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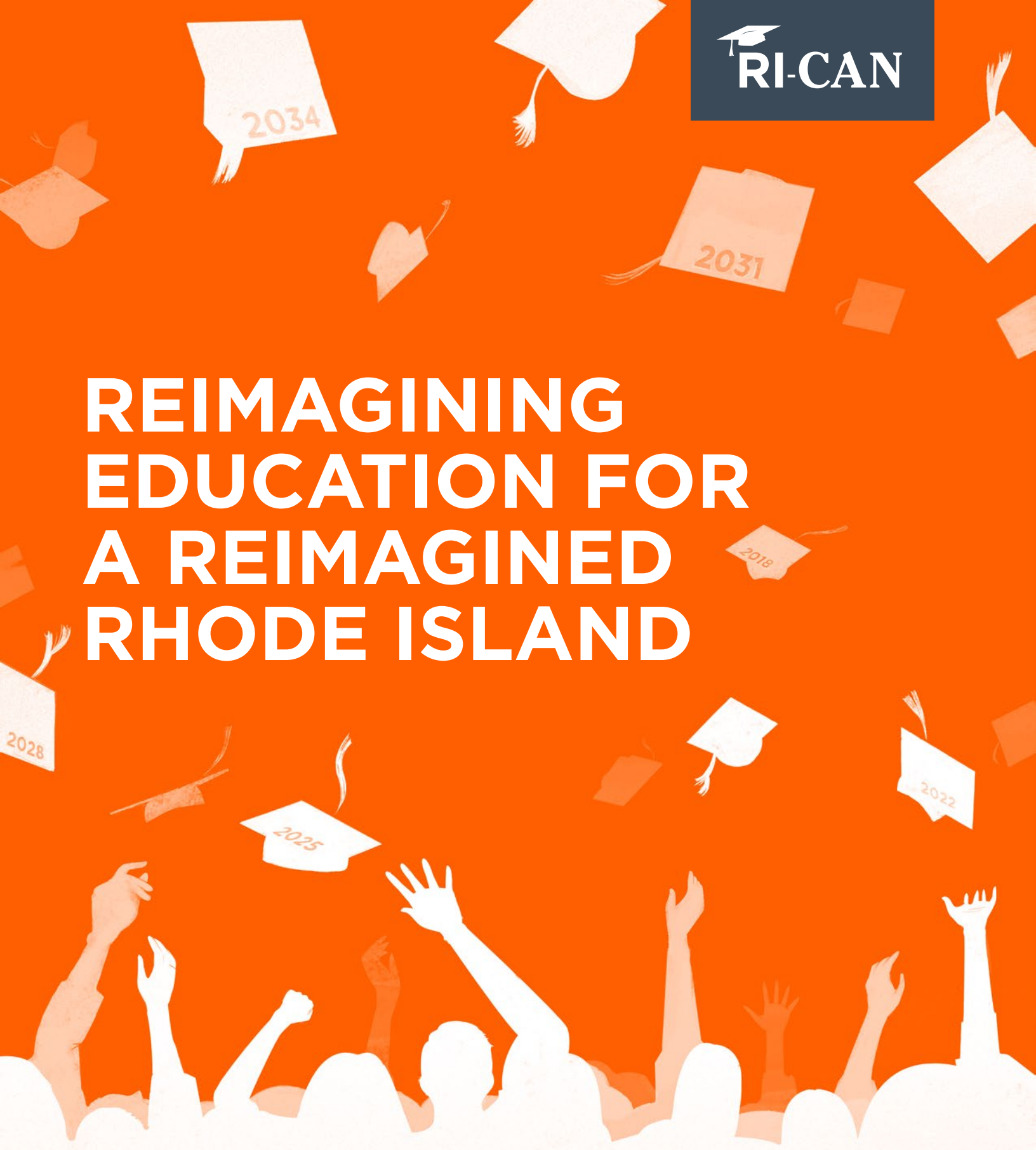

REIMAGINING EDUCATION FOR A REIMAGINED RHODE ISLAND

A RI-CAN REPORT

REIMAGINING EDUCATION FOR A REIMAGINED RHODE ISLAND

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Introduction

The power of a positive vision

An incredible power of vision is what Rhode Island needs now more than ever to propel itself from the middle of state rankings to be the top performing public school system in the country—and to be a place where low-income students and students of color are assured equal access to high-quality educational opportunities. Currently, fewer than 20 percent of Rhode Island's low-income eighth graders are proficient in reading and math on the Nation's Report Card. That number is 18 percent for Rhode Island's black and Latino students in reading and 44 percent for white students, compared to much higher numbers in neighboring Massachusetts and Connecticut. If Rhode Island is to remain economically competitive in the region, we must dramatically transform our education system.

We need to fundamentally reimagine the learning experience in the Ocean State, rethink how we deliver education and make it accessible, and reexamine how we structure policies to support those efforts. Students currently enrolled have grown up in a fast-paced, technologically driven environment and future generations will be even more connected to the world around them. What should an education system look like for children born in 2015 who will enter preschool in three years, kindergarten in five, and graduate from high school with the class of 2034?

If we commit ourselves today to transforming the educational system for ALL of our students, through the lens of what's possible for the class of 2034, then anything is possible for Rhode Island.

WE-CAN get there by:

1. **Starting earlier**
   The class of 2034 will have access to high-quality, universally available pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs.

2. **Expanding choices**
   The class of 2034 will have access to at least two high-quality public school options throughout their K-12 experience.

3

Aiming higher

The class of 2034 will be the highest performing students on the Nation's Report Card in the fourth and eighth grades; 100 percent will receive a high school diploma and will have taken at least one post-secondary entrance/training exam.

4

Cultivating talent

The class of 2034 will be taught in every grade and course by highly effective teachers who reflect the demographics of Rhode Island's student population, receive regular professional development and evaluations and are supported by strong educational leaders.

5

Reaching everyone

The class of 2034 will have a high-quality personalized learning experience in and out of the classroom that is focused on their academic needs and financially supported by a student-centered formula.

1. Start earlier

The class of 2034 will have access to high-quality, universally available pre-kindergarten (pre-K) and full-day kindergarten programs.

WE-CAN get there by:

- *Fulfilling the legislative commitment* to increase funding for the Rhode Island Pre-K Program by $1 million each year until the $10 million funding mark is reached.
- *Increasing funding* for the Pre-K Program beyond the current commitment until every Rhode Island four-year-old has access to high-quality pre-K.
- *Expanding Pre-K Program access* to three-year-olds, starting with children from low-income families.
- *Expanding incentives* for pre-K providers to participate in the BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System so that every provider participates.
- *Providing incentives* for districts and educational providers to align pre-K and K-3 programs to ensure early learning gains are sustained through elementary school.
- *Fully implementing universal access* to full-day kindergarten statewide.

Pre-kindergarten

High-quality pre-K programs have proven, through decades of research, to improve students' early learning outcomes and kindergarten readiness substantially.[1] The best pre-K programs benefit students well into adulthood, increasing high school graduation rates, college attendance and lifetime earnings.[2] Early childhood investments lead to higher tax revenues and lower criminal justice expenditures,[3] lower K-12 schooling costs and lower public health costs;[4] economists have estimated that every dollar spent on high-quality pre-K produces seven to ten dollars in return.[5] Public investment in high-quality pre-K for all three- and four-year-olds in Rhode Island would provide cost savings within nine years and by 2050 an overall benefit-cost ratio of eight to one.[6]

Taken together, the research suggests that providing every child access to a high-quality pre-K program is not only a sound investment for the state but also critical to closing Rhode Island's achievement gap.

State context

In 2008, the General Assembly passed the Rhode Island Prekindergarten Education Act, directing the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) to establish a pilot pre-K program that meets high quality standards, builds on existing infrastructure and serves students in communities with concentrations of low-performing schools. Still, in 2014–2015, only three percent of Rhode Island four-year-olds and no three-year-olds were enrolled in state-funded pre-K programs.[7] Rhode Island currently ranks 40th in pre-K access for four-year-olds and is among the 25 states that do not fund pre-K programs for three-year-olds.[8]

However, through the Pre-K Program, Rhode Island has made strides toward improving pre-K access. The program began offering pre-K to four-year-olds in the 2009–2010 school year, awarding grants to a variety of qualified vendors, including licensed child-care centers, Head Start programs and public and private schools. In 2015–2016, programs are operating in Central Falls, Cranston, East Providence, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, Warwick, West Warwick and Woonsocket. All children in these communities are eligible to enroll, but admissions are determined via lottery when space is limited.[9]

Further, the funding formula established by the General Assembly in 2010 calls for a gradual phase-in of Pre-K Program funding, adding $1 million per year up to $10 million total. To date, enrollment in state-funded pre-K programs has grown from 126 students in 2010–2011 to 306 students in 2014–2015.[10]

1 Hirokazu Yoshikawa et al., "Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education," Society for Research in Child Development/Foundation for Child Development (2013), p. 1, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/Evidence%20Base%20on%20Preschool%20Education%20FINAL.pdf*.

2 Clive R. Belfield et al., "The High/Scope Perry Preschool Program: Cost-Benefit Analysis Using Data from the Age-40 Followup," The Journal of Human Resources 41 (2006): 162-190, p. 162, *http://jhr.uwpress.org/content/XLI/1/162.abstract*.

3 Ibid.

4 W.S. Barnett and Leonard N. Masse, "Comparative Benefit-Cost Analysis of the Abecedarian Program and its Policy Implications," Economics of Education Review 26 (2007): 113-125, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://nieer.org/resources/research/BenefitCostAbecedarian.pdf*.

5 James J. Heckman et al., "The Rate of Return to the HighScope Perry Preschool Program," Journal of Public Economics 94 (2010): 114-128, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://jenni.uchicago.edu/papers/Heckman_Moon_etal_2010_JPubEc_v94_n1.pdf*.

6 "Early Childhood Education Programs: Info," Rhode Island Department of Education, accessed August 18, 2015, *http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/EarlyChildhoodEducation/Programs.aspx*.

7 "2015 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook," Rhode Island KIDS COUNT (2015), p. 129, accessed August 13, 2015, *http://www.rikidscount.org/DataPublications/RIKidsCountFactbook.aspx*.

8 W.S. Barnett, et al., "The State of Preschool 2014: State Preschool Yearbook," National Institute for Early Education Research (2015), accessed August 23, 2015, *http://nieer.org/yearbook*.

9 "Early Childhood Education Programs," Rhode Island Department of Education, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/EarlyChildhoodEducation/Programs.aspx#13020-pre-k-programs*.

10 "2015 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook," pp. 128-129.

In December 2011, Rhode Island became one of nine states to win a first-round award from the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge fund. The grant, totaling $50 million over four years, has been used to implement pre-K quality improvement measures such as BrightStars (our quality rating and improvement system), teacher workforce development, a statewide kindergarten readiness assessment and a new early learning data system.[11] In 2015, Rhode Island met all ten early childhood program quality standards identified by the National Institute for Early Education Research.[12]

National context

Forty states and the District of Columbia fund pre-K programs for four-year-olds, while 25 states and D.C. fund pre-K programs for three-year-olds. Nationally, 29 percent of four-year-olds and four percent of three-year-olds were enrolled in publicly funded pre-K programs during the 2013–2014 school year, totaling more than 1.3 million students.[13]

Most states have adopted quality rating and improvement systems that assess the quality of pre-K programs and provide technical assistance to pre-K providers. Many states have taken additional steps to foster pre-K quality, such as aligning pre-K and K-12 learning standards, implementing kindergarten readiness assessments, improving longitudinal data systems and instituting measures to ensure a high-caliber early learning workforce.

Full-day kindergarten

Compared to their peers in half-day programs, students in full-day kindergarten perform better academically, have higher self-confidence, work and play better with others and have higher attendance rates through the early elementary grades.[14] Full-day kindergarten is also associated with a reduction in the need to hold students back in elementary school, especially among English-language learners.[15] The savings produced by holding fewer students back has been estimated to offset close to 20 percent of the cost of extending kindergarten programs from half-day to full-day.[16]

Ensuring that every child has access to full-day kindergarten is an essential first step toward raising achievement for all students.

11 "Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge," Rhode Island Department of Education (2013), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Instruction-and-Assessment-World-Class-Standards/Early-Childhood/Early-Learning-Challenge/RTTT-ELC_Information_Sheet_June_2013.pdf*.
12 "The State of Preschool 2014: State Preschool Yearbook."

13 "The State of Preschool 2014: State Preschool Yearbook."

14 Harris Cooper et al., "Effects of Full-Day Kindergarten on Academic Achievement and Social Development," Review of Educational Research 80 (2010): pp. 34-70.
15 Jill S. Cannon, Alison Jacknowitz and Gary Painter, "The Effect of Attending Full-Day Kindergarten on English Learner Students," Journal of Policy Analysis and Management 30 (2011): 287-309.
16 Debra Viadero, "Study: Full-Day Kindergarten Boosts Academic Performance," Education Week (April 17, 2002), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2002/04/17/31kinder.h21.html*.

State context

In 2012, the General Assembly passed the Full-Day Kindergarten Accessibility Act. The law empowered the commissioner of education to disburse limited, one-time grants to as many as four school districts per year to help cover the start-up costs of expanding access to full-day kindergarten. In December 2013, grants were awarded to four school districts for use beginning in the 2014–2015 school year: Cranston, Exeter-West Greenwich Regional, Glocester and Woonsocket. Awards ranged from $33,000 to $99,000, and districts awarded the funds are required to operate newly established full-day kindergarten programs for at least five years.[17]

In 2015, Governor Raimondo signed into law universal access to full-day kindergarten by the 2016–2017 school year. During the 2015–2016 school year, six communities, including Coventry, Cranston, East Greenwich, Johnston, Tiverton and Warwick, will receive additional funds through the education funding formula to assist with transitioning from half-day to universal full-day kindergarten.

National context

As of 2014, 11 states and D.C. require school districts to offer publicly funded full-day kindergarten to all eligible students (Rhode Island now joins these states). Thirty-four states require districts to offer a minimum of half-day kindergarten.[18] Nationwide, approximately 77 percent of kindergarten students were enrolled in full-day programs in the 2012–2013 school year.[19]

17 "RIDE awards funds to four districts to expand full-day kindergarten," Rhode Island Department of Education, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/AdditionalInformation/News/ViewArticle/tabid/408/ArticleId/117/RIDE-awards-funds-to-four-districts-to-expand-full-day-kindergarten.aspx*.

18 "Table 5.3. Types of state and district requirements for kindergarten entrance and attendance, by state: 2014," National Center for Education Statistics (2014), accessed May 28, 2015, *https://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab5_3.asp*.
19 "2015 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook," p. 134.

2. Expand choices

The class of 2034 will have access to at least two high-quality public school options throughout their K-12 experience.

WE-CAN get there by:

- *Removing the statutory barriers* to expanding public school choice and public charter school autonomy.
- *Implementing* a universally accessible intra- and inter-district public school choice system.
- *Accelerating regional and statewide public choice options* for persistently low-performing schools.

School choice

All children deserve a high-quality education, regardless of their address. Access to a great education sets kids up to graduate from high school ready to succeed in college or a career. Public charter schools, inter-and intra-district choice and other choice models give all kids access to top-performing schools and educational programs that have proven track records of success—especially for those students who have traditionally been underserved in our educational system.

State context

Public charter schools are not the only way to offer parents and families more high-quality choices, but they are a critical part of the equation. When public charter schools first appeared nationally, the primary objective of them was to serve as laboratories of innovation. In exchange for increased accountability, public charter schools were given the flexibility and autonomy to demonstrate the power of great leaders and teachers to create a culture and environment that helps all students succeed, unencumbered by the restrictive rules of district school systems. And in Rhode Island, public charter schools have demonstrated tremendous success. In a recent study, Rhode Island's charter sector was found to have the highest effect on student learning gains of all charter systems in the nation.[20]

Rhode Island's charter law was enacted in 1995. As of the 2013–2014 school year, there were 19 public charter schools in Rhode Island that enrolled 5,950 students. In Rhode Island, the state board of education is the only public charter school authorizer and the law states that it may issue no more than 35 charters in the state.[21]

The autonomy afforded to public charter schools in Rhode Island is dependent on their type: district, independent or mayoral academy. District charter schools are subject to district collective bargaining agreements, and both district and independent charter schools must pay into the state pension system, provide tenure and follow prevailing wage laws. Only the mayoral academies are exempt from these regulations and are truly autonomous. While state regulations governing public charter schools have improved, according to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Rhode Island's charter law ranks a dismal 33rd out of 43, among all states with charter school laws.[22] Access to public charter schools continues to be a challenge: Out of a total student population of approximately 142,000 students in the state,[23] nearly 10,000 students are on waiting lists to attend charter schools.[24]

20 "National Charter School Study: 2013," Center for Research on Education Outcomes, pp. 52-55, accessed on August 25, 2014, *https://credo.stanford.edu/documents/NCSS%202013%20Final%20Draft.pdf*.

21 "Charter Schools," Rhode Island Department of Education, accessed on August 25, 2015, *http://www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/RIPublicSchools/CharterSchools.aspx*.

22 "Measuring Up to the Model: A Ranking Of State Charter School Laws (2014)," National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, accessed August 24, 2015, *http://www.publiccharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/StateRankings2014.pdf*.

23 "The State of Rhode Island Public Education, 2014," RI-CAN, *http://ristateofed2014.ri-can.org/*.

24 "Waiting Lists to Attend Charter Schools Top 1 Million Names," National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, accessed August 24, 2015, *http://www.publiccharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/NAPCS-2014-Wait-List-Report.pdf*.

Intra-district school choice, allowing a student to transfer to another school within the school district, is available in some Rhode Island communities on a limited and volunteer basis. Additionally, inter-district choice, allowing a student to transfer to a school outside of the school district, may also exist when districts enter into an agreement. For example, the communities of Jamestown and North Kingstown have an agreement that students residing in Jamestown may attend North Kingstown High School. Tuition for Jamestown High School students is paid out of the district's appropriation for public schools.

National context

An overwhelming majority of Americans and New Englanders support multiple school options for their children.[25] School choice policies create environments where parents can look beyond the traditional model of neighborhood schools to find the best possible educational options for their children. School choice exists in many forms across the country, including: charter schools, magnet schools, inter- and intra-district open enrollment, private school scholarships, tax credits and tax deductions. Forty-three states and the District of Columbia have established charter school laws,[26] and 28 states and the District of Columbia have enacted other forms of school choice options.[27]

In 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) required states (unless otherwise prohibited by state law) to allow students the option to transfer to a higher-performing school within the district if their assigned school consistently failed to make "Adequate Yearly Progress."[28] Due to a number of factors, including a lack of information about the policy, transportation and availability, only a small number of students took advantage of this option over the last decade.

25 "The Education Roadtrip," 50CAN, *http://edroadtrip.50can.org/*.

26 "Measuring Up to the Model: A Ranking Of State Charter School Laws (2014)."

27 "Fast Facts," Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, accessed August 24, 2015, *http://www.edchoice.org/our-resources/fast-facts/#voucher-fast-facts*.

28 "No Child Left Behind Policy Brief: School Choice," Education Commission of the States, accessed August 24, 2015, *http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/35/21/3521.pdf*.

3. Aim higher

The class of 2034 will be the highest performing students on the Nation's Report Card in the fourth and eighth grades; 100 percent will receive a high school diploma and will have taken at least one post-secondary entrance/training exam.

WE-CAN get there by:

- *Continuing to support* the Common Core State Standards and providing appropriate resources where needed to support teachers and administrators with curriculum development and instructional resources, while amending the work as needed based on teacher, parent and student feedback.
- *Ensuring faithful implementation* of a statewide assessment aligned to the Common Core standards.
- *Providing the necessary resources* to ensure that students, parents and teachers are prepared for the assessments and know what to expect.
- *Expanding access* to Advanced Placement courses to every school.
- *Implementing a competency-based credit program* for students.

Common core, assessments and competency-based programming

The Common Core State Standards lay out clear, rigorous guidelines for what Rhode Island students should master at every grade level to graduate with the skills they need to thrive after high school.

In order for our students and schools to get the most out of these new standards, Rhode Island must also commit to administering assessments that are aligned and rigorous and hold both our students accountable to the material they are learning as well as hold our schools accountable to teaching it—especially for our disadvantaged students.

With these baseline levels of learning established, Rhode Island opens itself up to a competency-based educational model, where students can show mastery of the knowledge and skills outlined in the Common Core State Standards through multiple pathways, including Advanced Placement exams and portfolio assessments.

State context

Prior to adoption of the Common Core, Rhode Island had statewide Grade Level Expectations (GLE) and Grade Span Expectations (GSE) that defined what students should know at each grade level and how to assess students' academic achievement. In 2010, the Rhode Island Board of Regents adopted the Common Core standards and began the transition to Common Core in 2011.[29]

In Rhode Island, the standards were adopted in response to the reality that many Rhode Island students graduate from high school unprepared to succeed in college. Sixty-three percent of Rhode Island's students in two-year colleges require remediation, and only 65 percent of students who enter public colleges in Rhode Island earn their degrees. The Common Core focuses on developing the critical thinking skills that employers want and employees need. Currently, 77 percent of Rhode Island's jobs require advanced skills and some postsecondary education or training,[30] and for every one unemployed person in Rhode Island, there are 2.4 STEM jobs that go unfilled.[31]

From March 2011 to September 2012, RIDE provided professional development to 5,750 teachers to study the Common Core State Standards.[32] RIDE also launched the Ready, Set, Go Common Core campaign on the RIDE website and on Facebook in 2011 to keep parents and educators informed and to provide resources related to the transition.[33]

Teachers have played a major role in ensuring a successful Common Core transition. A majority of Rhode Island teachers are enthusiastic about the Common Core, and 63 percent believe the Common

29 "Common Core State Standards Initiative," Rhode Island Department of Education, accessed February 25, 2014, *http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Common-Core/Common-Core-State-Standards-Initiative-FAQ-8-22-11.pdf*.
30 "Rhode Island's College- and Career-Ready Commitment," Achieve, accessed February 25, 2014, *http://www.achieve.org/files/RhodeIslandCCR_FactSheet-Sept2012.pdf*.
31 "Vital Signs Rhode Island," Change the Equation, accessed February 25, 2014, *http://vitalsigns.changetheequation.org/tcpdf/vitalsigns/newsletter.php?statename=Rhode%20Island*.
32 "Rhode Island Support for CCSS Implementation," Rhode Island Department of Education, accessed February 25, 2014, *https://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Instruction-and-Assessment-World-Class-Standards/Transition/RI_Support_for_CCSS_Implementation.pdf*.
33 "Transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and to PARCC," Rhode Island Department of Education, accessed February 25, 2014, *https://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/TransitiontotheCCSSandPARCC.aspx*.

Core will help their students improve their critical thinking skills.[34] Along with representatives from RIDE, teachers trained on Common Core conducted informational forums across Rhode Island to inform parents and community members about the standards.

In addition to the transition to new academic standards, Rhode Island has also transitioned to new Common Core-aligned assessments. Previously, student progress was assessed using the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP). But beginning in the 2014–2015 school year, the Common Core-aligned PARCC assessments replaced the NECAP. To prepare, Rhode Island participated in PARCC field-testing during the 2013–2014 school year.[35]

In 2013, just over 5,600 Rhode Island high schoolers took just under 10,000 AP exams with an average score of just under three. Seventy percent of these test-takers were white, 13 percent were Hispanic and 5 percent were black, compared to 61 percent white, 24 percent Hispanic and 8 percent black in Rhode Island schools.[36] In 2014, the AP passing rate (meaning a score of three or more on a five-point scale) across the state was 57 percent, with Barrington boasting a 90 percent passing rate and a number of schools owning single-digit passing rates, including Providence's Central High (3 percent) and Hope High (6 percent).[37]

National context

In 2009 the National Governor's Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, 48 states, two territories and the District of Columbia signed a memorandum of understanding committing to the Common Core State Standards Initiative, a state-led process to create common academic standards in English language arts and mathematics. In 2010, the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics were completed and released.[38]

Since 2010, more than 40 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).[39] The CCSS outline the skills and information students need to master in every grade from kindergarten onward, to graduate ready for college or a career.

Common Core-aligned instruction encourages engaged and active learning through student-led work and hands-on experiences that simulate the experiences they'll encounter in college or in a career. The Common Core outlines *what* kids should know, not *how* teachers should teach. Local districts retain full power over their own curricula and teachers can continue to craft their own lesson plans to meet the unique needs of their students.

34 "Primary Sources: Rhode Island," Scholastic, accessed February 25, 2014, *http://www.scholastic.com/primarysources/ri-2.htm*.

35 "PARCC States Announce Field Testing," Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, accessed February 25, 2014, *https://www.parcconline.org/parcc-states-announce-field-testing-non-profit-launched*.

36 "AP State Report," College Board, accessed August 11, 2015, *http://research.collegeboard.org/programs/ap/data/archived/2013* and Rhode Island Families and Communities/Student Characteristics 2014-15, accessed on August 11, 2015, *http://infoworks.ride.ri.gov/state/ri*.

37 Rhode Island Student Achievement/AP Exams (High School) 2013-14, Rhode Island Department of Education, accessed on August 11, 2015, *http://infoworks.ride.ri.gov/state/ri*.

38 "Achieving the Common Core," Achieve, Inc., accessed March 4, 2014, *http://www.achieve.org/achieving-common-core*.

39 "In the States," Common Core State Standards Initiative, accessed May 8, 2014, *http://www.corestandards.org/in-the-states*.

In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education offered competitive grants to two state-based consortia—Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)—to develop assessments aligned to the Common Core. States could choose to join one or both of the consortia, choose to create their own CCSS-aligned assessment or use another assessment of college and career readiness like the ACT.

During this same period, access to Advanced Placement exams has been on the rise across the country. Since 2009–2010, the number of schools that offer AP exams to at least one student increased by 9 percent and total student participation increased by 27 percent.[40] Further, pass rates of the AP exam have doubled over the past 10 years.[41]

40 "AP Program Participation and Performance Data 2014," College Board, accessed August 11, 2015, *http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/research/2014/2014-Annual-Participation.pdf*.

41 "AP Exam Pass Rate Nearly Doubles in 10 Years," Allie Bidwell, US News and World Report, accessed August 11, 2015, *http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/data-mine/2014/10/07/college-board-ap-exam-pass-rate-nearly-doubles-in-10-years*.

4. Cultivate talent

The class of 2034 will be taught in every grade and course by highly effective teachers who reflect the demographics of Rhode Island's student population, receive regular professional development and evaluations and are supported by strong educational leaders.

WE-CAN get there by:

- *Implementing* Rhode Island's rigorous educator preparation standards with fidelity.
- *Expanding data gathered* for the Educator Preparation Indices, continuing to release the Indices annually and growing the Indices to include principal preparation programs.
- *Striving* for Rhode Island to receive an A rating for teacher preparation standards by the National Council on Teacher Quality and have the same organization rank a majority of our state's educator preparation programs in the top 100 in the country.
- *Increasing cut scores* for teacher licensure examinations and ensuring all examinations are sufficiently rigorous.
- *Offering scholarships and loan forgiveness* for high-caliber individuals who enter and stay in the teaching profession, especially teachers of color.
- *Further improving implementation* of the state's educator and principal evaluation systems.
- *Ensuring* that school and educational leader training and professional development is relevant and rigorous and prepares current and future school leaders for work in the twenty-first century educational environment.
- *Implementing* robust teacher and school leader mentorship programs that allows our best educators and school leaders to share best practices and grow thetalent of our less experienced or less successful educators and schools leaders.

Teacher preparation

Teacher preparation in the U.S. often leaves much to be desired. Preparation programs are not selective; nearly half of new teachers score in the bottom third of their college class on college entrance exams.[42] Grading standards for education majors are lower than standards for other majors.[43] And most programs place little emphasis on producing high-quality clinical experiences, despite research showing that those experiences lead to better outcomes for teachers and their students.[44] In one survey, 62 percent of alumni said that their preparation program failed to prepare them for the realities of the classroom.[45]

Furthermore, many states are doing little to hold programs accountable for producing well-prepared graduates. Most state accountability systems identify virtually no programs as low-performing,[46] and over the past five years, less than one percent of programs have been shut down.[47]

Fortunately, Rhode Island has become a national leader in raising the bar for teacher preparation and is working to ensure that every child is taught by a well-prepared teacher.

State context

In November 2013, the Rhode Island Board of Education adopted new educator preparation program approval standards. These standards mirror rigorous standards recently adopted by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), the national accreditor of education colleges. Under these new standards, all Rhode Island programs—traditional and alternative alike—will be judged for program approval and renewal based on the following criteria. The teacher preparation programs:

- Teach educator candidates appropriate professional knowledge;
- Develop strong partnerships with districts and ensure candidates have strong clinical experiences;
- Are selective in admissions and recruit candidates who reflect the diversity of Rhode Island's student body and meet districts' employment needs;
- Produce graduates that have a documented positive impact on student learning and who reach career milestones such as placement, retention and promotion; and
- Collect program data, share it widely and use it for continuous improvement.[48]

42 Carmel Martin, "Carmel Martin: R.I. is national model for teacher preparation," Providence Journal (December 12, 2014), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.providencejournal.com/opinion/commentary/20141212-carmel-martin-r.i.-is-national-model-for-teacher-preparation.ece*.

43 "Training Our Future Teachers: Easy A's and What's Behind Them," National Council on Teacher Quality (November 2014), p. iii, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://nctq.org/dmsView/EasyAs*.

44 Donald J. Boyd et al., "Teacher Preparation and Student Achievement," Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis 31 (2009), accessed June 2, 2015, *https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Preparation%20and%20Achievement.pdf*.

45 Arthur Levine, "Educating School Teachers," The Education Schools Project (2006), pp. 31-32, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.edschools.org/pdf/Educating_Teachers_Report.pdf*.

46 Chad Aldeman et al., "A Measured Approach to Improving Teacher Preparation," Education Sector (January 2011), p. 3, accessed August 31, 2015, *http://elenamsilva.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/TeacherPrepFederal.pdf*.

47 Stephen Sawchuk, "States Slow to Close Faltering Teacher Ed. Programs," Education Week (December 16, 2014), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/12/16/states-slow-to-close-faltering-teacher-ed.html*.

48 "Educator Preparation Programs: Updates," Rhode Island Department of Education, accessed August 31, 2015, *http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EducatorCertification/RIEducatorPreparationPrograms.aspx#12583-updates*; Linda Borg, "Rhode Island Board of Education adopts new standards for teacher preparation," Providence Journal (November 14, 2013), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.providencejournal.com/breaking-news/content/20131113-r.i.-board-adopts-new-standards-for-teacher-preparation.ece*.

The Rhode Island Department of Education also recently began publishing an annual report on each state-approved preparation program. These Educator Preparation Indices include employment, retention and effectiveness data for teachers who completed preparation programs in the past three years. They are designed to assist prospective teachers in choosing preparation programs and to help districts make informed hiring decisions.[49]

In another move to improve educator preparation, Rhode Island also increased the minimum score that teaching candidates must achieve on the basic skills examination required of certain candidates for admission to teacher preparation programs. Five years ago, Rhode Island's cut scores on each component of this exam were among the lowest in the nation.[50] Today, on a new version of this exam, our cut scores are aligned with most other states.[51]

For non-traditional teaching candidates, Rhode Island offers several additional pathways to certification. Among these is Rhode Island's alternate route pathway. Candidates with a bachelor's degree, a 3.0 GPA and, for secondary teaching candidates, a major in their certification area, may enroll in an approved alternate route program and begin teaching with a preliminary certificate. After completing the program, candidates are eligible for a full professional certificate. Any approved private service provider, professional organization or institution of higher education can offer alternate route programs, as long as the organization has entered into a partnership with a local education agency.[52]

National context

In 2013, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), the sole national accreditor of education colleges, issued a new set of rigorous accreditation standards. The standards are similar to Rhode Island's program approval standards, including requirements for selective admissions, strong clinical experiences and evidence of graduates' effectiveness.[53]

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education also proposed new regulations for teacher preparation programs. If the rules are issued as written, states will be required to rate teacher preparation programs annually using measures that include graduate placement and retention rates, graduate and employer survey results and evidence of graduates' effectiveness in the classroom.[54]

Some states have taken other initial steps to improve teacher preparation as well. Roughly one-quarter of states require programs to be

49 Linda Borg, "New data on teacher preparation programs released," Providence Journal (December 4, 2014), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.providencejournal.com/news/education/20141204-new-data-on-teacher-preparation-programs-released.ece?template=printart*.
50 Jennifer D. Jordan, "Plan to raise standards for new teachers proposed," Providence Journal (December 7, 2009), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.nctq.org/docs/Plan_to_raise_standards_for_teachers_proceeds-_The_Providence_Journal.pdf*.
51 Letter from Lisa M. Foehr, "Re: Assessment of Pre-Professional Skills Update," Rhode Island Department of Education (August 15, 2014), accessed August 31, 2015, *http://ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Certification/Becoming-an-Educator/Assessment_of_PreProfessional_Skills.pdf*; "The Praxis Series: Passing Scores by Test and State," Educational Testing Service (January 1, 2015), accessed June 2, 2015, *https://www.ets.org/s/praxis/pdf/passing_scores.pdf*.
52 "Pathways to RI Certification: Preliminary," Rhode Island Department of Education, accessed August 18, 2015, *http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EducatorCertification/PathwaystoRICertification.aspx#23213-preliminary*.

53 "CAEP Accreditation Standards," Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (August 29, 2013), accessed June 2 2015, *https://caepnet.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/final_board_amended_20150213.pdf*.
54 Stephen Sawchuck, "Ed. Dept. Teacher-Prep Regulations Released; Aim to Tie Aid to Program Performance," Education Week (November 25, 2014), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2014/11/ed_dept_teacher-prep_regulatio.html*.

nationally accredited.[55] Sixteen states require a 3.0 GPA for admission, and 13 states require applicants to submit scores from a nationally normed college entrance assessment.[56] Further, 18 states make data about the performance of teacher preparation programs publicly available, although only a handful have set minimum objective standards for program performance.[57]

Finally, most states provide alternate routes to certification that allow candidates to bypass traditional teacher preparation programs. Candidates for alternate routes often must meet additional criteria not required of traditional candidates, such as having a higher GPA and a college major in the subject area in which they are planning to teach.[58]

55 "2013 State Teacher Policy Yearbook: Rhode Island," National Council on Teacher Quality (January 2014), p. 50, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/2013_State_Teacher_Policy_Yearbook_Rhode_Island_NCTQ_Report*.
56 "Are New Teachers Being Prepared for College- and Career-Readiness Standards? 2014 State Teacher Policy Yearbook: Rhode Island," National Council on Teacher Quality (2015), pp. 36-37, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/2014_State_Teacher_Policy_Yearbook_Rhode_Island_NCTQ_Report*.
57 Ibid., p. 41.
58 "2013 State Teacher Policy Yearbook: Rhode Island," p. 62.

Teacher staffing

The research is clear: No other in-school factor is more important to student achievement than teachers.[59] The quality of a student's teacher matters more than the school in which she is enrolled or the district where she resides.[60] Across dozens of studies, findings demonstrate that great teachers can consistently produce up to a year and a half of student learning, while the least effective teachers produce only half a year.[61] Students assigned to effective teachers are more likely to attend college, earn higher salaries and even save for retirement.[62]

To ensure every child has access to an effective teacher, states and districts need good policies that support the profession, ensure that the best and brightest enter its ranks and encourage ongoing professional development for those who are currently educating our children.

59 Eric A. Hanushek, "The Economic Value of Higher Teacher Quality," Economics of Education Review 30 (2011), page 467, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://hanushek.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Hanushek%202011%20EER%2030(3).pdf*.
60 Matthew M. Chingos, Grover J. (Russ) Whitehurst and Katharine M. Lindquist, "School Superintendents: Vital or Irrelevant?" Brown Center on Education Policy, Brookings Institution (September 2014), page 10, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/reports/2014/09/superintendents%20whitehurst%20chingos/superintendentsbrown%20center9314.pdf*.
61 "The Economic Value of Higher Teacher Quality."
62 Raj Chetty, John N. Friedman, and Jonah E. Rockoff, "The Long-Term Impacts of Teachers: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood," National Bureau of Economic Research (2011), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://obs.rc.fas.harvard.edu/chetty/value_added.pdf*.

State context

In 2009, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education adopted the *Rhode Island Educator Evaluation System Standards*. The standards were designed to identify common expectations that all districts and public charter schools could use to implement rigorous, fair and accurate educator evaluations. Based on the standards, five evaluation systems have been approved.[63]

Each of these systems shares common components that align to the state standards. For example, teachers must be evaluated regularly and receive one of four rankings: *highly effective, effective, developing or ineffective*. Each system gives significant weight to educators' professional practices while requiring that measures of student learning account for the majority of the evaluation score. Evaluators who observe classroom practice must be trained, and teachers must receive multiple observa-

63 "RIDE releases 2nd annual report on educator evaluations," Rhode Island Department of Education (November 13, 2014), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/AdditionalInformation/News/ViewArticle/tabid/408/ArticleId/186/RIDE-releases-2nd-annual-report-on-educator-evaluations.aspx*.

tions with written feedback after each session. The system was designed to create a fair, accurate and meaningful evaluation system that supports teachers and helps improve teaching and learning in our schools.

The way in which districts use evaluation data is critically important, and here Rhode Island is also on the right track. Professional development is tied to areas of improvement identified in evaluations, fostering teacher growth in more targeted, effective ways. Similarly, teachers rated *developing* or *ineffective* receive performance improvement plans to put them on track toward greater effectiveness. The evaluation system also allows consistently ineffective teachers to be dismissed.

Although the educator evaluation model is strong in many ways, there are still areas for improvement. In the first two years of implementation, evaluation results reflected little variation in teacher performance: Ninety-five percent of teachers were rated effective or highly effective in year one,[64] and 98 percent of teachers were rated effective or highly effective in year two.[65] In a report accompanying year one results, RIDE stated: "When we consider the educator ratings alongside other data such as student achievement, student growth or school accountability, there appears to be a discrepancy." RIDE continued: "These results serve as a powerful reminder of the strong cultural forces that may make it uncomfortable for evaluators to assign honest ratings and the need for ongoing training." Rhode Island's principals confirmed this sentiment: Two-thirds said that they had assigned a higher rating to a teacher than they believed was warranted.[66] Former Providence Superintendent Susan Lusi also pointed out that evaluations are highly time-consuming for principals to tackle alone.[67]

The evaluation system has also undergone some changes and updates since its inception. For example, the Department of Education temporarily suspended the use of student growth in educator evaluations in the summer of 2013, partly to ease the transition from NECAP to PARCC assessments. Also, during the 2014 legislative session, the General Assembly passed legislation that requires teachers rated effective or highly effective to receive evaluations every two to three years instead of annually, though they will still have annual conferences with and observations by their principals. While it is critical to ensure the pace of implementation is working for educators in the field, we also have to ensure a strong commitment to keeping student achievement front and center in the discussion.

64 "Rhode Island Educator Evaluations: Improving Teaching and Learning," Rhode Island Department of Education (September 2013), p. 2, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Evaluation/Education-Eval-Main-Page/2013_Evaluation_Data_External_Report.pdf*.
65 "RIDE releases 2nd annual report on educator evaluations."

66 "Rhode Island Educator Evaluations: Improving Teaching and Learning," pp. 4 and 6.
67 "High evaluation ratings for most R.I. teachers problematic," Linda Borg, Providence Journal, October 11, 2013, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.providencejournal.com/breaking-news/content/20131011-high-evaluation-ratings-for-most-r.i.-teachers-problematic.ece*.

National context

Most states have recently adopted teacher evaluation systems that incorporate measures of student learning growth in addition to classroom observations and that establish more than two categories of educator effectiveness. Researchers have identified several practices that feature in the best of these evaluation systems: All teachers are evaluated annually in some form, student learning growth is a significant criterion in the evaluation, teachers receive multiple classroom observations, teachers receive substantive feedback through the evaluation process and professional development is based on areas for improvement identified in the evaluation.[68]

School leadership

Just as teachers have a large impact on student outcomes, so do principals. Among in-school factors, principals account for up to one-quarter of the variation in student achievement across schools, second only to teachers.[69] Research suggests that principals can have an especially large impact in high-poverty schools.[70]

The importance of principals is no surprise given their crucial role in developing educators. Research has found that the most effective principals recruit quality teachers, address less effective teaching and focus on developing and improving the performance of all teachers.[71] Principals also shape a school's culture and environment. Studies show that the highest performing schools typically have a culture of high expectations, a focus on academic achievement and an emphasis on frequent feedback and data-driven instruction,[72] with principals playing a major role in establishing these priorities.[73] Researchers have described the centrality of principals' impact on schools as "the ripple effect."[74]

To ensure all children attend schools with effective principals at the helm, states and districts need policies that effectively prepare principals and that give them the support and autonomy they need while holding them accountable for results.

State context

Educational leaders in Rhode Island must have either a Building Level Administrator PK-12 or District Level Administrator certification earned through one of three avenues: 1) completion of one of the nine state-approved certification programs, 2) completion of a state-approved program in another state within five years of application or proof of full credentialing from another state, or 3) completion of a

68 "2013 State Teacher Policy Yearbook: National Summary," National Council on Teacher Quality (2014), p. 1, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/2013_State_Teacher_Policy_Yearbook_National_Summary_NCTQ_Report*.

69 Kenneth Leithwood, Karen Seashore Louis, Stephen Anderson and Kyla Wahlstrom, "Review of research: How leadership influences student learning," Wallace Foundation (2004), page 21, accessed September 25, 2015, http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/key-research/documents/how-leadership-influences-student-learning.pdf.

70 Gregory F. Branch, Eric A. Hanushek and Steven G. Rivkin, "Estimating the Effect of Leaders on Public Sector Productivity: The Case of School Principals," National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (2012), page 41, accessed September 25, 2015, *http://www.caldercenter.org/sites/default/files/Hanushek_wp66.pdf*.

71 Tara Beteille, Demetra Kalogrides and Susanna Loeb, "Effective Schools: Managing the Recruitment, Development, and Retention of High-Quality Teachers," National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (2009), accessed September 25, 2015, *http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/1001428-effective-schools.pdf*.

72 Will Dobbie and Roland G. Fryer, Jr., "Getting Beneath the Veil of Effective Schools: Evidence from New York City," National Bureau of Economic Research (2011), accessed September 25, 2015, *http://www.nycharterschools.org/sites/default/files/resources/effective_schools_fryer.pdf*; Ronald Edmonds, "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor," Educational Leadership 37 (1979): 15-24; Samuel C. Carter, "No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools," Heritage Foundation (2000), accessed September 25, 2015, *http://samuelcaseycarter.squarespace.com/storage/NoExcuses-SCC.pdf*.

73 Pamela Mendels, "The Effective Principal," The Wallace Foundation (2012), accessed September 25, 2015, *http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/effective-principal-leadership/documents/the-effective-principal.pdf*.

74 Matthew Clifford, Ellen Behrstock-Sherratt and Jenni Fetters, "The Ripple Effect: A Synthesis of Research on Principal Influence to Inform Performance Evaluation Design," American Institutes for Research (2012), page 7, accessed September 25, 2015,

CRCI Credential Review Plan.[75] This flexibility in credentialing allows for multiple pathways into administrative positions for Rhode Island educators.

Building off the Rhode Island Educator Evaluation System Standards, Rhode Island fully implemented a new evaluation model for school-level educational leaders during the 2012–13 school year. This system evaluates school leaders on three criteria: professional practice, professional foundations and student learning. Principals receive three evaluation conferences (at the beginning, middle and end of the school year) as well as three school visits (one announced and two unannounced) as part of their evaluations. For the professional practice and professional foundations criteria, the principal is evaluated using a guided rubric with eleven and six key competencies, respectively. For the student learning criteria, principals are gauged against their own determined student learning goals. They must have at least two of them. Principals must also meet at least one self-selected professional growth goal. At the end of each year, principals are rated as highly effective, effective, developing or ineffective.[76]

As with classroom-level educators, the way in which districts use principal and school leader evaluation data is critically important, and here Rhode Island is also on the right track. School leader professional development is targeted to principals' identified areas of improvement: Indeed, all principals rated developing or ineffective at the end of the year are required to create a Performance Improvement Plan with their evaluators and all leaders, no matter their effectiveness rating, create Professional Growth Plans at the beginning of each school year.

National context

When certifying principals, 40 states require that candidates have teaching experience, 33 states require candidates to have a master's degree and 29 states require candidates to pass a principal licensure exam. Twenty-nine states, including Rhode Island, offer alternate routes to principal licensure.[77] Many states fund leadership academies that identify and develop aspiring school leaders,[78] and recently, several school districts around the country have implemented principal development pipelines: programs that recruit and train aspiring principals and provide those individuals with mentoring and other professional support.[79] Roughly three-quarters of states, including Rhode Island, evaluate principals based partly on student achievement growth.[80] However, despite this accountability mechanism, many states and districts still have policies in place that restrict principal autonomy, especially over school staffing and resources.[81]

http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/1707_The_Ripple_Effect_d8_Online_0.pdf.

75 Rhode Island Department of Education, "Building Level Administrator Certificate (12001)" (January 2015), accessed on September 26, 2015, *http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Certification/Cert-Requirements/Adm-BuildAdm-Req.pdf*.

76 Rhode Island Board of Regents, Elementary and Secondary Education, "Rhode Island Model: Building Administrator Evaluation and Support System: Edition II" (June 2012), accessed September 26, 2015, *http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Evaluation/Education-Eval-Main-Page/Admin-Model-GB-Edition-II-FINAL.pdf*.

77 Paul Manna, "Developing Excellent School Principals to Advance Teaching and Learning: Considerations for State Policy," The Wallace Foundation (2015), p. 30, accessed September 25, 2015, *http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/state-policy/Documents/Developing-Excellent-School-Principals.pdf*.

78 "Statewide Leadership Academies," Education Commission of the States (2008), accessed September 25, 2015, *http://ecs.force.com/mbdata/mbtab6NE?SID=a0i700000009va3&rep=SLA*.

79 See, e.g., Brenda J. Turnbull, Derek L. Riley and Jaclyn R. MacFarlane, "Districts Taking Charge of the Principal Pipeline," Policy Studies Associates and the Wallace Foundation (2015), accessed September 25, 2015, *http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/principal-training/documents/building-a-stronger-principalship-vol3-districts-taking-charge.pdf*;

80 Denisa R. Superville, "States Forge Ahead on Principal Evaluation," Education Week (May 20, 2014), accessed September 25, 2015, *http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/05/21/32principals_ep.h33.html*.

81 See, e.g., Daniela Doyle and Gillian Locke, "Lacking Leaders: The Challenges of Principal Recruitment, Selection, and Placement," Public Impact and the Thomas B. Fordham Institute (2014), p. 2, accessed September 25, 2015, *http://edexcellence.net/publications/lacking-leaders-the-challenges-of-principal-recruitment-selection-and-placement*; "The Irreplaceables: Understanding the Real Retention Crisis in America's Urban Schools," TNTP (2012), p. 20, accessed September 25, 2015, *http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_Irreplaceables_2012.pdf*.

5. Reach everyone

The class of 2034 will have a high-quality personalized learning experience in and out of the classroom that is focused on their academic needs and financially supported by a student-centered formula.

WE-CAN get there by:

- *Implementing a statewide, personalized educational approach.*
- *Becoming the first state* to incorporate technology fully in every school.
- *Providing a vibrant career and technical training program* with opportunities to earn career credits or credentials with a high school diploma.
- *Ensuring the state funding formula* is fully funded and remains student-centered.
- *Assessing and improving upon the funding formula periodically* to achieve full equitability over time.
- *Providing fair, sustainable school facilities aid* to all public schools, both charter and traditional alike.

Personalized learning

Personalized learning has the capacity to revolutionize education in Rhode Island. It forces us to take a strong look at our governance system and the inefficiencies in it, ensure strong educational programming and accountability for all students, and take advantage of innovation and a marketplace of schooling opportunities for students' unique learning needs and desires. Personalized learning starts with putting students at the center of the system and meets them whenever and wherever they are, so that their interests and needs guide the learning process. Personalized models provide more opportunities to reach different student populations such as English-language learners, students with disabilities and gifted and talented learners. Research shows that personalized and cultural approaches prove particularly successful among black and Latino students.[82] Personalized learning may take many forms, such as blended learning, flipped classroom approaches, project-based efforts, early college initiatives or many others.

Blended learning programs and virtual schools are a small but fast-growing trend in education today and commonly used as part of a personalized learning system. Blended learning programs generally incorporate a mix of online and in-person education, while many virtual schools exist in a purely online environment. Blended learning is more than just schooling in a technology-rich environment. Quality blended learning programs leverage digital resources to give students more personalized instruction where the students have greater control over the pacing, place and path of their instruction.[83]

State context

To clarify state requirements and standards related to online education, RIDE adopted new regulations governing virtual learning in 2012. The regulations aim to ensure access to high quality and rigorous content, support for all learners, reliable access to the necessary technology and appropriate coordination with higher education institutions and other state agencies.[84]

Although Rhode Island does not have any statewide fully online schools, two charter schools and one district school have recently implemented blended educational programs. In fall 2013, Village Green Virtual Public Charter High School and Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy opened as the first two blended charter schools in Rhode Island. Additionally, during the 2012–2013 school year, Pleasant View Elementary School in Providence transitioned to a blended learn-

82 James P. Huguley, "Latino Students in Rhode Island: A Review of Local and National Performances," The Latino Policy Institute at Roger Williams University, page 3, accessed August 24, 2015, *http://rwu.edu/sites/default/files/downloads/lpi/lpi-education-report2013.pdf*.

83 "What is blended learning?" Clayton Christenson Institute for Disruptive Innovation, accessed June 20, 2014, *http://www.christenseninstitute.org/blended-learning/*.

84 "Regulations of the Board of Regents Governing Virtual Learning Education in Rhode Island," Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, p. 5, accessed June 20, 2014, *http://ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/inside-ride/Laws-Regulations/Virtual-Learning-Regs-Aug-2012.pdf*.

ing school model. In addition to these three programs, the Pawtucket School District and Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy have announced a district-charter partnership to personalize learning for students. Two high schools—Pawtucket Learning Academy High School and Blackstone Valley Prep High School—are partnering with California-based Summit Public Schools to implement a personalized, blended learning curriculum between the two schools.

National context

As of the 2013–2014 school year, there were approximately 75 "fully blended"[85] schools across the country in 24 states and the District of Columbia.[86] Additionally, approximately 310,000 students in 29 states attended fully online[87] schools, a 13 percent increase over the previous year.[88]

Blended learning and virtual programs are offered in a variety of ways. In addition to fully blended and fully online schools, students across the country may have access to single-district online programs, state-supported supplemental options or multi-district consortia. These three models of online programs are run by individual school districts or the state and are generally structured to provide online courses as a supplement to instruction provided in a traditional school setting.[89]

Blended learning no longer exists as only a supplement or choice in some states. Since 2006, online learning is a graduation requirement in Michigan, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Idaho and Virginia, and Georgia, Minnesota, New Mexico and West Virginia recommend that students experience online learning before they graduate.[90]

85 A "fully blended" school is defined as a stand-alone school where much of the curriculum is delivered online and attendance is required at a physical location that utilizes a personalized, data-driven approach to meeting students' needs. See "Keeping Pace with K-12 Online and Blended Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice (2013)," Evergreen Education Group, p. 18, accessed June 20, 2014, *http://kpk12.com/cms/wp-content/uploads/EEG_KP2013-lr.pdf*.
86 Ibid. 20.
87 "Fully online" schools or "virtual schools" do not require students to attend a physical location to access the curriculum. Ibid. 16.
88 Ibid. 22.
89 Ibid, 16-17.

90 "Fast Facts About Online Learning," International Association for K-12 Online Learning, accessed June 20, 2014, *http://www.inacol.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/iNACOL-Fast-Facts-About-Online-Learning-October-2013.pdf*.

Career and technical education

Career and technical education programs throughout the United States have evolved significantly in the last several years. High quality career and technical education programs have proven successful in preventing students from dropping out of high school, improving career prospects for students and better preparing students for 21st century career pathways in industries like healthcare or other STEM fields.[91]

91 "CTE: Education for a Strong Economy," Association for Career and Technical Education, accessed June 20, 2014, *https://www.acteonline.org/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=1908*.

State context

As of 2013, over 22,000 high school students participated in career and technical education programs throughout the state. Ninety-six percent of these students graduated from high school and 84 percent met performance goals for technical skills.[92]

92 "Rhode Island Fact Sheet," Association for Career and Technical Education, accessed May 1, 2015, *https://www.acteonline.org/rhodeisland/#.VUO1sq1Viko*.

In today's ever-changing job sector, more and more experts are concerned about the skills gap in the career fields that are growing most. In Rhode Island, 76 percent of IT employers expect to expand their businesses in the next three to five years.[93] While private sector employment dropped four percent overall in the last decade in Rhode Island, bioscience employment grew by 24 percent and pharmaceutical manufacturing more than doubled.[94] But there aren't enough students graduating from high school with the necessary skills to fill these jobs. As we noted above, for every unemployed person in Rhode Island, 2.4 STEM-based jobs go unfilled. Quality career and technical education programs can help bridge this gap.

Recognizing the growing need for high quality career and technical education programs, RIDE adopted new regulations in 2012 clarifying, among other things, the roles and responsibilities of RIDE and local education agencies, quality assurance measures and program standards.[95] In addition to drafting new regulations, the Rhode Island General Assembly committed $3 million to career and technical education programs in the 2013 budget. However, only 10 percent of this appropriation was targeted at programs specializing in IT, healthcare and pre-engineering programs.[96]

To further improve collaboration and outcomes in career and technical education, the General Assembly passed legislation in 2014 establishing the Rhode Island Career and Technical Board of Trustees and the Rhode Island Career and Technical Education Trust. The Board of Trustees will ensure collaboration across secondary and higher education institutions and advise the Board of Education. The Trust is responsible for developing student learning opportunities through employer partnerships, advising the Board of Trustees and fundraising.[97]

National context

Career and technical education programs provide the core academic skills, employability and job-specific technical skills that ensure students are prepared for college or careers immediately after high school. Programs nationwide are offered anywhere from middle school to post-secondary school and prepare students to obtain industry-recognized credentials, post-secondary certificates and two- and four-year degrees.

In schools with highly integrated academic and career and technical programs, students demonstrate higher achievement in math, reading and science than their counterparts in schools that don't have integrated programs. In addition, students who have participated in career

93 "Why IT Works: Identifying Employer Needs, Talent Gaps, & Strategies to Grow a Stronger Information Technology Workforce in Rhode Island," Tech Collective, p. 2, accessed June 20, 2014, *http://www.tech-collective.org/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=324&Itemid=100*.

94 "Bioscience: Identifying Employer Needs, Talent Gaps, & Strategies to Grow a Stronger Bioscience Workforce in Rhode Island," Tech Collective, p. 5, accessed June 20, 2014, *http://www.tech-collective.org/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=346&Itemid=100*.

95 "Regulations of the Board of Regents Governing Career and Technical Education in Rhode Island," Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, accessed June 20, 2014, *http://sos.ri.gov/documents/archives/regdocs/released/pdf/DESE/6665.pdf*.

96 "Rhode to Work: A Legislative Action Plan, January 2014," The Rhode Island Senate Policy Office, p. 13, accessed June 20, 2014, *http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Reports/Rhode%20to%20Work.pdf*.

97 R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 16-45.1-1, 16-45.1-2, available at *http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/*; see also, "Raimondo Takes Steps to Prioritize Workforce Development, Build Skills for 21st Century Economy," The State of Rhode Island, *http://www.ri.gov/press/view/24092*.

and technical education programs are more likely to report that they developed key problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.[98]

The state funding formula

An equitable, high-quality public school system requires an equitable state funding formula. Experts agree that the best funding formulas share several features. The formula should be simple and transparent; the formula should be student-centered, attaching funds directly to students and allowing those funds to follow students to the public schools they attend; and the formula should account for differences in student need.[99] The best funding systems also give districts flexibility by minimizing the number of categorical (restricted) funding programs.[100]

State context

Between 1995 and 2010, Rhode Island did not have a state funding formula.[101] Districts were funded via budget line items and past or existing funding levels served as the basis for new appropriations.[102] Changes in district enrollment were not accounted for (i.e., no enrollment-based funding adjustments were made between 2004 and 2010),[103] nor were other demographic differences across districts.

In 2010, the General Assembly passed into law a new weighted, student-centered funding formula. The formula allocates a core instructional amount to districts for each enrolled student and allocates an additional amount for each low-income student. Once a district's total funding amount is established, the formula determines the portion of this amount that will be covered by the state and the portion that will be covered by the district (districts with higher wealth must cover a greater portion of their total funding amount). The state also offers categorical funding to districts for a limited number of programs and expenses such as extraordinary special education costs, start up and maintenance of career and technical education programs and expansion of early childhood education programs.[104]

As the formula has been phased in, most districts have seen an increase in state revenue, while some have seen a decrease. The formula will be fully implemented by FY2017 for districts receiving more revenue and by FY2020 for those receiving less.[105] Under the new formula, 79 percent of students will attend schools in districts that receive more state aid than they did prior to 2011.[106]

98 "What is career and technical education?" Association for Career and Technical Education, accessed June 20, 2014, *https://www.acteonline.org/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=1918*.

99 Martin West, "Fund the Student: A Plan to Fix Rhode Island's Broken Public School Finance System," Public Impact (2009), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://publicimpact.com/publications/Fund_the_Student_Rhode_Island.pdf*.

100 Joanna Smith et al., "Categorical Funds: The Intersection of School Finance and Governance," Center for American Progress (2013), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/CategoricalSpending1-brief-4.pdf*.

101 Lesli A. Maxwell, "New R.I. School Funding Formula Aims at Equity," Education Week (July 19, 2010), accessed June 2, 2015. *http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/07/19/37formula.h29.html*.

102 Michael Griffith, "State Education Funding Formulas and Grade Weighting," Education Commission of the States (2005), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/59/81/5981.pdf*.

103 "Funding Formula Frequently Asked Questions—Updated April 2011," Rhode Island Department of Education (April 2011), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Funding-and-Finance-Wise-Investments/Funding-Sources/State-Education-Aid-Funding-Formula/FAQ-Updated-42011.pdf*.

104 "Funding Formula Summary," Rhode Island Department of Education (2010), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Funding-and-Finance-Wise-Investments/Funding-Sources/State-Education-Aid-Funding-Formula/Funding-Formula-Summary-2-19-11-version.pdf*.

105 Ibid.

106 "A Funding Formula for Rhode Island," Rhode Island Department of Education, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Funding-and-Finance-Wise-Investments/Funding-Sources/State-Education-Aid-Funding-Formula/Formula-Presentation.pdf*.

The new funding formula is simple, transparent and equitable. Funding is tied directly to student enrollment, with districts and public charter schools receiving per-pupil dollars only for the students they serve. It also affords significant flexibility to districts, tying most aid to students instead of categorical programs. In fact, as of 2013, Rhode Island provides the most funding flexibility of any state in the nation, allocating the lowest percentage of its education budget to categorical funding (e.g., programs for specific groups of students or class-size reduction efforts).[107]

As Rhode Island continues striving toward a fully equitable funding system, adjustments to the formula may be required. The state's Unified Chart of Accounts will track how expenditures vary across local education agencies and give lawmakers the opportunity to adjust the formula accordingly to ensure maximum equitability.

National context

Most states use a "foundation formula" to distribute education aid to districts.[108] This model establishes a minimum per-pupil funding amount for each district, requires districts to raise a portion of those funds through local taxes and provides the remaining balance from the state. Many formulas include an "equalization" component that sends more state dollars to districts with lower taxable wealth. In addition, almost every state weights its per-pupil funding by student characteristics such as income level, disability status and English-language learner status, thereby providing extra funds to districts based on their demographic make up.[109] States also establish separate pools of categorical funding that districts may access, although the number of categorical programs varies by state.

School facilities

Students spend more time in schools than in any other building outside of their homes. Good facilities not only keep kids and teachers safe and healthy, they help establish strong teaching and learning environments that allow students to thrive academically.[110] Studies have shown that attendance rates are higher in schools with better facilities,[111] and research has drawn a direct link between school facility investments and higher test scores.[112] While systems and space may change to support learning in and out of the classroom, facilities will continue to play a vital role in education.

To ensure our students are doing their best, every child needs access to a high-quality learning environment.

107 "Categorical Funds: The Intersection of School Finance and Governance."

108 Thirty-seven states and the District of Columbia used a foundation formula during the 2008–2009 school year. Amy M. Hightower, Hajime Mitani and Christopher B. Swanson, "State Policies That Pay: A Survey of School Finance Policies and Outcomes," Editorial Projects in Education, Inc. (2010), p. 5, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.mikemcmahon.info/StateFundingStudy10.pdf*.

109 "State Policies That Pay: A Survey of School Finance Policies and Outcomes," p. 7.

110 "FY 2013 Public Schoolhouse Assessment," Rhode Island Department of Education, p. 9, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Funding-and-Finance-Wise-Investments/School-Facilities/School-Construction-Program/FINAL-SCHOOLHOUSE-REPORT.pdf*.

111 Valkiria Duran-Narucki, "School Building Condition, School Attendance and Academic Achievement in New York City Public Schools: A Mediation Model," Journal of Environmental Psychology 28 (2008): 278-286.

112 Christopher Neilson and Seth Zimmerman, "The Effect of School Construction on Test Scores, School Enrollment, and Home Prices," Institute for the Study of Labor, Discussion Paper No. 6106 (2011), accessed June 2, 2015 *http://ftp.iza.org/dp6106.pdf*. Also see Stephanie Riegg Cellini, Fernando Ferreira and Jesse Rothstein, "The Value of School Facility Investments: Evidence from a Dynamic Regression Discontinuity Design," The Quarterly Journal of Economics 125 (2010): 215-261, p. 252, accessed June 2, 2015, *http://real.wharton.upenn.edu/~fferreir/documents/qjec.2010.125.1.pdf*.

State context

Rhode Island established a school housing aid program in 1960. The state reimburses districts and public charter schools for a portion of construction and renovation costs after the project is complete. Districts receive reimbursement rates between 35 and 92.7 percent depending on district wealth, while public charter schools are reimbursed at a flat rate of 30 percent regardless of local wealth.[113]

In 2013, the RI Department of Education reported that only one-quarter of district schools were in "good" condition and estimated the cost of bringing every school building up to this standard at $1.8 billion.[114] The housing aid reimbursement process itself poses several obstacles for districts and public charter schools. For example, districts and charters must finance the full cost of facilities projects before the state will provide reimbursement. For districts, this often means soliciting voter approval for municipal bond measures, a political and sometimes difficult task. Public charter schools have an even harder time acquiring bonded debt, as they lack municipal bonding authority and are often seen as a risky investment for funders due to their five-year reauthorization cycle. Many charter schools must lease their space, and leases are generally ineligible for housing aid reimbursement. Due to concerns about the cost of the program, the General Assembly placed a moratorium on school housing aid expenditures in 2011.

In 2015, Governor Raimondo proposed and signed into law the creation of a new School Building Authority (SBA) within the Department of Education to oversee the school housing aid program. A new advisory board to the SBA is charged with establishing standards for school design and construction; creating a priority list for projects; promulgating regulations for applications to the new SBA capital fund; creating investment priorities for the SBA capital fund; and recommending programs to reduce borrowing by increasing use of capital reserve funds, revolving loan funds and grant programs. The moratorium on school facilities aid was also lifted in 2015.

National context

School districts often struggle to meet their facilities needs. Deferred investment in public school maintenance and renewal projects totaled $271 billion nationally as of 2008, or about $5,400 per student, not including construction costs for new school buildings.[115] In 2013, the American Society of Civil Engineers rated America's school facilities a D-plus.[116]

113 R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-7-35.

114 "FY 2013 Public Schoolhouse Assessment," pp. 15 and 72.

115 "Repair for Success: An Analysis of the Need and Possibilities for a Federal Investment in PK-12 School Maintenance and Repair," 21st Century School Fund (2009), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.bestfacilities.org/best-home/docuploads/pub/211_PreK-12MaintenanceRepairRenewalInvestment_21CSF(3).pdf*.

116 "2013 Report Card for America's Infrastructure: Schools," American Society of Civil Engineers (2013), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/a/#p/schools/overview*.

Public charter schools face unique barriers to facilities acquisition and upkeep. Because they cannot levy taxes or ask local voters to approve a bond, charter schools often cover facilities costs with per-pupil dollars or rely on special state programs that promote capital access, although these programs are not available in every state. A recent survey found that two-thirds of public charter schools lease, rather than own, their current facility,[117] and another survey found that 56 percent are located in facilities that will be inadequate for projected enrollment in five years.[118]

States offer various forms of facilities aid to districts and charter schools. Using data from the mid-2000s, a recent report found that the average state covers about 30 percent of capital outlays for school construction and land and building acquisition, although some states, like Massachusetts, cover 100 percent.[119] Depending on the state, funding is made available through pay-as-you-build reimbursement, after-the-fact reimbursement, direct grants, loans and/or credit enhancement.

117 "Survey of America's Charter Schools 2014," The Center for Education Reform (2014), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.edreform.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2014CharterSchoolSurveyFINAL.pdf*.

118 "Public Charter School Facilities: Results from the NAPCS National Charter School Survey, School Year 2011–2012," National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2012), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.publiccharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Public-Charter-School-Facilities-National-Survey-Findings_20130905T164026.pdf*.

119 "State Capital Spending on PK-12 School Facilities," 21st Century School Fund (2010), accessed June 2, 2015, *http://www.21csf.org/csf-home/Documents/FederalStateSpendingNov2010/StateCapitalSpendingPK-12SchoolFacilitiesReportNov302010.pdf*.

About RI-CAN

We founded RI-CAN because all children deserve access to great public schools, regardless of their address, the color of their skin or how much their parents earn. This work has never been more critical in Rhode Island, as our kids face persistent opportunity gaps and our state struggles to redefine itself in a 21st century economy.

The time for change is now.

To bring that change to fruition, RI-CAN runs issue-based policy campaigns that seek to improve state education policy through a combination of top-notch research, policy analysis, advocacy and communications. We will work to bring Rhode Islanders information they can use to make better decisions for their children, advocate for change in their communities and ultimately transform public schools throughout our state.

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