

Social Policy Hub for Equity Research in Education (SPHERE)



RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

Rhode Island's Education Policy

AtmoSPHERE

September 2020

Although this year has been a challenging one, we are really proud of what we have been able to accomplish. **I want to start by thanking you for your support** and for your positive feedback about the policy primer that we released. We have been receiving messages and phone calls from stakeholders throughout the state (and even across the country!) who have taken an interest in this work. If you haven't read it yet, please [check it out here!](#)

We are very excited to welcome Dr. Corinne McKamey, SPHERE's newest faculty fellow for 2020-2021. Dr. McKamey is the Associate Professor of Culture, Communities and Education in the Department of Educational Studies, and a founding co-director of the RIC Youth Development B.A. Program. Her research has focused on youth work, qualitative research, and the ways marginalized young people talk about educational care, science/engineering, and sex education. Dr. McKamey's current research examines conditions that attract and retain students of color within an undergraduate community education program. To learn more about our newest faculty fellow, as well as other important people at SPHERE, [click](#)

[here](#).

Finally, we encourage you to follow our new Twitter account [@SPHERE_RIC](#). We cannot wait to share more updates about SPHERE's work, and help to amplify the work of our education policy friends and partners from across the state.



State Legislative Updates

The COVID-19 pandemic put a halt to much of the work in the legislature last spring. The critical task of passing the 2021 Fiscal Year state budget is on hold until after the November election.

Teacher Certification Updates

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) made revisions to teacher certification requirements. The changes affect certification in special education, deaf and hard of hearing, English as a second language, and fast-track principal requirements. RIDE also expanded teacher certification reciprocity to include 15 states and the District of Columbia. The final version of the regulations can be viewed [here](#).



School Accountability

The U.S. Department of Education allowed states to cancel assessments and other school accountability measures for the 2019-2020 school year, but it has not provided that opportunity for this upcoming school year. During the 2020-2021 school year, RIDE expects to resume measuring student performance on assessments. RIDE will continue collecting graduation, suspension, diploma plus, and English Language proficiency data. RIDE expects to report on student and teacher absenteeism, but will remove absenteeism as an accountability measure, so as not to pressure students or educators to attend school if they are feeling unwell.

Federal Legislation Updates

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has extended its free summer meal program into the fall months. This ensures that children have access to nutritious food as the country recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, along with eliminating a massive administration burden for school nutrition staff. This extension brings much relief to schools. Learn more [here](#).

Under the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER Fund), the U.S. Department of Education awarded grants to governors for the purpose of providing local educational agencies (LEAs), institutions of higher education (IHEs), and other education related entities with emergency assistance as a result

of COVID-19. Rhode Island was granted \$8,704,245. The state considered expanding funds to directly support impacted students with college persistence and completion during COVID-19. For K-12, the state considered using funds to support remote learning through professional development for educators, resources to improve summer learning efforts, and best practices to address the social-emotional needs of students, staff, and families. View Rhode Island's application for GEER funding [here](#).

Finally, on May 12, 2020, The Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act, or the HEROES Act, was introduced. This bill was a response to the COVID-19 outbreak and its impact on the economy, public health, state and local governments, individuals, and businesses. This bill was passed by the House, but has not yet been passed by the Senate. HEROES is important for education because it provides \$915 billion in emergency funding for state and local governments, which are facing budget shortfalls that could lead to mass teacher layoffs and deep cuts to public education. Learn more about the HEROES Act [here](#).

Upcoming Events

- [HousingWorks RI Fact Book Release, October 16](#)
- [Organizing Dispositions for Educational Leadership Conference, October 22-24](#)
- [Lights on Afterschool, October 22](#)



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