





Rhode Island LEAP TASK FORCE

February 9, 2021

**RHODE
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The Learning, Equity & Accelerated Pathways (LEAP)

Task Force

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RIDE Mission and Vision

RIDE Mission

The mission of the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) is threefold:

1. To lead and support local education agencies (LEAs), schools, and communities through a unified, strategic direction for education in the state.
2. To use policy, advocacy, and governance structures to create an environment that advances opportunities for all students.
3. To maintain collaboration and efficiency in the department that enables innovation, agility, and continuous learning.

RIDE Vision

RIDE creates conditions for every Rhode Island student to think critically and collaboratively, and act as a creative, self-motivated, culturally and globally competent learner. Rhode Island students are prepared to lead fulfilling and productive lives, succeed in academic and employment settings, and contribute meaningfully to society.

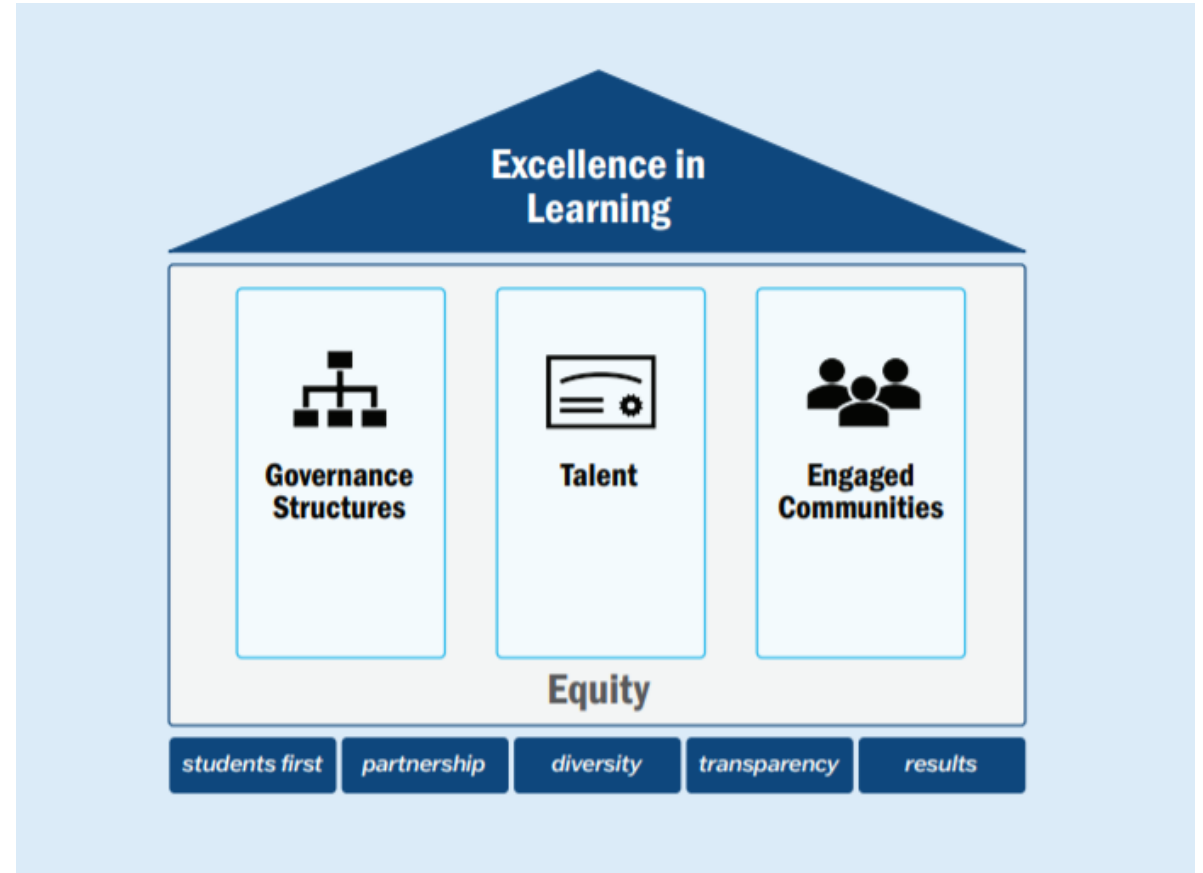
RIDE Priorities

Guiding its mission and vision are the following priorities:

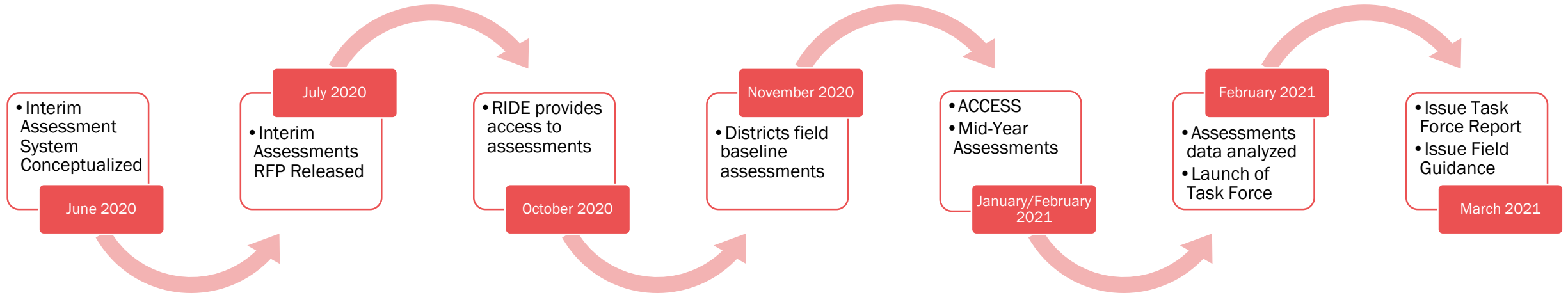
- **Equity**
- **Excellence in Learning**
- **Engaged Communities**
- World Class Talent
- Governance Structures

In prioritizing “Equity, Excellence in Learning, Engaged Communities” in particular, RIDE is committed to providing support and resources that allow every LEA to meet the needs of all students with input from stakeholders.

View commitments aligned to each priority [here](#).



RIDE Learning Recovery Strategic Timeline



Rhode Island LEAP Task Force Approach

The Learning, Equity & Accelerated Pathways (LEAP) Task Force is engaged in a participatory, evidence-informed, data-driven process to understand statewide learning loss in partnership with practitioners, parents, students, community leaders, experts and a variety of stakeholders across the State of Rhode Island. RIDE will use this process to develop recommendations that inform strategy (short- and long-term) and align resources to achieve coherence.

Rhode Island LEAP Task Force Goals

GOALS

- Assess the conditions of “learning loss” in the schools and communities across Rhode Island
- Analyze Rhode Island specific academic and non-academic data
 - Interim assessments, demographic and descriptive data, disaggregated student groups, etc.
 - Summer and expanded learning
- Identify areas of focus and engage with national experts in each of those areas
- Identify research-based, high leverage strategies for addressing identified root causes and establish strategic focus for “learning loss” in Rhode Island
- Provide field guidance and align stimulus funding to instructional priorities driven by the data.

Rhode Island LEAP Task Force Membership

In composing the Task Force, RIDE took a “big tent” approach, looking to the field for expertise and knowledge. Additionally, there will be two rounds of feedback with the Commissioner's RI Student Council and the Commissioner's RI Educators of Color Committee.

Membership includes:

- Teachers
- Principals
- Superintendents
- School Board Members
- Labor
- Parent Voices
- Community Stakeholders
- Advocacy Organizations
- Nonprofit Organizations
- Elected Officials
- Postsecondary Education
- Academia
- Local and National Subject Matter Experts



Rhode Island LEAP Task Force Cadence

Over the next 30 days, a committee of practitioners, community members, advocates, and educational experts will engage in a substantive solutions-finding process to identify the highest leverage strategies for a state-wide approach to learning recovery, and help the state set its learning recovery agenda.

Cadence	Purpose	Topics Addressed
Feb. 11	Task Force Launch Session	Keynote from the 10 th U.S. Secretary of Education John King, Jr.
Feb. 16	Understanding Root Causes	Academic and non-academic data along with key analytic insights
Feb. 23	Drawing Upon National Expertise	Expanded learning opportunities (E.g., summer, tutoring, etc.) – Dr. Jennifer McCombs, RAND
Mar. 2	Drawing Upon National Expertise	Meeting needs equitably + serving diverse populations (MLL, DAS and SEL) – Dr. Marc Brackett, Yale University
Mar. 9	Drawing Upon National Expertise	Thinking through a whole-of-system response via an equity lens – Dr. Kenneth Wong, Dr. Pedro Noguera and Prof. Paul Reville
Mar. 16	Recommendations	Deliver draft recommendations of task force to the Commissioner

REVERSING PANDEMIC-CAUSED STUDENT LEARNING LOSSES

27 January 2021

To ensure that all students have a chance to succeed, it is urgent to slow, stop, and reverse the loss in educational attainment and social-emotional development caused by COVID-19. To address these critical needs, an ad hoc group of school superintendents, teacher unions, school committees, and others have joined hands to propose program goals, objectives, and a framework.

Members of the group – which includes the Rhode Island School Superintendents' Association, the Rhode Island Association of School Committees, the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals, the National Education Association of Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Foundation, and the Hassenfeld Institute for Public Leadership – believe the highest priority must be given to a multifaceted program to curb the loss and accelerate student learning. The group looks forward to working with all stakeholders, including parents and students, to address this critical matter.

A) SUMMARY OF PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A comprehensive Rhode Island student “catch-up” program should include both short- and long-term strategies that address students' academic, physical, social, and emotional needs. This plan should:

- 1) Focus primarily on the critical concepts in Literacy and Mathematics, aligned to appropriate grade level standards, that are foundational to continued learning. Reading at grade level by the third grade, and Elementary and Transition grades (e.g. 6, 8, and 9) should be prioritized. There should also be an emphasis on social-emotional development that has been impeded by school disruptions as a result of COVID-19;
- 2) Recognize the importance of school and district decision-making and implementation, consistent with high statewide standards;
- 3) Include plans for financial and other incentives to encourage participation and family support;
- 4) Scale up existing Summer Academy for Interactive Learning (SAIL) programs;
- 5) Partner with community resources to address students' social and emotional needs throughout the summer of 2021 and beyond;

- 6) Align during-, before- and after-school, as well as summer school “ramp-up” and “catch-up” opportunities and coordinate efforts of school- and community-based partners (see Full-Service Community Schools models);
- 7) Include guidelines and recommendations for program design and implementation, based on research and best practices, to assist districts and schools in their design and implementation;
- 8) Provide 100 percent state funding of either pass-through federal coronavirus aid or own-source state revenues;
- 9) While continually documenting learning losses in Rhode Island schools, build the initial program with the assumption of a one-year learning loss; and
- 10) Emphasize in-person student interventions as Rhode Island implements its vaccination strategy and other COVID-19 mitigations.

B) PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

- 1) The framework should focus on the need for catch-up and ramp-up in Literacy and Mathematics in Elementary School and Transition grades (third grade reading, 6, 8, and 9);
- 2) It should tell the story of meeting the social, emotional, and physical needs of students;
- 3) It should be comprehensive and year-round, inclusive of the entire school year (including during-, before- and after-school) and summer school; and
- 4) It should include recommendations, guidelines, and examples to support district- and school-based decision-making regarding design and implementation of support programs. Guidelines for program development could include the following recommendations:
 - Identify students in need of Literacy and Mathematics support through teacher-made assessments, interim assessments, statewide assessments, and more.
 - Identify key grade level standards and benchmarks to guide goal setting, academic program-setting, and instruction.
 - Identify and purchase curriculum materials aligned with key content standards for use in during-, before-, and after-school programs as well as summer learning opportunities.

- Restructure in-school learning time to focus more on Literacy and Mathematics, such as longer subject blocks or short-term ramp-up courses.
- Coordinate between before- and after-school ramp-up programs and in-school programs to extend learning opportunities, while ensuring that all programming is focused on key standards.
- Identify current programs and additional community programs and partners that could be coordinated to support ramp-up programs (see Full-Service Community Schools models).
- Identify teachers and teacher assistants interested in providing before-, after- and summer school instruction, while hiring additional teachers as necessary.
- Provide professional development for in-school and before-, after- and summer school programs to ensure common understanding of key standards and effective strategies in closing learning gaps in Literacy and Mathematics.

C) NEXT STEPS

1) Demonstrating Need

Rhode Island-specific data on pandemic-driven learning loss is not readily available. This should not cause a delay in implementing a student catch-up program. Based on national research, it is reasonable to assume a one-year learning loss. McKinsey & Company found that students, on average, could lose five-to-nine months of learning by the end of school year 2020-21. Students of color could lose six-to-twelve months and white students four-to-eight months.

Working with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and others, each district should further document the impact of the pandemic on student educational outcomes in Mathematics, Literacy, and social-emotional pathologies. With RIDE's assistance, this step can be addressed by district administrators working with principals, teacher unions, parents, and school improvement teams.

2) Building a Consensus on Programs

Building on existing local initiatives, each district, along with RIDE, should identify evidence-based learning programs that can serve as prototypes to improve student outcomes during the summer of 2021 and beyond. While we see this as a

multi-year, year-round effort, this summer presents a unique opportunity to make progress on this critical objective. A recent RAND analysis of 43 summer programs suggests that 75% were effective in improving outcomes in reading.

In creating plans, school districts should work with all stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers, teacher union representatives, and school committee members to consider the following:

- Identify the best pathway to help students catch up over the summer, during vacation periods, and throughout the school year.
- Review the plan with all stakeholders to get their input. Parental, student (as appropriate), community, and business inputs will be critical.
- Discuss with district operations managers and building administrators the logistics, availability, access, and viability of site utilization during vacations and before and after school periods.
- Explore the efficacy of working with other municipal and community partners to expand summer programs beyond the academic component to include physical, social, and cultural-arts activities to promote physical, social, and emotional well-being.

3) Financing at Scale

A significant investment will be required to develop and implement a comprehensive program to make up for pandemic-related student learning losses that is aligned with both state standards and local curriculum. For example, it is estimated that 25 hours of targeted instruction for a group of 8-12 students for six months of additional learning over two weeks of vacation academies would cost \$1,600 per student per year. Summer programs will not be sufficient to reverse pandemic-related student learning losses alone. Therefore, a strategically coordinated, year-round system of academic, social, and emotional supports for students is strongly recommended. The following steps should be taken:

- Prepare an estimated budget assuming the program will be 100 percent federal and state funded, factoring in costs for on-site meals and transportation, including staffing.
- Work with the General Assembly and RIDE (since federal funds may pass through RIDE) to identify options.

- Require schools and school districts to develop a budget demonstrating the amount and use of federal and state COVID relief needed to implement a system of supports and interventions.

4) Public Engagement

Stakeholders need to buy in to the need to expand learning opportunities due to pandemic-related learning losses experienced by students. To understand public attitudes and concerns, we should consider the following:

- Organize two or three focus groups.
- Plan town meetings with district administrations, union leaders, and school staff.
- Commence discussions with decision makers in the General Assembly and RIDE, as well as with the Governor.
- Seek input and buy-in from stakeholders currently not involved in the discussion including parents, student groups, non-certified employees, school principals, mayors, and municipal councils.