

## Social Policy Hub for Equity Research in Education (SPHERE)

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RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

*Rhode Island's Education Policy*

# AtmoSPHERE

October 2020

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SPHERE is busily advancing its mission to work in partnership with community members to disseminate research for equitable educational and social policies. On Thursday, October 15, Parents Leading for Educational Equity (PLEE) hosted a presentation for Rhode Island parents and community members. The presentation, “Let’s Talk Education Policy in RI,” featured SPHERE Director Adrienne Goss. Dr. Goss organized the presentation around four guiding questions: Why are schools inequitable? Do assessments improve learning? Are charter schools the answer to underperforming districts? Why is it so hard to recruit and retain teachers of color? The presentation concluded with a lengthy question and answer session addressing some of the information in our [2020 Rhode Island Education Policy Primer](#) as well as more specific questions about a range of topics including supporting teachers, special education, teacher union contracts, and school funding. To stay current on all of SPHERE’s events, follow our Twitter account [@SPHERE\\_RIC](#).

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## **RIDE Updates**

The United States Department of Education **Charter School Programs** awarded funding to RIDE for EnrollRI, a new online platform for parents to research, apply, and enroll their children in charter schools. There were over 20,000 applicants to charter schools for the 2020-2021 school year with only a little under 2,000 spots available. RIDE has received eight proposals requesting to serve more than 6,000 children, which is the largest number of applications they have seen in recent years. The review process is currently underway with external evaluators reviewing the proposals.

Achievement First Rhode Island, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College and Segue Institute for Learning have applied to expand the number of students served in their charter schools. New charter schools applying include Excel Academy Rhode Island, Medical Preparatory Academy of Rhode Island, Nuestro Mundo Public Charter School, Providence Preparatory Charter School, and Wangari Maathai Community School. Public comment on charter school expansion and applications continues until December 1. RIDE anticipates making recommendations to the Council in December.

The Rhode Island Department of Education announced their creation of the **RIDE Educators of Color Committee**. This committee's mission is to “create structural changes to eliminate disparities and uphold our core values of Anti-Racism, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Empowerment, and the Health and Safety of all students, families, educators and staff.” In order to show their commitment to addressing racism at each level (internalized, interpersonal, institutional and systemic), the committee has created subcommittees that will be responsible for upholding their mission, vision and core values. For more information, click [here](#).

## In Case You Missed It

**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT** recently released a report on [Practices Supporting Student-Centered Learning in Rhode Island: Youth, Family, and Community-Based Approaches to Equity in Education](#). The report emphasizes the importance of centering the voices of youth and families in education policy. It features some of the policy wins of several Rhode Island youth-led organizations, and the benefits of youth participatory action research. Look closely and you'll find a footnote referencing SPHERE's work, too!

**The Rhode Island Public Expenditures Council (RIPEC)** analyzed the key aspects of elementary and secondary educational experiences in Rhode Island during the pandemic, considering historical and national trends as well as educational best practices as determined by current research and academic studies. RIPEC notes that in-person instruction generally results in better student outcomes and the school districts offering the most in-person instruction are in higher-income suburban and rural communities, while urban schools in lower-income communities are among those offering the least in-person instruction. According to academic studies and RIDE's own guidance, distance learning is best when delivered as a combination of synchronous and asynchronous instruction. If possible, educational leaders should seek to modify distance learning methods to better align with best practices. RIPEC

suggests that policymakers should require a statewide accounting to identify any gaps in student access to technology and should ensure that every student has access to a suitable device and broadband. Finally, RIPEC states that because of our system of local control and our lack of common curriculum, Rhode Island, despite its small size, was largely unable to take advantage of efficiencies of delivering effective distance learning instruction across school districts and once this pandemic is over, there needs to be a larger discussion as to whether this current model delivers the best outcomes for all students. To read the full report, click [here](#).

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## Upcoming Events

Are the Kids Really Alright? The Nellie Mae Foundation is hosting this virtual conversation with community and school leaders across New England about school reopening. [Learn more here](#).



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