaker, Dr. Charles Payne, the Frank P. Hixon Professor in the School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago
   - Synthesis of themes from previous community engagement efforts
   - Summary of feedback from facilitated "table discussions" among community participants
4. Promising Strategy Briefs The Collaborative prepared snapshots of promising strategies for the Task Force subcommittees in the following specific areas:
   - Alternative Routes to Certification: The American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence
   - Teacher Competency Programs: Teach for America
   - The Diverse Provider Model: The Philadelphia Experiment
   - Teacher Residencies: The Boston Teacher Residency Program
   - Community-Based Support Systems: The Harlem Children's Zone
   - Initiatives in Human Capital: Denver's Professional Compensation System for Teachers
   - Early Childhood Education: Evaluating the Benefits
   - State Investment in Early Education: Oklahoma Universal Pre-K Program
   - Early Childhood Curriculum: Pre-K Mathematics Curriculum
5. Memorandum on Warren Simmons's Progress Briefing with Governor Carcieri Task Force chair Warren Simmons sent a memorandum to all Task Force members summarizing his meeting with the Governor on October 17, 2008, to brief him on the progress of the Task Force.
6. Mobility Analysis Led by the Providence Plan, the Collaborative prepared an analysis of student mobility in Rhode Island, including data on the effects of mobility on performance, relative cohort stability rates, and mobility rates of English language learners, as well as suggested discussion questions (included in appendix B8).

## Possible Role for the Collaborative beyond the Work of the Task Force

The initial funding of the Research Collaborative has tested its viability as a source of technical support and capacity building to state and local education agencies beyond the immediate work of the Task Force. Similar entities in Chicago, New York, and Boston have contributed to the overall civic capacity in their communities by helping inform citywide reform strategies in their local communities. To cite one example, the Consortium on Chicago School Research has, for nearly two decades, been a major source of independent educational research and evaluation in that city.

Local circumstances in Rhode Island also attest to the need for a research collaborative. The relatively small size of our local education agencies limits the resources any single district can devote to research and evaluation, and what capacity exists is consumed by the administration of accountability obligations, which continue to increase. Informally, the Annenberg Institute has learned from district leaders that a Research Collaborative would be a valued addition, both for the capacity issues noted above and for the importance of having a "third party" conduct some studies.

The Research Collaborative could expand on the types of analysis conducted by school districts and the broader community. For example, there is currently no reliable mechanism for reporting to Rhode Island high schools on how their recent graduates are performing in colleges or universities. In partnership with RIDE, the Collaborative could offer the technical wherewithal to inform the design of such a system. Part of the role of a Research Collaborative could also include working directly with districts to build capacity in new techniques and best practices for providing data as a tool for teachers and school leaders. Finally, the Collaborative could be the training ground for the next generation of education policy analysts who are currently graduate students in our member institutions.

# About the Task Force and Its Work

## A1 Task Force Participants and Advisors

The following people supported the work of the Task Force by participating at its meetings, serving on its focus-area working groups, or providing background research.

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## National Advisory Panel to the Task Force

The following nationally recognized education experts met with and advised the Task Force on current trends in education and on their particular areas of expertise.

Dr. Barnett Berry
*President and CEO*
Center for Teaching Quality
Hillsborough, North Carolina

Dr. Frederick Hess
*Resident Scholar*
American Enterprise Institute
Washington, DC

Dr. Milbrey McLaughlin
*Professor of Education and Public Policy*
Stanford University
Stanford, California

Dr. Charles M. Payne
*Frank P. Hixon Professor*
School of Social Service Administration
University of Chicago

Dr. Jesse Register
*Superintendent*
Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools
Nashville, Tennessee

Paul Reville
*Secretary of Education*
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Boston, Massachusetts

## A2 Task Force Meetings and Events

The following list includes the formal meetings to which the full Task Force was invited. It does not include meetings of the subcommittees or working groups, each of which met three to ten times over the course of eighteen months.

### 2008

| | |
|---|---|
| January 31 | Full Task Force Meeting |
| March 28 | Full Task Force Meeting |
| June 25 | Full Task Force Meeting |
| September 30 | Full Task Force Meeting |
| October 4 | Community Forum |
| November 6 | Community-Based Organizations Leaders Meeting |
| November 13 | Full Task Force Meeting |
| December 20 | Report on Preliminary Recommendations |

### 2009

| | |
|---|---|
| January 30 | Full Task Force Meeting |
| March 4 | Educator Quality Mini-Conference |
| March 16 | Expanded Learning Time Mini-Conference |
| March 23 | Site Visit, Umana Middle School Academy, East Boston |
| March 27 | Full Task Force Meeting |
| March 28 | Woonsocket Community Forum |
| April 2 | Educator Quality Mini-Conference |
| April 18 | Latino Forum |
| April 30 | Educators' Forum |
| May 13 | Newport Community Forum |
| May 15 | Full Task Force Meeting |
| June 5 | Multiple Pathways Mini-Conference |
| June 15 | Expanded Learning Time Mini-Conference |
| July 29 | Full Task Force Meeting |
| October 7 | Educator Quality Mini-Conference |
| October 27 | Report on Final Recommendations |

# B1 Profile for Rhode Island and the Core City Districts

## Student Population Indicators

- Child Population – 247,822 children under age 18 lived in Rhode Island in 2000, 91,945 of whom lived in the core cities.*
- Pre-K to 12 Enrollment – 144,537 students were enrolled in Rhode Island public schools in the 2007-2008 school year, 47,964 of whom were in core city districts.
- Children in Poverty – In 2000, 41,162 children under age 18 were living in poverty in Rhode Island, 30,744 of whom were living in the core cities.
- Single-Parent Families – In 2000, 30% of Rhode Island children lived in single parent families, compared with 47% of children in the core cities.
- English Language Learners – There were 7,427 English Language Learners in Rhode Island public schools in the 2007-2008 school year, 5,637 of whom were in core city districts. ELL students in Rhode Island spoke more than 80 different languages in 2007-2008, the majority speaking Spanish.
- Special Education – There were 26,100 students with disabilities in Rhode Island in the 2007-2008 school year, 9,365 of whom were in the core cities.
- Teen Births – Between 2003 and 2007, there were 5,664 births to teen girls ages 15-19 living in Rhode Island, 3,950 of which were in the core cities.

* Core cities are those with greater than 15 percent child poverty rates according to the 2000 Census. These include: Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick, and Woonsocket.

- Student Mobility – The Rhode Island student mobility rate for the 2007-2008 school year was 16%, compared to 26% in the core city districts.
- Minority Enrollment – 31% of students in Rhode Island public schools were minorities in the 2007-2008 school year, compared with 69% in core city districts.

## Education Indicators

- Full-day Kindergarten – 58% of Rhode Island public school kindergarteners attended full-day programs in the 2008-2009 school year, compared with 95% of kindergarteners in core city districts.
- 4th Grade Reading Skills – 68% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Rhode Island in 2008, compared with 52% of students in the core city districts.
- 4th Grade Math Skills – 63% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Rhode Island in 2008, compared with 45% of students in the core city districts.
- 8th Grade Reading Skills – 65% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Rhode Island in 2008, compared with 45% of students in the core city districts.
- 8th Grade Math Skills – 53% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Rhode Island in 2008, compared with 33% of students in the core city districts.
- % of Seniors Taking the SATs – 57% of Rhode Island seniors took the SATs in 2008, compared with 53% of seniors in the core city districts.
- High School Graduation and Dropout Rates – 74% of Rhode Island high schools students in the 2008 graduating class graduated on-time in four years and 16% of the class dropped out. The remaining 10% of students completed their GEDs within four years or

remained enrolled in high school for more than four years. In the core city districts, 61% of students graduated on-time in four years, 26% dropped out, and the remaining 13% either completed their GEDs within four years or remained enrolled in high school for more than four years.

- Per Pupil Expenditures – The general education per pupil annual expenditure for instruction and instructional support in Rhode Island is $7,246.

## Teacher Indicators

- Long-term Teachers – 15% of Rhode Island teachers report being in the field of education for more than 25 years.
- New Teachers – 2% of Rhode Island teachers report being in the field of education for less than one year.
- Teacher Mobility – 29% of Rhode Island teachers report being in their current building for 3 years or less.
- Professional Development Expenditures – The 2008 professional development expenditure per pupil in Rhode Island was $207.

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education and the *2009 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*

# B2 District Profile for Central Falls

## Student Population Indicators

- Child Population – 5,531 children under age 18 lived in Central Falls in 2000.
- Pre-K to 12 Enrollment – 3,338 students were enrolled in Central Falls public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Children in Poverty – In 2000, 2,210 children under age 18 were living in poverty in Central Falls.
- English Language Learners – There were 728 English Language Learners in Central Falls public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Special Education – There were 793 students with disabilities in Central Falls in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Teen Births – Between 2003 and 2007, there were 338 births to teen girls ages 15-19 living in Central Falls.
- Student Mobility – The Central Falls student mobility rate for the 2007-2008 school year was 27%.

## Education Indicators

- Full-day Kindergarten – 100% of Central Falls public school kindergarteners attended full-day programs in the 2008-2009 school year.
- 4th Grade Reading Skills – 48% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Central Falls in 2008.
- 4th Grade Math Skills – 39% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Central Falls in 2008.
- 8th Grade Reading Skills – 34% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Central Falls in 2008.
- 8th Grade Math Skills – 27% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Central Falls in 2008.
- % of Seniors Taking the SATs – 38% of Central Falls seniors took the SATs in 2008.
- High School Graduation and Dropout Rates – 52% of Central Falls high schools students in the 2008 graduating class graduated on-time in four years and 29% of the class dropped out. The remaining 19% of students completed their GEDs within four years or remained enrolled in high school for more than four years.
- Per Pupil Expenditures – The general education per pupil annual expenditure for instruction and instructional support in Central Falls is $6,065.

## Teacher Indicators

- Long-term Teachers – 16% of Central Falls teachers report being in the field of education for more than 25 years.
- New Teachers – 1% of Central Falls teachers report being in the field of education for less than one year.
- Teacher Mobility – 27% of Central Falls teachers report being in their current building for 3 years or less.
- Professional Development Expenditures – The 2008 professional development expenditure per pupil in Central Falls was $313.

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education and the *2009 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*

# B3 District Profile for Pawtucket

## Student Population Indicators

- Child Population – 18,151 children under age 18 lived in Pawtucket in 2000.
- Pre-K to 12 Enrollment – 8,530 students were enrolled in Pawtucket public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Children in Poverty – In 2000, 4,542 children under age 18 were living in poverty in Pawtucket.
- English Language Learners – There were 871 English Language Learners in Pawtucket public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Special Education – There were 1,392 students with disabilities in Pawtucket in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Teen Births – Between 2003 and 2007, there were 641 births to teen girls ages 15-19 living in Pawtucket.
- Student Mobility – The Pawtucket student mobility rate for the 2007-2008 school year was 24%.

## Education Indicators

- Full-day Kindergarten – 84% of Pawtucket public school kindergarteners attended full-day programs in the 2008-2009 school year.
- 4th Grade Reading Skills – 58% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Pawtucket in 2008.
- 4th Grade Math Skills – 50% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Pawtucket in 2008.
- 8th Grade Reading Skills – 52% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Pawtucket in 2008.
- 8th Grade Math Skills – 35% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Pawtucket in 2008.
- % of Seniors Taking the SATs – 52% of Pawtucket seniors took the SATs in 2008.
- High School Graduation and Dropout Rates – 57% of Pawtucket high schools students in the 2008 graduating class graduated on-time in four years and 26% of the class dropped out. The remaining 17% of students completed their GEDs within four years or remained enrolled in high school for more than four years.
- Per Pupil Expenditures – The general education per pupil annual expenditure for instruction and instructional support in Pawtucket is $6,014.

## Teacher Indicators

- Long-term Teachers – 17% of Pawtucket teachers report being in the field of education for more than 25 years.
- New Teachers – 2% of Pawtucket teachers report being in the field of education for less than one year.
- Teacher Mobility – 26% of Pawtucket teachers report being in their current building for 3 years or less.
- Professional Development Expenditures – The 2008 professional development expenditure per pupil in Pawtucket was $157.

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education and the *2009 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*

# B4 District Profile for Providence

## Student Population Indicators

- Child Population – 45,277 children under age 18 lived in Providence in 2000.
- Pre-K to 12 Enrollment – 24,180 students were enrolled in Providence public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Children in Poverty – In 2000, 18,045 children under age 18 were living in poverty in Providence.
- English Language Learners – There were 3,615 English Language Learners in Providence public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Special Education – There were 4,565 students with disabilities in Providence in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Teen Births – Between 2003 and 2007, there were 2,211 births to teen girls ages 15-19 living in Providence.
- Student Mobility – The Providence student mobility rate for the 2007-2008 school year was 28%.

## Education Indicators

- Full-day Kindergarten – 100% of Providence public school kindergarteners attended full-day programs in the 2008-2009 school year.
- 4th Grade Reading Skills – 47% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Providence in 2008.
- 4th Grade Math Skills – 40% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Providence in 2008.
- 8th Grade Reading Skills – 41% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Providence in 2008.
- 8th Grade Math Skills – 28% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Providence in 2008.
- % of Seniors Taking the SATs – 57% of Providence seniors took the SATs in 2008.
- High School Graduation and Dropout Rates – 63% of Providence high schools students in the 2008 graduating class graduated on-time in four years and 26% of the class dropped out. The remaining 11% of students completed their GEDs within four years or remained enrolled in high school for more than four years.
- Per Pupil Expenditures – The general education per pupil annual expenditure for instruction and instructional support in Providence is $6,248.

## Teacher Indicators

- Long-term Teachers – 13% of Providence teachers report being in the field of education for more than 25 years.
- New Teachers – 1% of Providence teachers report being in the field of education for less than one year.
- Teacher Mobility – 35% of Providence teachers report being in their current building for 3 years or less.
- Professional Development Expenditures – The 2008 professional development expenditure per pupil in Providence was $544.

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education and the *2009 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*

# B5 District Profile for Newport

## Student Population Indicators

- Child Population – 5,199 children under age 18 lived in Newport in 2000.
- Pre-K to 12 Enrollment – 2,175 students were enrolled in Newport public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Children in Poverty – In 2000, 1,267 children under age 18 were living in poverty in Newport.
- English Language Learners – There were 62 English Language Learners in Newport public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Special Education – There were 434 students with disabilities in Newport in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Teen Births – Between 2003 and 2007, there were 134 births to teen girls ages 15-19 living in Newport.
- Student Mobility – The Newport student mobility rate for the 2007-2008 school year was 22%.

## Education Indicators

- Full-day Kindergarten – 100% of Newport public school kindergarteners attended full-day programs in the 2008-2009 school year.
- 4th Grade Reading Skills – 53% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Newport in 2008.
- 4th Grade Math Skills – 54% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Newport in 2008.
- 8th Grade Reading Skills – 69% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Newport in 2008.
- 8th Grade Math Skills – 51% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Newport in 2008.
- % of Seniors Taking the SATs – 60% of Newport seniors took the SATs in 2008.
- High School Graduation and Dropout Rates – 66% of Newport high schools students in the 2008 graduating class graduated on-time in four years and 22% of the class dropped out. The remaining 12% of students completed their GEDs within four years or remained enrolled in high school for more than four years.
- Per Pupil Expenditures – The general education per pupil annual expenditure for instruction and instructional support in Newport is $8,056.

## Teacher Indicators

- Long-term Teachers – 14% of Newport teachers report being in the field of education for more than 25 years.
- New Teachers – 1% of Newport teachers report being in the field of education for less than one year.
- Teacher Mobility – 33% of Newport teachers report being in their current building for 3 years or less.
- Professional Development Expenditures – The 2008 professional development expenditure per pupil in Newport was $149.

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education and the *2009 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*

# B6 District Profile for Woonsocket

## Student Population Indicators

- Child Population – 11,155 children under age 18 lived in Woonsocket in 2000.
- Pre-K to 12 Enrollment – 6,166 students were enrolled in Woonsocket public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Children in Poverty – In 2000, 3,494 children under age 18 were living in poverty in Woonsocket.
- English Language Learners – There were 275 English Language Learners in Woonsocket public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Special Education – There were 1,455 students with disabilities in Woonsocket in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Teen Births – Between 2003 and 2007, there were 469 births to teen girls ages 15-19 living in Woonsocket.
- Student Mobility – The Woonsocket student mobility rate for the 2007-2008 school year was 24%.

## Education Indicators

- Full-day Kindergarten – 100% of Woonsocket public school kindergarteners attended full-day programs in the 2008-2009 school year.
- 4th Grade Reading Skills – 53% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Woonsocket in 2008.
- 4th Grade Math Skills – 48% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Woonsocket in 2008.
- 8th Grade Reading Skills – 43% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Woonsocket in 2008.
- 8th Grade Math Skills – 29% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Woonsocket in 2008.
- % of Seniors Taking the SATs – 43% of Woonsocket seniors took the SATs in 2008.
- High School Graduation and Dropout Rates – 60% of Woonsocket high schools students in the 2008 graduating class graduated on-time in four years and 28% of the class dropped out. The remaining 12% of students completed their GEDs within four years or remained enrolled in high school for more than four years.
- Per Pupil Expenditures – The general education per pupil annual expenditure for instruction and instructional support in Woonsocket is $5,139.

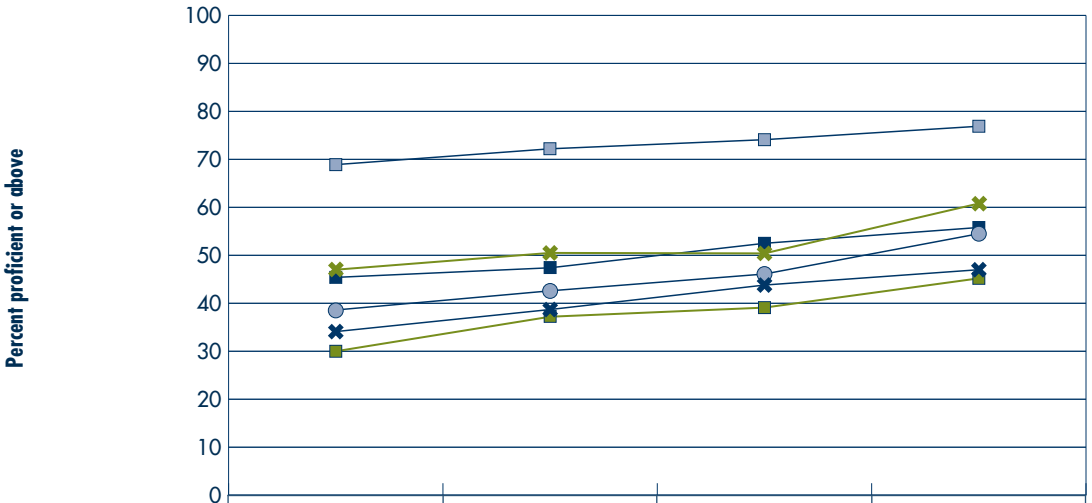
## Teacher Indicators

- Long-term Teachers – 14% of Woonsocket teachers report being in the field of education for more than 25 years.
- New Teachers – 2% of Woonsocket teachers report being in the field of education for less than one year.
- Teacher Mobility – 29% of Woonsocket teachers report being in their current building for 3 years or less.
- Professional Development Expenditures – The 2008 professional development expenditure per pupil in Woonsocket was $309.

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education and the *2009 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*

# B7 Comparative Data on the Urban Core Districts

FIGURE 1
NECAP Results in Reading, grades 3–8




| | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Central Falls | 34.1 | 38.7 | 43.8 | 47.0 |
| Newport | 47.0 | 50.5 | 50.4 | 60.8 |
| Pawtucket | 45.4 | 47.4 | 52.5 | 55.8 |
| Providence | 30.0 | 37.2 | 39.1 | 45.2 |
| Woonsocket | 38.6 | 42.6 | 46.1 | 54.5 |
| Rest of State | 68.9 | 72.2 | 74.1 | 76.9 |

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education

FIGURE 2

NECAP Results in Math, grades 3–8


| | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Central Falls | 21.1 | 29.1 | 31.6 | 33.1 |
| Newport | 40.2 | 44.1 | 42.5 | 49.8 |
| Pawtucket | 38.9 | 40.1 | 42.4 | 43.3 |
| Providence | 23.6 | 31.4 | 28.5 | 32.8 |
| Woonsocket | 32.3 | 33.7 | 34.8 | 40.3 |
| Rest of State | 59.9 | 62.6 | 62.7 | 66.3 |

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education

FIGURE 3

Demographic Profile of Students in RI Urban Districts vs. State

| | Central Falls | Newport | Pawtucket | Providence | Woonsocket | STATE | Proportion of State |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Child Population | 5,531 | 5,199 | 18,151 | 45,277 | 11,155 | 247,822 | 34.4% |
| Public School Enrollment | 3,481 | 2,258 | 8,667 | 25,012 | 6,286 | 147,407 | 31.0% |
| Children on Free/Reduced Lunch | 2,210 | 1,267 | 4,542 | 18,045 | 3,494 | 41,162 | 71.8% |
| English Language Learners | 827 | 60 | 980 | 3,947 | 300 | 7,920 | 77.2% |
| Special Education | 814 | 495 | 1,391 | 4,743 | 1,509 | 27,345 | 32.7% |
| Minority Enrollment | 85.0% | 49.0% | 56.0% | 88.0% | 42.0% | 31.0% | 72.0% |
| Student Mobility | 40.0% | 31.0% | 32.0% | 28.0% | 22.0% | 18.0% | — |
| High School Graduation Rate | 46.0% | 60.0% | 48.0% | 58.0% | 54.0% | 70.0% | — |
| Per Pupil Expenditure | $11,277 | $11,812 | $9,364 | $10,239 | $8,797 | $9,736 | — |

Source: *2008 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*

FIGURE 4

Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates for the Class of 2008 by City

| Student Group | Cohort Size | Graduation Rate | Dropout Rate | % Completed GED | % Still in School |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Central Falls | 305 | 52% | 29% | 2% | 16% |
| Newport | 192 | 66% | 22% | 3% | 9% |
| Pawtucket | 717 | 57% | 26% | 6% | 11% |
| Providence | 2,379 | 63% | 26% | 2% | 9% |
| Woonsocket | 492 | 60% | 28% | 3% | 9% |
| **All Urban* Students** | 4,385 | 61% | 26% | 3% | 10% |
| **All Rhode Island Students** | 13,163 | 74% | 16% | 3% | 7% |

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education

*Urban districts in this analysis are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick, and Woonsocket.

FIGURE 5

Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates for the Class of 2008 by Demographic Groups

| Student Subgroup (for All Urban* Districts) | Cohort Size | Graduation Rate | Dropout Rate | % Completed GED | % Still in School |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Native American | 38 | 50% | 29% | 3% | 18% |
| Asian | 202 | 66% | 26% | <1% | 7% |
| Black | 855 | 62% | 24% | 2% | 13% |
| Hispanic | 1,878 | 61% | 27% | 2% | 10% |
| White | 1,412 | 61% | 26% | 5% | 9% |
| Special Education | 1,029 | 44% | 35% | 3% | 18% |
| Regular Education | 3,356 | 67% | 23% | 3% | 7% |
| English Language Learners (ELLs) | 808 | 56% | 30% | 1% | 13% |
| Non-ELLs | 3,577 | 63% | 25% | 3% | 9% |
| Low-Income | 3,598 | 59% | 27% | 3% | 11% |
| Higher-Income | 787 | 71% | 21% | 3% | 5% |
| Female | 2,220 | 67% | 23% | 3% | 7% |
| Male | 2,165 | 55% | 29% | 3% | 13% |

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education

*Urban districts in this analysis are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick, and Woonsocket.

# B8 Student Mobility Analysis

## STUDENT MOBILITY IN RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In February of 2009, The Providence Plan began an analysis of student mobility in Rhode Island with the support of the Urban Education Task Force Research Collaborative and funded in part by a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation. The project was conceived as a way to support and inform the work of the Urban Education Task Force, as well as to demonstrate the potential of a collaborative research body for Rhode Island's public schools.

Below are some major findings from the analysis:

### Basic Mobility:

- The five urban core districts have much higher rates of mobility than the rest of the state, at all grade levels. The high school churning rate (a measure of mobility) during the 2007-2008 school year in the urban core was 44.8% versus 13.9% in the rest of the state.
- With the exceptions of Central Falls and Newport, school year changes ***within*** the five core districts are more prevalent than school moves ***across*** districts.

### Mobility and Performance:

- The longer students were continuously enrolled in the same school, the better, on average, they performed on their 4th grade math and reading NECAP assessments.
- Students with late entries and/or early exits from a school between 2004 and 2008 had more suspensions in 2007-2008 than their peers with no school enrollment changes. This held true at both the middle and high school levels, and across all type of suspension incidents.
- Attendance and mobility appear to be related at all grade levels and independent of free lunch status. The more late entries and/or early exits from a school between 2004 and 2008, the lower the attendance rate during the 2007-08 school year.

### Mobility over Time:

- Cohort stability rates in the core cities' high schools (how many students remained continuously enrolled in a ***school*** from grade 9 to grade 12) ranged from 23% to 79%.
- At a district level, Central Falls had the highest percentage of students continuously enrolled in the same ***district*** between grades 9 and 12 (52%) while Providence had the lowest rate (47%).
- School year stability and in-mobility rates across the core cities remained relatively stable at the elementary level throughout the past four school years. However, the in-mobility rate at the high school level (the percent of students new to a school during the year) decreased from 17% in the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years to just 9% in 2007-08.

### English Language Learners:

- The mobility rates of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the core cities do not differ much from their non-ELL peers. However, the mobility rates of English Language learners in the non-core cities tend to be higher than their non-ELL peers.

### Residential and School Mobility:

- Of the 6,399 school moves during the 2007-08 school year, 50% had a corresponding residential move (reported to RIDE). Approximately one-third of school moves into the core cities had a corresponding residential change versus over two-thirds of school moves into the rest of the state.
- Regardless of free lunch status, students who switched schools and are known to have changed residence performed better on 2008 NECAP assessments than those students who switched schools and did not have a reported corresponding change of address. Non school movers performed the best among the three groups.

ANALYSIS BY THE PROVIDENCE PLAN WITH SUPPORT FROM
THE URBAN EDUCATION TASK FORCE RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

**Possible Questions for Discussion:**

1) What implications does this analysis hold for the implementation of Task Force recommendations?
2) What other data sources or research should be considered to deepen our understanding of the consequences of high student mobility?
3) What are effective means for sharing these findings with community and school district leaders?
4) What questions does this analysis raise for you that deserve further inquiry?

**Supporting documents (available upon request):**

**District mobility fact sheets**: fact sheets containing basic data on within and cross-district movement for each of the core cities.
**Mobility Summary:** PowerPoint slides displaying aggregated mobility findings.
**Cohort Stability packet**: charts displaying the count of students who remain continuously enrolled in a school from the lowest entry grade in the Fall of 2004 through the school's highest grade for every school in a core city.
**Detailed tables (disaggregation):** detailed tables of mobility indicators (churning, stability, and in-mobility) by district, core-cities, and non-core cities and disaggregated by school level, race/ethnicity, and SES.
**Residential mobility brief:** Findings from analysis of residential addresses and school moves from RIDE data warehouse for the 2007-2008 school year (first year of student address collection by RIDE).

ANALYSIS BY THE PROVIDENCE PLAN WITH SUPPORT FROM
THE URBAN EDUCATION TASK FORCE RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

# C1 Educators' Forum

The Rhode Island Urban Education Task Force held a forum for educators and administrators on April 30, 2009, to gather their feedback and perspectives on the preliminary recommendations of the Task Force. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform organized the forum in conjunction with the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals, the Central Falls Teachers' Union, the Pawtucket Teachers' Alliance, the Providence Teachers Union, the Woonsocket Teachers Guild, and the Providence School Department.

The forum was held at Jorge Alvarez High School in Providence. Approximately eighty educators and administrators were in attendance (the majority were teachers). Participants represented a variety of educator organizations and schools across grade levels and cities, including:

- Jorge Alvarez High School, Providence
- Robert L. Bailey Elementary School, Providence
- Calcutt Middle School, Central Falls
- Classical High School, Providence
- Flora Curtis Elementary School, Pawtucket
- Alan Shawn Feinstein School, Central Falls
- Edmund W. Flynn Elementary School, Providence
- Charles Fortes Elementary School, Providence
- Hope Highlands Elementary School, Cranston
- Joseph Jenks Junior High School, Pawtucket
- Robert F. Kennedy School, Providence
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School, Providence
- Margaret I. Robertson School, Central Falls
- Rhode Island Federation of Teachers
- Gilbert Stuart Middle School, Providence
- Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy, Providence
- Samuel Slater Junior High School, Pawtucket
- Veterans Memorial Elementary School, Central Falls
- Roger Williams Middle School, Providence
- Woonsocket High School
- Woonsocket Middle School

The forum provided an opportunity for educators to hear a presentation about the work of the Task Force, give feedback on the preliminary recommendations, and share the challenges they face in urban districts, as well as their needs. The forum also included a keynote address by American Federation of Teachers vice president Adam Urbanski and a panel made up of union leaders from Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

## Summary of Union Leaders Panel

Panelists were asked to address the following questions:

1. What do you see as the major challenges faced by urban districts? Give an example of something the union has done to address challenges and/or improve conditions.
2. What is one recommendation you would like the Task Force to make?

The panel identified several challenges around working conditions. Teachers do their best in spite of the physical deterioration of buildings and lack of books and basic school supplies; this year, teachers had to spend their stipend for extra materials to buy paper. They have technology, but the old buildings can't support it.

The panelists put forth several recommendations for the Task Force, including a three-year mentoring program for new teachers and teachers at risk; professional development for

principals; and involving teachers in designing professional development. They suggested that instead of focusing on creating better teachers, it would be more productive to have a concept of creating a more attractive teaching position that would treat teachers as professionals.

## Summary of Small-Group Discussions

Small-group discussions then focused on the following questions:

1. What are your challenges and needs as an urban educator?
2. Which recommendations that you heard today resonate with you? What's missing? What should be added?

### Challenges and Needs

Educators cited many challenges around the following themes.

Curriculum development and changes Participants pointed to a "lack of coherence, vigor, and relevance in curriculum," the lack of a coordinated curriculum, and a misalignment between the curriculum and assessment.

Unions and management Teachers mentioned that there is a lack of teacher voice on many levels: in the administration, in professional development, and in their own classrooms. They reported that there is "too much top-down management" and expressed frustration that "opinions are not valued – there is a fear of repercussions."

School culture and climate Teachers mentioned an "absence of trust and collaboration among students, teachers, administrators, and parents." Poor communication between these parties was also cited. "Lack of student motivation" and "little support from parents" are seen as issues.

Societal issues that impact urban schools Issues mentioned include poverty, mobility, poor nutrition, and lack of medical care.

Deteriorating physical plant of schools Teachers mentioned leaky ceilings, cracked masonry, and inadequate ventilation, as well as outdated technology and inadequate facilities.

Early childhood students Teachers of these students face challenges that include students coming into kindergarten who are not ready to learn and not enough emphasis on preschool programs. Kindergarten teachers reported a lack of respect.

Other challenges Among those mentioned were a lack of financial resources and issues of equity – across gender, special needs, and between urban and suburban students.

Corresponding needs Areas mentioned included materials and physical plant, curriculum, union/management, parent engagement, and professional development. Calls were made for more supplies, a consistent curriculum, more teacher voice in establishing programs that work, better parent engagement, and "model" professional development.

## Priorities

Several of the Task Force recommendations resonated with the educators. Priorities within the recommendations included: Expanded Learning Time, Multiple Pathways, and Statewide Pre-K. K–3 Literacy and Innovation Zone were also mentioned.

### Expanded Learning Time

- Expanded learning time: pre-K, summer school, enrichment, pre-school
- Tailored to the needs and interests of each child
- Enrichment activities
- Engaged by community members and parents as well as teachers
- For those who need it, not all, to maximize time, equity, quality – different, not more of the same

### Multiple Pathways

- Multiple pathways that take student interest into account when developing and administering curriculum
- Schools for overage/under-credited students
- Programs other than college bound
- Alternative programs for chronically disruptive students

### Statewide Pre-K

- Mandatory pre-school for three- and four-year-olds
- Pre-K for all students, especially for urban districts with equitable funding

Other priorities mentioned not in reference to the recommendations included paying attention to English language learners, creating the capacity to compete with charter schools, and equal treatment between schools.

## What's Missing and What Should Be Added

Participants also identified what they felt was missing in the Task Force preliminary report and recommendations. The biggest thing seen as missing is a fair funding formula and resources to implement the recommendations of the Task Force.

In the discussion around the Educator Performance Management System, they reported a lack of teacher voice (including librarians, nurses, and teachers) and specific criteria in the recommendations around labor management discussions. There was also a request that when working with new reforms to "give new ideas time to work: do not judge us on an idea that has just started."

Also missing was a reference to the physical plant and learning environments of the schools and a way to address deteriorating buildings.

In terms of curriculum, there should be an emphasis on math, science, and technology. The importance of smaller class size was also mentioned. There was a suggestion that "early literacy and numeracy need to be tied together and to provide services in both from Pre-K to 3."

Parent involvement and parent/teacher communication were also seen as missing. Participants mentioned the need for "parental accountability in the form of volunteerism, involvement in school functions, etc." Additionally, there should be a "connection to community: teachers should know the students, parents, issues of family and gain adult buy-in."

## Final Thoughts and Evaluations

Overall, the educators and administrators who attended the forum expressed satisfaction with having a forum to share and discuss their challenges and needs in the urban school districts. Evaluations collected rated overall effectiveness of the forum at 4 to 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being excellent. Participants reported that the most effective part of the forum was the table discussions and the opportunity to share with their colleagues. Several reported that they would have liked even more time for table discussions. Others reported a realization that "they are not alone" and that it was "eye opening to hear others are experiencing the same challenges as our district."

The evaluations also reflected a desire for the Task Force to help teachers with implementing the recommendations. "Please give urban teachers more opportunities for input and please give us help in implementing recommendations." Some respondents offered some further recommendations for the Task Force particularly around being sure to include teacher voice. "It is wise for them [the Task Force] to seek feedback from the people in the

trenches." "Value the expertise of teachers! Let us in on curriculum and professional development choices! We are the ones that know what the kids need."

In terms of the funding issue, comments included: "Urge the Governor to insist on a fair funding formula, since so many aspects of the recommendations can be addressed with proper funding." "Good ideas without adequate resources mean nothing!"

Finally, the teachers requested proper follow-up from the forum. With regard to teacher voice: " Will the teacher voice requested today be heard? How will we know? What follow-up will there be?" They also would like to included in the future work: "Continue the conversation – keep teachers involved as they are ultimately the force of change." "Thanks for listening."

*Summary compiled by Ina Anderson, Rhode Island Young Professionals and public engagement consultant*

# C2 Community Perspectives

A series of forums to elicit community feedback and perspectives on the preliminary recommendations of the Task Force were held between October 2008 and May 2009 (see figure below).

The following summaries reflect community input across the community forums in reference to each of the task force recommendations. The recommendations that elicited the most responses were Multiple Pathways, Educator Performance Management System, Expanded Learning Time, and Cross-System Collaborations. The recommendations for statewide Pre-K, K–3 Literacy, and an Innovation Zone received fewer comments; those brief comments are also reflected in this summary.

There were numerous responses from the forums that referred to issues that the community would like the Task Force to pay attention to that are not related to the preliminary recommendations. These are summarized in the section "Other Perspectives" below.

## Comments on the Task Force Recommendations

### Educator Performance Management System

Comments regarding this recommendation revolved around issues regarding teachers, including teacher performance and evaluation, accountability, and professional development. There was a call for "vested engagement by teachers." Participants also spoke to the barriers and challenges faced by the urban districts. These included socio-cultural factors such as poverty and diversity, as well as concerns about the physical conditions of schools. A desire for trust on the part of teachers, students, and administrators was expressed.

Performance and Evaluation Implement better teacher selection and evaluation with a consistent statewide education performance management system; reward effective teachers and hold all teachers across the system accountable; reward good teachers within the pay structure and consider merit pay and changes in teacher

UETF Public Engagement Meetings

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| October 4, 2008 | Coming Together to Build Better Schools: Urban Education for the 21st Century | Providence | 150 parents, youth, community members and leaders, and civic leaders |
| November 6, 2008 | Community Leaders Meeting | Providence | 50 community-based organization leaders |
| March 28, 2009 | Woonsocket Community Forum | Woonsocket | 25 parents, youth, and community and civic leaders |
| April 18, 2009 | Latinos Coming Together to Build Better Schools: Urban Education for the 21st Century | Providence | 60 Latino and other parents, youth, community members and leaders, and civic leaders |
| May 13, 2009 | Newport Community Forum | Newport | 50 parents, youth, and community and civic leaders |

contracts; make sure teachers aren't discouraging high expectations; define criteria for measuring teacher performance.

> Some teachers work more than others, [doing more than what is required of them] and they get the same salary as teachers that are not as effective. Some teachers have a lack of passion for teaching. They are protected by unions; sometimes they hurt as much as teach students.

Professional Development Teachers should meet the skills and needs of current students and show a willingness to adapt; there should be diversity training for teachers and staff and incentives for teacher professional development around language instruction (vouchers); a systemwide teacher mentoring network should be set up to help implement new curriculum.

## Multiple Pathways

Participants responded positively to this recommendation. A desire was expressed for students to have school-to-world connections outside of the typical school structure. Multiple Pathways were also viewed as a way to address discipline issues and dropout rates. Reform around Multiple Pathways should be student-centered and all avenues of opportunity should be open to all students.

School-to-world connections for students There need to be pathways and opportunities to connect school work with the outer world of jobs, college, and skills, including opportunities other than college bound programs and expanded career pathways to adult learning and higher education.

Discipline and students at risk Provide alternative programs for the chronically disruptive, with less focus on suspension as discipline, more programs for over-age/under-credited students, and a recognition of different learning types of students to avoid mislabeling; pay more attention to students' opinions and make use of peer intervention.

## Cross-System Collaborations

Participants responded that communication and cooperation are essential for Cross-System Collaborations. Collaborations must be "systemic and multi-level" in order to "move beyond programmatic changes."

Cooperation Find commonalities among successful schools, increase cooperation between school and the state and interagency collaboration, and increase school-to-business and community partnerships. "We are not maximizing the resources that business can provide."

Address barriers to cross-system collaborations such as the disconnect between schools and the district, territorial politics and school boards, and lack of data collection tools and technology in the classrooms.

Communication An integrated plan is needed to increase communication and information exchange in schools and among the all urban communities.

Another perspective from Adam Urbanski, keynote speaker at the Educators' Forum: "We need to do better, particularly now with globalization and technology. No single constituency can do it alone. Collaboration is a prerequisite for change, a precondition. Collaboration means working together for the same common denominator."

## Expanded Learning Time

Responses to this recommendation refer to the quality of ELT activities and suggestions for those activities. Forum participants noted that there are currently too few after-school programs. It was also mentioned that community-based organizations are "doing good after-school work" and connections can be made between schools and CBOs. Questions arose

about whether or not ELT would be mandatory and part of graduation requirements, and whether or not teachers would be paid overtime.

Goals of ELT Define the premise and implications of the extended day. Students need quality education, not just to be kept in school longer.

Activities Involve internships, pay older students to tutor younger kids, include arts, music, dance, theater, and electives.

### K–3 Literacy Instruction

Participants expressed concerns about student readiness to learn. There was recognition of barriers to early literacy, including second-language barriers, social and home issues, and school absences. It was suggested that "early literacy and numeracy need to be tied together."

### Pre-K

Participants responded that pre-K should be a priority within the Task Force and that it should be statewide and mandatory.

### Innovation Zone

Participants responded positively to this recommendation. Suggestions included creating a clearing house for sharing ideas and best practices and creating the capacity for innovations and leadership at the building level.

## Other Perspectives

There was a wide range of comments from participants that did not specifically relate to the recommendations of the Task Force. The themes of parent and community engagement, school climate, trust, and communication were prevalent across all of the forums. In addition, the question of funding and resources was consistently raised. There was also a set of comments referring to systemic issues at the district level around curriculum and graduation requirements.

### Parent and Community Engagement and Involvement

Participants in the community forums mentioned parent engagement and involvement as a top issue for them in the schools. This was one of the themes that emerged most consistently across the forums. Specifically, there were calls for "cultivating strong parent involvement" in the schools for better student outcomes. A desire was expressed for principals to be "flexible and open to interact with parents and teachers and students." There was mention of "cultivating a welcoming and engaging culture for parents." One participant shared a vision where "parents are called regularly with student updates and the timing of parent conferences works for all parents. Schools are welcoming and language accessible. Parents can easily volunteer in schools." Another suggested that "principals be evaluated on parental engagement and that there are consequences."

Communication Better communication is needed between the community and the school." Provide more information to parents about what they can do to contribute. "Parents should be viewed as stakeholders in a company and be briefed throughout the year by school and district staff. Meetings should be staggered to allow parents with tight schedules attendance options." Create ways for teachers to reach out to parents.

Student-parent connection If the students are going to be involved, the parents should also be engaged. Regular parent conferences should be available and schools should try to provide a more welcoming and hospitable environment, in which parents are comfortable. Parents should motivate their children to do better.

Children were treated better when parents were involved. "The school should offer its facilities to parents and families when school is not in session."

## Training and Empowerment for Families

Participants also said it was important to create "pathways for parents to become part of the fabric of their children's education." One participant remarked that "we need systems to improve parent and family engagement." The need was expressed for empowering parents to engage at the school level so that parents can reinforce what is happening in schools and vice versa, and more support and training for parents to support their kids and help them engage with schools.

## Communication and Trust

Participants identified a need for greater communication between schools, principals, teachers, parents, and the community. They also called for communication to be more consistent and in the proper language of the parents. A request was made to "make sure mailings home from school are in the correct language." There were also calls for activities that allow parents and teachers to interact and provide access to teacher and high school leaders, as well as greater accessibility to principals for parents. Suggestions included regular emails, phone calls, and even door-to-door organizing of parents and home visits.

Ongoing conversation Convene an honest conversation; keep having conversations like these forums.

Trust Set a table of trust: "When we get together to know who is there to help and who has a resource to provide, we can create trust." Hold trust-building workshops.

Respectful communication "Engage parents based on their cultural and language competencies"; address language barriers in communication. "Parents need centers, places and interpreters, so they can learn about the school system, and the forms they need to fill out." "At schools there are not translators for Spanish-speaking parents, and the ones that do have them . . . the parents feel the translators are talking down to them."

## State–District Responsibility

There were many issues brought up which have deep systemic roots and cannot be addressed without participation from the state and the district.

Politics Several comments argued that politics has come to dominate education policies and must be curbed. There was a call for "good leadership and less politics" and to "focus on the necessities of our students and not pay attention to what our politicians say."

More equitable funding and resource allocation "Address inequalities both within urban districts and between suburban schools." Highest need should have the most funding. Equitable statewide educational funding formula is needed with better allocation of resources. More money is needed. "Funding fuels all!" Students need more financial support: "Equal access to SATs in terms of cost"; "the college financial support system is not well known."

Equity High standards, equal access, and equal engagement for all. Equalize race, class, and social differences; equal rights for special needs kids.

Diversity Increase number of minority teachers and administrators in schools through state or district policy: "hire within urban" and "diversify teachers to reflect the community." Invest in urban educators, have minority representation.

### Curriculum and Standards

Participants agreed that schools need to raise the bar and move to a curriculum that is more challenging, both in breadth and depth, and to ensure that the curriculum is taught in challenging and hands-on ways that are relevant to young people's lives and future careers.

### School Climate and Culture

Comments addressed changing the school culture to be more welcoming for students and making the schools a positive learning environment that would "celebrate success" and "believe in our kids." Suggestions include: "make children feel valued," "changing apathetic culture," and "create a student-first culture."

Violence "Increase true safety in school and between students outside of school."

Respect A need for people to understand and respect the culture of the schools. "Culture is academic and social and can include community, parents youth, CBOs and youth workers, school classroom, district, teachers."

Student-first culture Promote and foster student and youth voice.

Accountability Create a culture of accountability. A "lack of 'It takes a village' mentality" was cited.

### Relationships with Adults

There were several comments on the issue of current relationships between teachers and students. Many dealt with creating trust and honesty. Others pointed out that teachers need to discuss with the students the "why" of schooling: "talk to our children about what they need and how they view school." The most resounding theme was to have a secure channel of communication between the two constituencies.

Each student needs an adult they can trust and have positive contact with, caring adults with positive attitudes and higher expectations, and good communication between adults and students.

## Summary of Other Perspectives

Top issues mentioned were funding and parent engagement. There were many references to school culture, trust, communication, and meaningful relationships between students and adults. There was also significant mention of issues around equity and diversity.

Overall, a desire for action was expressed: "More action and less talk!" Finally, participants in the forums wondered, "What are the action steps that are going to be taken? What's the follow-up and how?"

*Summary prepared by Ina Anderson, Rhode Island Young Professionals and public engagement consultant, and Nick Vockerodt, graduate student, Urban Education Policy Program, Brown University*

RHODE ISLAND

# Urban Education Task Force

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