

Social Policy Hub for Equity Research in Education (SPHERE)



RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

Rhode Island's Education Policy

AtmoSPHERE

November 2020

We love opportunities to get the word out about our primer and help Rhode Islanders understand the ins and outs of education policy. At each presentation, educators and community members ask questions that challenge us to think deeply about how things work in the Ocean State, reflect on what information we currently provide, and how we can expand to meet the needs of our Rhode Island community. Our most recent opportunity came on Thursday, November 19, during the Providence Teachers Union's (PTU) Racial Justice Committee meeting. The committee hosted a presentation and discussion with SPHERE Director Dr. Adrienne Goss focusing on Rhode Island education policy. We look forward to more opportunities to partner with organizations across the state to advance our mission to conduct and disseminate education and social policy research. To stay current on all of SPHERE's events, follow our Twitter account [@SPHERE_RIC](#).



SPHERE's Latest Research Project: SCOREcard

Researchers from Rhode Island College are collaborating with the Center for Youth & Community Leadership in Education (CYCLE), at Roger Williams University, and Parents Leading for Educational Equity (PLEE) on the Schools & Communities Organizing for Racial Equity (SCORE) project. SCORE is a collaborative, action-oriented research project that will bring together an intergenerational community design team consisting of youth currently attending a school within the Providence Public Schools District and parent leaders from PLEE. Researchers from RIC will study the development of the project, including how teams of parents and youth work together to develop equity indicators, and how they advocate for their use in the district. Our hope is that by carefully documenting this process, similar projects can take place in other districts throughout Rhode Island and across the country. To learn more about our partner, CYCLE, and to stay up to date on the project, click [here](#).

Rhode Island General Assembly News

Senator Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) will be appointed chairperson of the Senate Committee on Education for the 2021-2022 session. The Senate Committee on Education is responsible for all legislation and matters relating to student performance, governance, programming, teacher preparation, and planning as well as the work and operation of all state agencies regarding all levels of education, make findings, and recommend policy initiatives and other actions to the General Assembly. Senator Cano will become the first Latina committee chairperson in the Senate's history. During her tenure in the legislature, Senator Cano has focused extensively on educational issues, such as her sponsorship of legislation mandating financial literacy be taught to students and her membership on the Senate Education Funding Formula task force. To read the full article, click [here](#).

Representatives Blake Filippi (R-District 36) and David Place (R-District 47) introduced [House Bill 8145](#), Education Savings Accounts—School Choice In-Person Learning. This bill establishes an education savings account program during a declaration of a health care emergency by the governor. Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs) allow parents to use a portion of the funding that would otherwise have been spent on their child's public education, and then apply those funds to a school of their choice or other educational services. Currently, five states in the U. S. have active ESA programs. The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare.

RIDE Updates

RIDE's new strategic plan prioritizes, in descending order, equity, excellence in learning, engaged communities, world class talent, and governance structures. The equity priority notes that education systems have a responsibility to identify and dismantle the root causes of educational inequity so that all students regardless of

race, language, socioeconomic status, ability, or other identities have access to equitable opportunities. RIDE has a goal that by June 2021, 100% of RIDE teams will use the Equity Decision Making Tool as a consistent, explicit step in formal decision-making practices as measured by a staff survey and leader observations. Excellence in learning would mean all students are able to learn and grow. It is the job of educators systemwide to provide tools, opportunities and environments that support student learning and the development of the whole child. RIDE's goal for this priority is that by July 2025, 75% of students will achieve proficiency in reading, math and science, as measured by the RICAS assessment.

The 2019 Education Accountability Act establishes the District Accountability System, which includes three-year strategic planning, annual state assessment planning, annual improvement plans, and a monitoring system. RIDE aims to establish clear expectations for growth and improvement that include all students across the district, use the data to develop three-year district improvement plans, annual action plans, and RICAS success plans that put students first to drive improvement, leverage funds and resources to support strategic actions articulated within the various improvement plans, and monitor district progress and performance towards targeted areas of growth and improvement for all students and student groups, including multilingual learners and differently-abled students. District accountability will provide transparent and accessible information about an entire district's performance and will use the same business rules as the school accountability model. The calculations, points allocated to each indicator, and rules for determining the star ratings will all be the same. RIDE will then use the star ratings to align the levels of support provided to districts. LEAs with a single school will receive district star ratings, just like LEAs with multiple schools. Charter schools will also now be required to align strategic planning efforts to the new three-year strategic plan standard. This accountability system will begin with pilot districts this year. The pilot districts will provide feedback on the use of the RI DataHub and the suite of services offered as RIDE supports. The release of the District Accountability with Star Ratings is expected in Fall 2021.

The next meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education is December 8, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

Federal Policy: Potential Changes in Education with the Biden Administration

President-elect Biden's administration has promised to drastically increase resources for public schools, expand civil rights advocacy for marginalized students, and reassert department leadership in policymaking. Additionally, Biden has promised to bolster funding for special education, institute universal pre-kindergarten, and triple funding for a federal program that helps schools serving high concentrations of students from low-income families, devoting some of that funding to teacher salaries. In higher education, Biden has promised free public college, expanding federal financial aid, and canceling some student debt.

The Biden administration plans to restore Obama-era civil rights guidance that allowed transgender students to choose their school bathrooms, addressed the disproportionate disciplining of Black students, and pressed for diversity in colleges and K-12 classrooms. These guidance documents will be able to be restored immediately because they were not put through the regulatory process or enacted into law. Biden has promised to focus on the public schools that educate the vast majority of U.S. schoolchildren and to take steps to address the inequity that has long existed in the education system.



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