

FUND FOR RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC EDUCATION

2023 Year in Review



RHODE ISLAND
FOUNDATION

2023

In December 2019, Angélica Infante-Green, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE), announced the establishment of the Fund for Rhode Island Public Education (RIPE) at the Rhode Island Foundation to accept donations from individuals, corporations and foundations interested in improving PK–12 public education statewide and support initiatives that benefit the education of public school students in Rhode Island. This Fund is an important avenue through which Rhode Islanders, and beyond can contribute to and join efforts to improve our schools and support every student statewide. When our students are positioned to excel in college, careers, and in life, our economy and our state are stronger. RIDE’s continued priorities—**World-Class Talent, Excellence in Learning, and Engaged Communities**—drive the work of the department and continue to inform the focus of the RIPE fund.

World Class Talent

World Class Talent is a priority for the state with the aim to create conditions that value educators and leaders, support a teaching force that reflects the rich diversity of Rhode Island, and promotes student success. Educators are professionals who need support to continuously develop skills and knowledge relevant to the students they teach.

In the 2023 SurveyWorks survey, 56% of teachers indicated that their school has been supportive of their growth as a teacher; 73% of administrators indicated that their district has been supportive of their growth. 43% of teachers also indicated that they had access to quality professional growth and learning opportunities. SurveyWorks is a statewide school culture and climate survey that solicits feedback from educators, students, and families about strengths and challenges in their school communities.

Since its inception the RIPE fund has supported efforts around planning and professional development related to personal finance courses, ongoing efforts in the development of an online program for culturally responsive education and equity, and capacity support for RIDE's District Support Program. Additionally, RIDE Educators of Color Committee, made up of Rhode Island educators, with a mission 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 has received support.

RIPE efforts are complementary to the additional support RIDE is providing to find and support world-class talent in the state. In October, RIDE launched Educate401.org, an online recruitment and resource hub for current and prospective educators. The website highlights the best of Rhode Island and offers a clear and user-friendly certification roadmap that guides aspiring teachers through the process of becoming certified educators in Rhode Island. The department also worked with Providence Public Schools to provide more professional learning opportunities and incentives to retain and attract teachers, including an \$8,000 reimbursement for English as a Second Language (ESL) certification. Approximately 500 teachers have received their ESL certification through this program.

RIDE also established a free, comprehensive preparation program to help teacher candidates pass Praxis tests, which is a step towards teacher certification in Rhode Island. The free program, developed in partnership with University Instructors, supports participants with Praxis preparation offerings worth an estimated \$1,000 and aims to ease the financial burden on educators and address the teacher shortage impacting Rhode Island and the nation.

Excellence in Learning

Excellence in Learning is exemplified by providing tools, opportunities, and environments that support student learning and the development of the whole child.

In the 2023 SurveyWorks survey, 79% of students in grades 6-12 noted that it is important to do well in their courses, and only 54% felt that what they are learning in school will be useful to them in the future. And even fewer students (29%) indicated they found the things they learned in class to be interesting. Additionally, 59% of students in grades 6-12 felt that their teachers hold them to high expectations around effort, understanding, persistence, and performance in class, and 63% said that their teachers encourage them to do their best.

In an effort to address the challenges noted above, RIPE continues to focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and

Math (STEM) in the elementary grades and implementation support for new graduation requirements. Specifically, RIPE has supported the following projects:

- **STEM endorsement pilot**—Rhode Island College, in collaboration with RIDE, created a year-long professional learning opportunity in Integrated STEM. This work will expand educator knowledge of STEM related standards for the grade level, build elementary teacher confidence and understanding of fundamental STEM concepts, and integrate STEM instruction that augments the high-quality curricular materials in use.
- **High School Regulations**—As part of the implementation support for the new high school regulations, RIDE has partnered with ABL to provide high schools with on-demand support to help reimagine the high school schedule.

Excellence in Learning

Other RIDE initiatives focused on Excellence in Learning include:

- **Outdoor classrooms**—RIDE awarded \$7.5M in grants for districts to create, enhance, and support access to natural resources for all students in the form of outdoor classrooms or schoolyard habitats. The Learning Inside Out Outdoor Classroom Initiative promotes environmental literacy and community connection, as well as addresses problems such as inequitable access to the outdoors, habitat loss and degradation, and climate change.
- **All Course Network (ACN)**—This program offers enrichment and credit-bearing opportunities for PreK-12 students outside of the traditional school day. ACN enrollment has more than quadrupled since the 2016 school year, serving nearly 4,000 students in more than 8,200 learning experiences.
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE)**—Schools now offer nearly 300 RIDE-approved CTE programs, a 91% increase since the 2015-2016 school year, with the number of students graduating with a CTE industry-recognized credential has nearly doubled since the 2016 school year.
- **W.E.L.L. Initiative (Wellness in Education Leads to Learning)**—a \$3M initiative to support the development of wellness spaces in schools statewide and provide funds for accompanying professional development and programming. The design of these spaces allows students and staff to experience a quiet atmosphere and have a chance to decompress. The initiative comes as education systems nationwide reimagine education and school facilities to meet the holistic needs of students in the wake of the pandemic.

Engaged Communities

Engaged communities refers to student-centered decisions and policies being made by those closest to the student - family, community members, school administrators, and teachers.

In the 2023 SurveyWorks survey, 75% of students in grades 3-5 and 46% of students in grades 6-12 reported that there is a strong social connection between teachers and students within and beyond the school. Sixty-nine percent of parents indicated that their school values the diversity of children's backgrounds.

- **Participatory Budgeting**—Brown University, in partnership with Providence Public Schools, piloted a participatory budgeting process that gave 8th grade students at Nathanael Green Middle School the opportunity to decide how funding should be used to improve Providence Public Schools. Students identified field trips and access to student internships and/or career preparation programs should be supported with these funds.
- **SMART Student Health and Wellness Model**—Nationally recognized SMART clinics are operational at three schools in the Providence Public School District – Roger Williams Middle School, Mt. Pleasant High School, and George J. West Elementary School.

Additional initiatives RIDE is leading related to the Engaged Communities strategy include:

- **Attendance Matters RI** – With this focus on improving attendance statewide, RIDE has launched the Attendance Matters RI campaign, which will inform stakeholders of the importance of daily attendance and the consequences of chronic absenteeism and energize students, families, and educators to promote good attendance. Recognizing the importance of this all-state approach, Rhode Island businesses are stepping up to encourage and reward student attendance. From exclusive coupons to special privileges, businesses such as Geoff's Superlative Sandwiches, Wright's Creamery, Knead Doughnuts, and Burger King have signed on to spread the message about attendance and promote good attendance habits.
- **Social-emotional learning**—RIDE awarded \$4.8 million in federal subgrants to establish strategies and carry out activities that will help increase students' sense of belonging and safety. Twelve districts will use funds for a variety of efforts, including expanding social-emotional learning and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) projects.

DONORS

We are grateful for every donor who has contributed to this fund. We have been able to build a foundation for funding as RIDE implements a six-year strategic plan that reflects the Chart a Course, Stay the Course, and Commissioner’s vision. We are thankful to all the donors who contributed in 2023. The Fund for RI Public Education has raised over \$7.5M since inception for both undesignated and designated programming.

A special thank you to our donors in 2023:

Brown University

Papitto Opportunity
Connection