

# About the Task Force and Its Work

## **A1** Task Force Participants and Advisors

The following people supported the work of the Task Force by participating at its meetings, serving on its focus-area working groups, or providing background research.

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## National Advisory Panel to the Task Force

The following nationally recognized education experts met with and advised the Task Force on current trends in education and on their particular areas of expertise.

Dr. Barnett Berry  
*President and CEO*  
Center for Teaching Quality  
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Dr. Jesse Register  
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Paul Reville  
*Secretary of Education*  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Boston, Massachusetts

## **A2** Task Force Meetings and Events

The following list includes the formal meetings to which the full Task Force was invited. It does not include meetings of the subcommittees or working groups, each of which met three to ten times over the course of eighteen months.

### **2008**

January 31	Full Task Force Meeting
March 28	Full Task Force Meeting
June 25	Full Task Force Meeting
September 30	Full Task Force Meeting
October 4	Community Forum
November 6	Community-Based Organizations Leaders Meeting
November 13	Full Task Force Meeting
December 20	Report on Preliminary Recommendations

### **2009**

January 30	Full Task Force Meeting
March 4	Educator Quality Mini-Conference
March 16	Expanded Learning Time Mini-Conference
March 23	Site Visit, Umana Middle School Academy, East Boston
March 27	Full Task Force Meeting
March 28	Woonsocket Community Forum
April 2	Educator Quality Mini-Conference
April 18	Latino Forum
April 30	Educators' Forum

May 13	Newport Community Forum
May 15	Full Task Force Meeting
June 5	Multiple Pathways Mini-Conference
June 15	Expanded Learning Time Mini-Conference
July 29	Full Task Force Meeting
October 7	Educator Quality Mini-Conference
October 27	Report on Final Recommendations

## **B1** Profile for Rhode Island and the Core City Districts

### Student Population Indicators

- **Child Population** – 247,822 children under age 18 lived in Rhode Island in 2000, 91,945 of whom lived in the core cities.\*
- **Pre-K to 12 Enrollment** – 144,537 students were enrolled in Rhode Island public schools in the 2007-2008 school year, 47,964 of whom were in core city districts.
- **Children in Poverty** – In 2000, 41,162 children under age 18 were living in poverty in Rhode Island, 30,744 of whom were living in the core cities.
- **Single-Parent Families** – In 2000, 30% of Rhode Island children lived in single parent families, compared with 47% of children in the core cities.
- **English Language Learners** – There were 7,427 English Language Learners in Rhode Island public schools in the 2007-2008 school year, 5,637 of whom were in core city districts. ELL students in Rhode Island spoke more than 80 different languages in 2007-2008, the majority speaking Spanish.
- **Special Education** – There were 26,100 students with disabilities in Rhode Island in the 2007-2008 school year, 9,365 of whom were in the core cities.
- **Teen Births** – Between 2003 and 2007, there were 5,664 births to teen girls ages 15-19 living in Rhode Island, 3,950 of which were in the core cities.

\* Core cities are those with greater than 15 percent child poverty rates according to the 2000 Census. These include: Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick, and Woonsocket.

- **Student Mobility** – The Rhode Island student mobility rate for the 2007-2008 school year was 16%, compared to 26% in the core city districts.
- **Minority Enrollment** – 31% of students in Rhode Island public schools were minorities in the 2007-2008 school year, compared with 69% in core city districts.

### Education Indicators

- **Full-day Kindergarten** – 58% of Rhode Island public school kindergarteners attended full-day programs in the 2008-2009 school year, compared with 95% of kindergarteners in core city districts.
- **4th Grade Reading Skills** – 68% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Rhode Island in 2008, compared with 52% of students in the core city districts.
- **4th Grade Math Skills** – 63% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Rhode Island in 2008, compared with 45% of students in the core city districts.
- **8th Grade Reading Skills** – 65% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Rhode Island in 2008, compared with 45% of students in the core city districts.
- **8th Grade Math Skills** – 53% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Rhode Island in 2008, compared with 33% of students in the core city districts.
- **% of Seniors Taking the SATs** – 57% of Rhode Island seniors took the SATs in 2008, compared with 53% of seniors in the core city districts.
- **High School Graduation and Dropout Rates** – 74% of Rhode Island high schools students in the 2008 graduating class graduated on-time in four years and 16% of the class dropped out. The remaining 10% of students completed their GEDs within four years or

remained enrolled in high school for more than four years. In the core city districts, 61% of students graduated on-time in four years, 26% dropped out, and the remaining 13% either completed their GEDs within four years or remained enrolled in high school for more than four years.

- **Per Pupil Expenditures** – The general education per pupil annual expenditure for instruction and instructional support in Rhode Island is \$7,246.

### **Teacher Indicators**

- **Long-term Teachers** – 15% of Rhode Island teachers report being in the field of education for more than 25 years.
- **New Teachers** – 2% of Rhode Island teachers report being in the field of education for less than one year.
- **Teacher Mobility** – 29% of Rhode Island teachers report being in their current building for 3 years or less.
- **Professional Development Expenditures** – The 2008 professional development expenditure per pupil in Rhode Island was \$207.

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education and the 2009 *Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*

## **B2** District Profile for Central Falls

### Student Population Indicators

- Child Population – 5,531 children under age 18 lived in Central Falls in 2000.
- Pre-K to 12 Enrollment – 3,338 students were enrolled in Central Falls public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Children in Poverty – In 2000, 2,210 children under age 18 were living in poverty in Central Falls.
- English Language Learners – There were 728 English Language Learners in Central Falls public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Special Education – There were 793 students with disabilities in Central Falls in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Teen Births – Between 2003 and 2007, there were 338 births to teen girls ages 15-19 living in Central Falls.
- Student Mobility – The Central Falls student mobility rate for the 2007-2008 school year was 27%.

### Education Indicators

- Full-day Kindergarten – 100% of Central Falls public school kindergarteners attended full-day programs in the 2008-2009 school year.
- 4th Grade Reading Skills – 48% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Central Falls in 2008.
- 4th Grade Math Skills – 39% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Central Falls in 2008.
- 8th Grade Reading Skills – 34% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Central Falls in 2008.
- 8th Grade Math Skills – 27% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Central Falls in 2008.

- % of Seniors Taking the SATs – 38% of Central Falls seniors took the SATs in 2008.
- High School Graduation and Dropout Rates – 52% of Central Falls high schools students in the 2008 graduating class graduated on-time in four years and 29% of the class dropped out. The remaining 19% of students completed their GEDs within four years or remained enrolled in high school for more than four years.
- Per Pupil Expenditures – The general education per pupil annual expenditure for instruction and instructional support in Central Falls is \$6,065.

### Teacher Indicators

- Long-term Teachers – 16% of Central Falls teachers report being in the field of education for more than 25 years.
- New Teachers – 1% of Central Falls teachers report being in the field of education for less than one year.
- Teacher Mobility – 27% of Central Falls teachers report being in their current building for 3 years or less.
- Professional Development Expenditures – The 2008 professional development expenditure per pupil in Central Falls was \$313.

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education and the 2009 *Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*

## **B3** District Profile for Pawtucket

### Student Population Indicators

- Child Population – 18,151 children under age 18 lived in Pawtucket in 2000.
- Pre-K to 12 Enrollment – 8,530 students were enrolled in Pawtucket public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Children in Poverty – In 2000, 4,542 children under age 18 were living in poverty in Pawtucket.
- English Language Learners – There were 871 English Language Learners in Pawtucket public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Special Education – There were 1,392 students with disabilities in Pawtucket in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Teen Births – Between 2003 and 2007, there were 641 births to teen girls ages 15-19 living in Pawtucket.
- Student Mobility – The Pawtucket student mobility rate for the 2007-2008 school year was 24%.

### Education Indicators

- Full-day Kindergarten – 84% of Pawtucket public school kindergarteners attended full-day programs in the 2008-2009 school year.
- 4th Grade Reading Skills – 58% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Pawtucket in 2008.
- 4th Grade Math Skills – 50% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Pawtucket in 2008.
- 8th Grade Reading Skills – 52% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Pawtucket in 2008.
- 8th Grade Math Skills – 35% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Pawtucket in 2008.

- % of Seniors Taking the SATs – 52% of Pawtucket seniors took the SATs in 2008.
- High School Graduation and Dropout Rates – 57% of Pawtucket high schools students in the 2008 graduating class graduated on-time in four years and 26% of the class dropped out. The remaining 17% of students completed their GEDs within four years or remained enrolled in high school for more than four years.
- Per Pupil Expenditures – The general education per pupil annual expenditure for instruction and instructional support in Pawtucket is \$6,014.

### Teacher Indicators

- Long-term Teachers – 17% of Pawtucket teachers report being in the field of education for more than 25 years.
- New Teachers – 2% of Pawtucket teachers report being in the field of education for less than one year.
- Teacher Mobility – 26% of Pawtucket teachers report being in their current building for 3 years or less.
- Professional Development Expenditures – The 2008 professional development expenditure per pupil in Pawtucket was \$157.

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education and the 2009 *Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*

## **B4** District Profile for Providence

### Student Population Indicators

- Child Population – 45,277 children under age 18 lived in Providence in 2000.
- Pre-K to 12 Enrollment – 24,180 students were enrolled in Providence public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Children in Poverty – In 2000, 18,045 children under age 18 were living in poverty in Providence.
- English Language Learners – There were 3,615 English Language Learners in Providence public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Special Education – There were 4,565 students with disabilities in Providence in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Teen Births – Between 2003 and 2007, there were 2,211 births to teen girls ages 15-19 living in Providence.
- Student Mobility – The Providence student mobility rate for the 2007-2008 school year was 28%.

### Education Indicators

- Full-day Kindergarten – 100% of Providence public school kindergarteners attended full-day programs in the 2008-2009 school year.
- 4th Grade Reading Skills – 47% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Providence in 2008.
- 4th Grade Math Skills – 40% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Providence in 2008.
- 8th Grade Reading Skills – 41% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Providence in 2008.
- 8th Grade Math Skills – 28% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Providence in 2008.

- % of Seniors Taking the SATs – 57% of Providence seniors took the SATs in 2008.
- High School Graduation and Dropout Rates – 63% of Providence high schools students in the 2008 graduating class graduated on-time in four years and 26% of the class dropped out. The remaining 11% of students completed their GEDs within four years or remained enrolled in high school for more than four years.
- Per Pupil Expenditures – The general education per pupil annual expenditure for instruction and instructional support in Providence is \$6,248.

### Teacher Indicators

- Long-term Teachers – 13% of Providence teachers report being in the field of education for more than 25 years.
- New Teachers – 1% of Providence teachers report being in the field of education for less than one year.
- Teacher Mobility – 35% of Providence teachers report being in their current building for 3 years or less.
- Professional Development Expenditures – The 2008 professional development expenditure per pupil in Providence was \$544.

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education and the 2009 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook

## **B5** District Profile for Newport

### Student Population Indicators

- Child Population – 5,199 children under age 18 lived in Newport in 2000.
- Pre-K to 12 Enrollment – 2,175 students were enrolled in Newport public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Children in Poverty – In 2000, 1,267 children under age 18 were living in poverty in Newport.
- English Language Learners – There were 62 English Language Learners in Newport public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Special Education – There were 434 students with disabilities in Newport in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Teen Births – Between 2003 and 2007, there were 134 births to teen girls ages 15-19 living in Newport.
- Student Mobility – The Newport student mobility rate for the 2007-2008 school year was 22%.

### Education Indicators

- Full-day Kindergarten – 100% of Newport public school kindergarteners attended full-day programs in the 2008-2009 school year.
- 4th Grade Reading Skills – 53% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Newport in 2008.
- 4th Grade Math Skills – 54% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Newport in 2008.
- 8th Grade Reading Skills – 69% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Newport in 2008.
- 8th Grade Math Skills – 51% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Newport in 2008.

- % of Seniors Taking the SATs – 60% of Newport seniors took the SATs in 2008.
- High School Graduation and Dropout Rates – 66% of Newport high schools students in the 2008 graduating class graduated on-time in four years and 22% of the class dropped out. The remaining 12% of students completed their GEDs within four years or remained enrolled in high school for more than four years.
- Per Pupil Expenditures – The general education per pupil annual expenditure for instruction and instructional support in Newport is \$8,056.

### Teacher Indicators

- Long-term Teachers – 14% of Newport teachers report being in the field of education for more than 25 years.
- New Teachers – 1% of Newport teachers report being in the field of education for less than one year.
- Teacher Mobility – 33% of Newport teachers report being in their current building for 3 years or less.
- Professional Development Expenditures – The 2008 professional development expenditure per pupil in Newport was \$149.

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education and the 2009 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook

## **B6** District Profile for Woonsocket

### Student Population Indicators

- Child Population – 11,155 children under age 18 lived in Woonsocket in 2000.
- Pre-K to 12 Enrollment – 6,166 students were enrolled in Woonsocket public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Children in Poverty – In 2000, 3,494 children under age 18 were living in poverty in Woonsocket.
- English Language Learners – There were 275 English Language Learners in Woonsocket public schools in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Special Education – There were 1,455 students with disabilities in Woonsocket in the 2007-2008 school year.
- Teen Births – Between 2003 and 2007, there were 469 births to teen girls ages 15-19 living in Woonsocket.
- Student Mobility – The Woonsocket student mobility rate for the 2007-2008 school year was 24%.

### Education Indicators

- Full-day Kindergarten – 100% of Woonsocket public school kindergarteners attended full-day programs in the 2008-2009 school year.
- 4th Grade Reading Skills – 53% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Woonsocket in 2008.
- 4th Grade Math Skills – 48% of 4th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Woonsocket in 2008.
- 8th Grade Reading Skills – 43% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in reading in Woonsocket in 2008.
- 8th Grade Math Skills – 29% of 8th graders scored at or above proficiency in mathematics in Woonsocket in 2008.

- % of Seniors Taking the SATs – 43% of Woonsocket seniors took the SATs in 2008.
- High School Graduation and Dropout Rates – 60% of Woonsocket high schools students in the 2008 graduating class graduated on-time in four years and 28% of the class dropped out. The remaining 12% of students completed their GEDs within four years or remained enrolled in high school for more than four years.
- Per Pupil Expenditures – The general education per pupil annual expenditure for instruction and instructional support in Woonsocket is \$5,139.

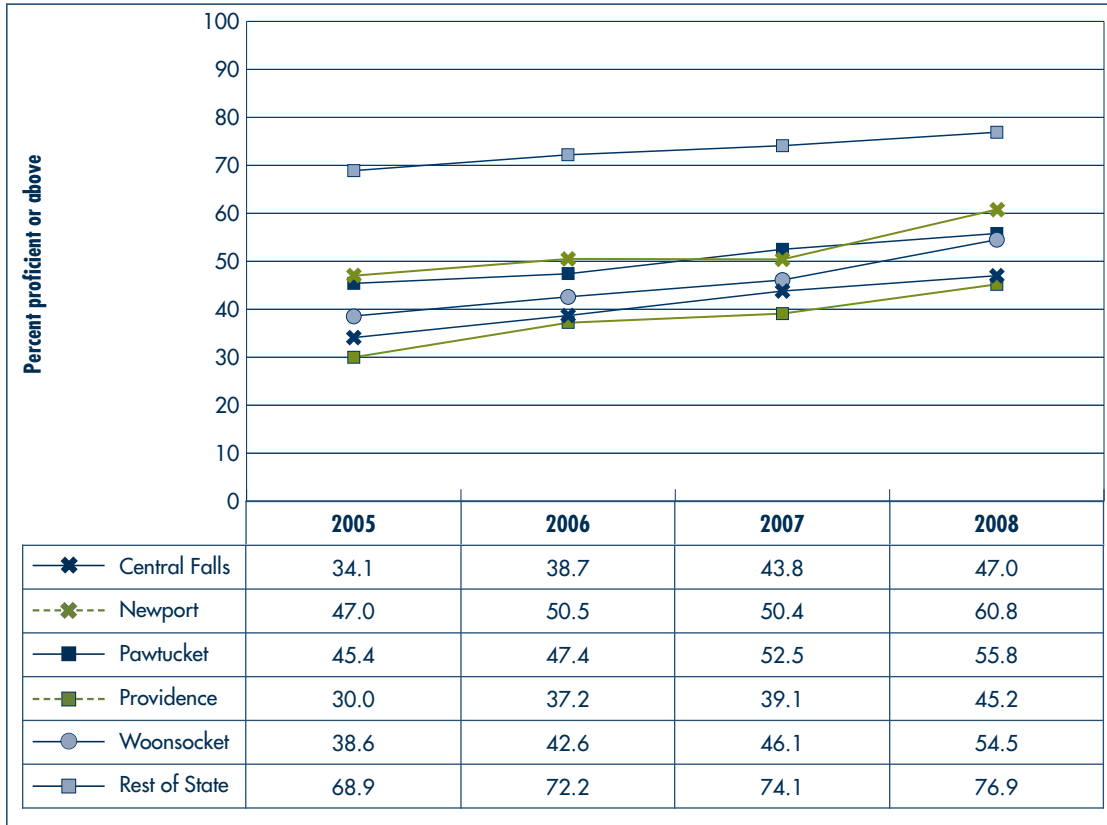
### Teacher Indicators

- Long-term Teachers – 14% of Woonsocket teachers report being in the field of education for more than 25 years.
- New Teachers – 2% of Woonsocket teachers report being in the field of education for less than one year.
- Teacher Mobility – 29% of Woonsocket teachers report being in their current building for 3 years or less.
- Professional Development Expenditures – The 2008 professional development expenditure per pupil in Woonsocket was \$309.

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education and the 2009 *Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*

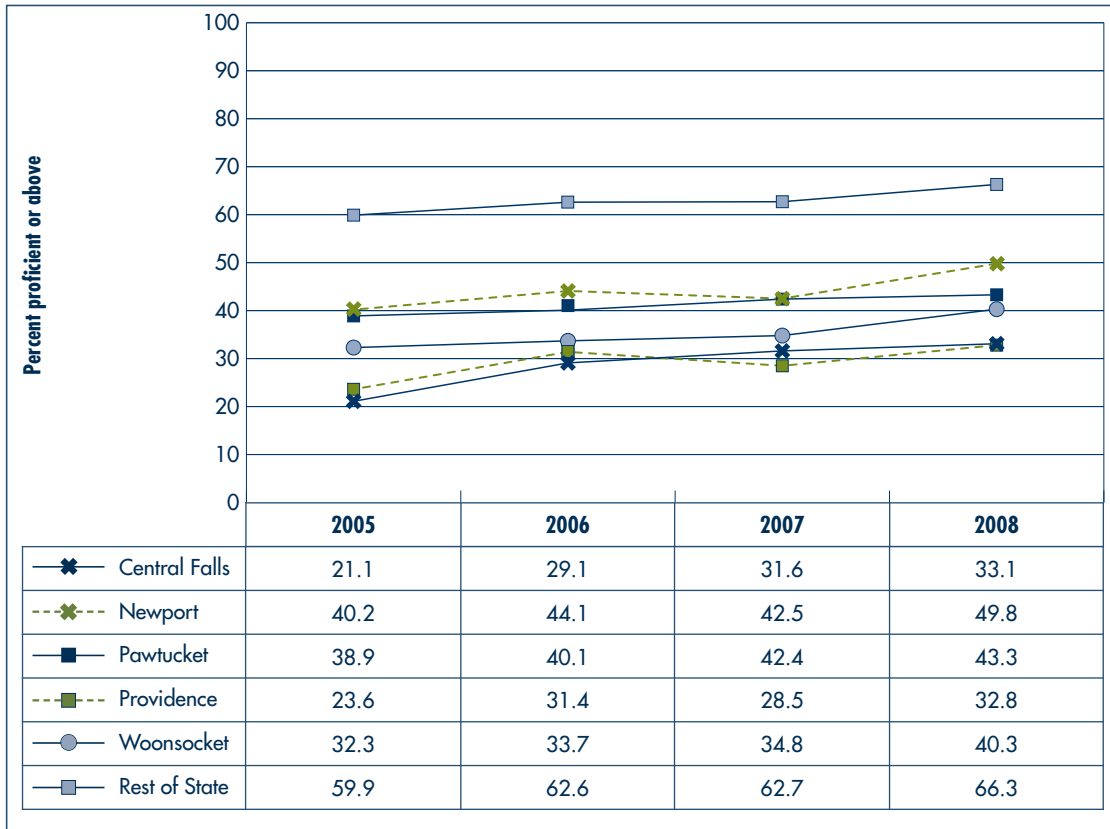
## B7 Comparative Data on the Urban Core Districts

FIGURE 1  
NECAP Results in Reading, grades 3–8



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education

FIGURE 2  
NECAP Results in Math, grades 3–8



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education

FIGURE 3  
Demographic Profile of Students in RI Urban Districts vs. State

	Central Falls	Newport	Pawtucket	Providence	Woonsocket	STATE	Proportion of State
Child Population	5,531	5,199	18,151	45,277	11,155	247,822	34.4%
Public School Enrollment	3,481	2,258	8,667	25,012	6,286	147,407	31.0%
Children on Free/Reduced Lunch	2,210	1,267	4,542	18,045	3,494	41,162	71.8%
English Language Learners	827	60	980	3,947	300	7,920	77.2%
Special Education	814	495	1,391	4,743	1,509	27,345	32.7%
Minority Enrollment	85.0%	49.0%	56.0%	88.0%	42.0%	31.0%	72.0%
Student Mobility	40.0%	31.0%	32.0%	28.0%	22.0%	18.0%	—
High School Graduation Rate	46.0%	60.0%	48.0%	58.0%	54.0%	70.0%	—
Per Pupil Expenditure	\$11,277	\$11,812	\$9,364	\$10,239	\$8,797	\$9,736	—

Source: 2008 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook

FIGURE 4

Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates for the Class of 2008 by City

Student Group	Cohort Size	Graduation Rate	Dropout Rate	% Completed GED	% Still in School
Central Falls	305	52%	29%	2%	16%
Newport	192	66%	22%	3%	9%
Pawtucket	717	57%	26%	6%	11%
Providence	2,379	63%	26%	2%	9%
Woonsocket	492	60%	28%	3%	9%
<b>All Urban* Students</b>	<b>4,385</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>All Rhode Island Students</b>	<b>13,163</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>7%</b>

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education

\*Urban districts in this analysis are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick, and Woonsocket.

FIGURE 5

Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates for the Class of 2008 by Demographic Groups

Student Subgroup (for All Urban* Districts)	Cohort Size	Graduation Rate	Dropout Rate	% Completed GED	% Still in School
Native American	38	50%	29%	3%	18%
Asian	202	66%	26%	<1%	7%
Black	855	62%	24%	2%	13%
Hispanic	1,878	61%	27%	2%	10%
White	1,412	61%	26%	5%	9%
Special Education	1,029	44%	35%	3%	18%
Regular Education	3,356	67%	23%	3%	7%
English Language Learners (ELLs)	808	56%	30%	1%	13%
Non-ELLs	3,577	63%	25%	3%	9%
Low-Income	3,598	59%	27%	3%	11%
Higher-Income	787	71%	21%	3%	5%
Female	2,220	67%	23%	3%	7%
Male	2,165	55%	29%	3%	13%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education

\*Urban districts in this analysis are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick, and Woonsocket.

## B8 Student Mobility Analysis

### STUDENT MOBILITY IN RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In February of 2009, The Providence Plan began an analysis of student mobility in Rhode Island with the support of the Urban Education Task Force Research Collaborative and funded in part by a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation. The project was conceived as a way to support and inform the work of the Urban Education Task Force, as well as to demonstrate the potential of a collaborative research body for Rhode Island's public schools.

Below are some major findings from the analysis:

#### Basic Mobility:

- The five urban core districts have much higher rates of mobility than the rest of the state, at all grade levels. The high school churning rate (a measure of mobility) during the 2007-2008 school year in the urban core was 44.8% versus 13.9% in the rest of the state.
- With the exceptions of Central Falls and Newport, school year changes *within* the five core districts are more prevalent than school moves *across* districts.

#### Mobility and Performance:

- The longer students were continuously enrolled in the same school, the better, on average, they performed on their 4<sup>th</sup> grade math and reading NECAP assessments.
- Students with late entries and/or early exits from a school between 2004 and 2008 had more suspensions in 2007-2008 than their peers with no school enrollment changes. This held true at both the middle and high school levels, and across all type of suspension incidents.
- Attendance and mobility appear to be related at all grade levels and independent of free lunch status. The more late entries and/or early exits from a school between 2004 and 2008, the lower the attendance rate during the 2007-08 school year.

#### Mobility over Time:

- Cohort stability rates in the core cities' high schools (how many students remained continuously enrolled in a *school* from grade 9 to grade 12) ranged from 23% to 79%.
- At a *district* level, Central Falls had the highest percentage of students continuously enrolled in the same *district* between grades 9 and 12 (52%) while Providence had the lowest rate (47%).
- School year stability and in-mobility rates across the core cities remained relatively stable at the elementary level throughout the past four school years. However, the in-mobility rate at the high school level (the percent of students new to a school during the year) decreased from 17% in the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years to just 9% in 2007-08.

#### English Language Learners:

- The mobility rates of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the core cities do not differ much from their non-ELL peers. However, the mobility rates of English Language learners in the non-core cities tend to be higher than their non-ELL peers.

#### Residential and School Mobility:

- Of the 6,399 school moves during the 2007-08 school year, 50% had a corresponding residential move (reported to RIDE). Approximately one-third of school moves into the core cities had a corresponding residential change versus over two-thirds of school moves into the rest of the state.
- Regardless of free lunch status, students who switched schools and are known to have changed residence performed better on 2008 NECAP assessments than those students who switched schools and did not have a reported corresponding change of address. Non school movers performed the best among the three groups.



ANALYSIS BY THE PROVIDENCE PLAN WITH SUPPORT FROM  
THE URBAN EDUCATION TASK FORCE RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

**Possible Questions for Discussion:**

- 1) What implications does this analysis hold for the implementation of Task Force recommendations?
- 2) What other data sources or research should be considered to deepen our understanding of the consequences of high student mobility?
- 3) What are effective means for sharing these findings with community and school district leaders?
- 4) What questions does this analysis raise for you that deserve further inquiry?

**Supporting documents (available upon request):**

**District mobility fact sheets:** fact sheets containing basic data on within and cross-district movement for each of the core cities.

**Mobility Summary:** PowerPoint slides displaying aggregated mobility findings.

**Cohort Stability packet:** charts displaying the count of students who remain continuously enrolled in a school from the lowest entry grade in the Fall of 2004 through the school's highest grade for every school in a core city.

**Detailed tables (disaggregation):** detailed tables of mobility indicators (churning, stability, and in-mobility) by district, core-cities, and non-core cities and disaggregated by school level, race/ethnicity, and SES.

**Residential mobility brief:** Findings from analysis of residential addresses and school moves from RIDE data warehouse for the 2007-2008 school year (first year of student address collection by RIDE).



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THE URBAN EDUCATION TASK FORCE RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

## **C1** Educators' Forum

The Rhode Island Urban Education Task Force held a forum for educators and administrators on April 30, 2009, to gather their feedback and perspectives on the preliminary recommendations of the Task Force. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform organized the forum in conjunction with the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals, the Central Falls Teachers' Union, the Pawtucket Teachers' Alliance, the Providence Teachers Union, the Woonsocket Teachers Guild, and the Providence School Department.

The forum was held at Jorge Alvarez High School in Providence. Approximately eighty educators and administrators were in attendance (the majority were teachers). Participants represented a variety of educator organizations and schools across grade levels and cities, including:

- Jorge Alvarez High School, Providence
- Robert L. Bailey Elementary School, Providence
- Calcutt Middle School, Central Falls
- Classical High School, Providence
- Flora Curtis Elementary School, Pawtucket
- Alan Shawn Feinstein School, Central Falls
- Edmund W. Flynn Elementary School, Providence
- Charles Fortes Elementary School, Providence
- Hope Highlands Elementary School, Cranston
- Joseph Jenks Junior High School, Pawtucket
- Robert F. Kennedy School, Providence
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School, Providence
- Margaret I. Robertson School, Central Falls
- Rhode Island Federation of Teachers

- Gilbert Stuart Middle School, Providence
- Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy, Providence
- Samuel Slater Junior High School, Pawtucket
- Veterans Memorial Elementary School, Central Falls
- Roger Williams Middle School, Providence
- Woonsocket High School
- Woonsocket Middle School

The forum provided an opportunity for educators to hear a presentation about the work of the Task Force, give feedback on the preliminary recommendations, and share the challenges they face in urban districts, as well as their needs. The forum also included a keynote address by American Federation of Teachers vice president Adam Urbanski and a panel made up of union leaders from Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

### **Summary of Union Leaders Panel**

Panelists were asked to address the following questions:

1. What do you see as the major challenges faced by urban districts? Give an example of something the union has done to address challenges and/or improve conditions.
2. What is one recommendation you would like the Task Force to make?

The panel identified several challenges around working conditions. Teachers do their best in spite of the physical deterioration of buildings and lack of books and basic school supplies; this year, teachers had to spend their stipend for extra materials to buy paper. They have technology, but the old buildings can't support it.

The panelists put forth several recommendations for the Task Force, including a three-year mentoring program for new teachers and teachers at risk; professional development for

principals; and involving teachers in designing professional development. They suggested that instead of focusing on creating better teachers, it would be more productive to have a concept of creating a more attractive teaching position that would treat teachers as professionals.

## Summary of Small-Group Discussions

Small-group discussions then focused on the following questions:

1. What are your challenges and needs as an urban educator?
2. Which recommendations that you heard today resonate with you? What's missing? What should be added?

## Challenges and Needs

Educators cited many challenges around the following themes.

**Curriculum development and changes** Participants pointed to a “lack of coherence, vigor, and relevance in curriculum,” the lack of a coordinated curriculum, and a misalignment between the curriculum and assessment.

**Unions and management** Teachers mentioned that there is a lack of teacher voice on many levels: in the administration, in professional development, and in their own classrooms. They reported that there is “too much top-down management” and expressed frustration that “opinions are not valued – there is a fear of repercussions.”

**School culture and climate** Teachers mentioned an “absence of trust and collaboration among students, teachers, administrators, and parents.” Poor communication between these parties was also cited. “Lack of student motivation” and “little support from parents” are seen as issues.

**Societal issues that impact urban schools** Issues mentioned include poverty, mobility, poor nutrition, and lack of medical care.

**Deteriorating physical plant of schools** Teachers mentioned leaky ceilings, cracked masonry, and inadequate ventilation, as well as outdated technology and inadequate facilities.

**Early childhood students** Teachers of these students face challenges that include students coming into kindergarten who are not ready to learn and not enough emphasis on preschool programs. Kindergarten teachers reported a lack of respect.

**Other challenges** Among those mentioned were a lack of financial resources and issues of equity – across gender, special needs, and between urban and suburban students.

**Corresponding needs** Areas mentioned included materials and physical plant, curriculum, union/management, parent engagement, and professional development. Calls were made for more supplies, a consistent curriculum, more teacher voice in establishing programs that work, better parent engagement, and “model” professional development.

## Priorities

Several of the Task Force recommendations resonated with the educators. Priorities within the recommendations included: Expanded Learning Time, Multiple Pathways, and Statewide Pre-K. K–3 Literacy and Innovation Zone were also mentioned.

## Expanded Learning Time

- Expanded learning time: pre-K, summer school, enrichment, pre-school
- Tailored to the needs and interests of each child
- Enrichment activities
- Engaged by community members and parents as well as teachers
- For those who need it, not all, to maximize time, equity, quality – different, not more of the same

## Multiple Pathways

- Multiple pathways that take student interest into account when developing and administering curriculum
- Schools for overage/under-credited students
- Programs other than college bound
- Alternative programs for chronically disruptive students

## Statewide Pre-K

- Mandatory pre-school for three- and four-year-olds
- Pre-K for all students, especially for urban districts with equitable funding

Other priorities mentioned not in reference to the recommendations included paying attention to English language learners, creating the capacity to compete with charter schools, and equal treatment between schools.

## What's Missing and What Should Be Added

Participants also identified what they felt was missing in the Task Force preliminary report and recommendations. The biggest thing seen as missing is a fair funding formula and resources to implement the recommendations of the Task Force.

In the discussion around the Educator Performance Management System, they reported a lack of teacher voice (including librarians, nurses, and teachers) and specific criteria in the recommendations around labor management discussions. There was also a request that when working with new reforms to “give new ideas time to work: do not judge us on an idea that has just started.”

Also missing was a reference to the physical plant and learning environments of the schools and a way to address deteriorating buildings.

In terms of curriculum, there should be an emphasis on math, science, and technology. The importance of smaller class size was also mentioned. There was a suggestion that “early literacy and numeracy need to be tied together and to provide services in both from Pre-K to 3.”

Parent involvement and parent/teacher communication were also seen as missing. Participants mentioned the need for “parental accountability in the form of volunteerism, involvement in school functions, etc.” Additionally, there should be a “connection to community: teachers should know the students, parents, issues of family and gain adult buy-in.”

## Final Thoughts and Evaluations

Overall, the educators and administrators who attended the forum expressed satisfaction with having a forum to share and discuss their challenges and needs in the urban school districts. Evaluations collected rated overall effectiveness of the forum at 4 to 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being excellent. Participants reported that the most effective part of the forum was the table discussions and the opportunity to share with their colleagues. Several reported that they would have liked even more time for table discussions. Others reported a realization that “they are not alone” and that it was “eye opening to hear others are experiencing the same challenges as our district.”

The evaluations also reflected a desire for the Task Force to help teachers with implementing the recommendations. “Please give urban teachers more opportunities for input and please give us help in implementing recommendations.” Some respondents offered some further recommendations for the Task Force particularly around being sure to include teacher voice. “It is wise for them [the Task Force] to seek feedback from the people in the

trenches.” “Value the expertise of teachers! Let us in on curriculum and professional development choices! We are the ones that know what the kids need.”

In terms of the funding issue, comments included: “Urge the Governor to insist on a fair funding formula, since so many aspects of the recommendations can be addressed with proper funding.” “Good ideas without adequate resources mean nothing!”

Finally, the teachers requested proper follow-up from the forum. With regard to teacher voice: “ Will the teacher voice requested today be heard? How will we know? What follow-up will there be?” They also would like to included in the future work: “Continue the conversation – keep teachers involved as they are ultimately the force of change.” “Thanks for listening.”

*Summary compiled by Ina Anderson, Rhode Island Young Professionals and public engagement consultant*

## C2 Community Perspectives

A series of forums to elicit community feedback and perspectives on the preliminary recommendations of the Task Force were held between October 2008 and May 2009 (see figure below).

The following summaries reflect community input across the community forums in reference to each of the task force recommendations. The recommendations that elicited the most responses were Multiple Pathways, Educator Performance Management System, Expanded Learning Time, and Cross-System Collaborations. The recommendations for statewide Pre-K, K–3 Literacy, and an Innovation Zone received fewer comments; those brief comments are also reflected in this summary.

There were numerous responses from the forums that referred to issues that the community would like the Task Force to pay attention to that are not related to the preliminary recommendations. These are summarized in the section “Other Perspectives” below.

## Comments on the Task Force Recommendations

### Educator Performance Management System

Comments regarding this recommendation revolved around issues regarding teachers, including teacher performance and evaluation, accountability, and professional development. There was a call for “vested engagement by teachers.” Participants also spoke to the barriers and challenges faced by the urban districts. These included socio-cultural factors such as poverty and diversity, as well as concerns about the physical conditions of schools. A desire for trust on the part of teachers, students, and administrators was expressed.

**Performance and Evaluation** Implement better teacher selection and evaluation with a consistent statewide education performance management system; reward effective teachers and hold all teachers across the system accountable; reward good teachers within the pay structure and consider merit pay and changes in teacher

### UETF Public Engagement Meetings

October 4, 2008	Coming Together to Build Better Schools: Urban Education for the 21st Century	Providence	150 parents, youth, community members and leaders, and civic leaders
November 6, 2008	Community Leaders Meeting	Providence	50 community-based organization leaders
March 28, 2009	Woonsocket Community Forum	Woonsocket	25 parents, youth, and community and civic leaders
April 18, 2009	Latinos Coming Together to Build Better Schools: Urban Education for the 21st Century	Providence	60 Latino and other parents, youth, community members and leaders, and civic leaders
May 13, 2009	Newport Community Forum	Newport	50 parents, youth, and community and civic leaders

contracts; make sure teachers aren't discouraging high expectations; define criteria for measuring teacher performance.

Some teachers work more than others, [doing more than what is required of them] and they get the same salary as teachers that are not as effective. Some teachers have a lack of passion for teaching. They are protected by unions; sometimes they hurt as much as teach students.

**Professional Development** Teachers should meet the skills and needs of current students and show a willingness to adapt; there should be diversity training for teachers and staff and incentives for teacher professional development around language instruction (vouchers); a systemwide teacher mentoring network should be set up to help implement new curriculum.

### Multiple Pathways

Participants responded positively to this recommendation. A desire was expressed for students to have school-to-world connections outside of the typical school structure. Multiple Pathways were also viewed as a way to address discipline issues and dropout rates. Reform around Multiple Pathways should be student-centered and all avenues of opportunity should be open to all students.

**School-to-world connections for students** There need to be pathways and opportunities to connect school work with the outer world of jobs, college, and skills, including opportunities other than college bound programs and expanded career pathways to adult learning and higher education.

**Discipline and students at risk** Provide alternative programs for the chronically disruptive, with less focus on suspension as discipline, more programs for over-age/under-credited students, and a recognition of different learning types of students to avoid mislabeling; pay more attention to students' opinions and make use of peer intervention.

### Cross-System Collaborations

Participants responded that communication and cooperation are essential for Cross-System Collaborations. Collaborations must be "systemic and multi-level" in order to "move beyond programmatic changes."

**Cooperation** Find commonalities among successful schools, increase cooperation between school and the state and interagency collaboration, and increase school-to-business and community partnerships. "We are not maximizing the resources that business can provide."

Address barriers to cross-system collaborations such as the disconnect between schools and the district, territorial politics and school boards, and lack of data collection tools and technology in the classrooms.

**Communication** An integrated plan is needed to increase communication and information exchange in schools and among the all urban communities.

Another perspective from Adam Urbanski, keynote speaker at the Educators' Forum: "We need to do better, particularly now with globalization and technology. No single constituency can do it alone. Collaboration is a prerequisite for change, a precondition. Collaboration means working together for the same common denominator."

### Expanded Learning Time

Responses to this recommendation refer to the quality of ELT activities and suggestions for those activities. Forum participants noted that there are currently too few after-school programs. It was also mentioned that community-based organizations are "doing good after-school work" and connections can be made between schools and CBOs. Questions arose

about whether or not ELT would be mandatory and part of graduation requirements, and whether or not teachers would be paid overtime.

**Goals of ELT** Define the premise and implications of the extended day. Students need quality education, not just to be kept in school longer.

**Activities** Involve internships, pay older students to tutor younger kids, include arts, music, dance, theater, and electives.

### K–3 Literacy Instruction

Participants expressed concerns about student readiness to learn. There was recognition of barriers to early literacy, including second-language barriers, social and home issues, and school absences. It was suggested that “early literacy and numeracy need to be tied together.”

### Pre-K

Participants responded that pre-K should be a priority within the Task Force and that it should be statewide and mandatory.

### Innovation Zone

Participants responded positively to this recommendation. Suggestions included creating a clearing house for sharing ideas and best practices and creating the capacity for innovations and leadership at the building level.

### Other Perspectives

There was a wide range of comments from participants that did not specifically relate to the recommendations of the Task Force. The themes of parent and community engagement, school climate, trust, and communication were prevalent across all of the forums. In addition, the question of funding and resources was consistently raised. There was also a set of comments referring to systemic issues at the district level around curriculum and graduation requirements.

### Parent and Community Engagement and Involvement

Participants in the community forums mentioned parent engagement and involvement as a top issue for them in the schools. This was one of the themes that emerged most consistently across the forums. Specifically, there were calls for “cultivating strong parent involvement” in the schools for better student outcomes. A desire was expressed for principals to be “flexible and open to interact with parents and teachers and students.” There was mention of “cultivating a welcoming and engaging culture for parents.” One participant shared a vision where “parents are called regularly with student updates and the timing of parent conferences works for all parents. Schools are welcoming and language accessible. Parents can easily volunteer in schools.” Another suggested that “principals be evaluated on parental engagement and that there are consequences.”

**Communication** Better communication is needed between the community and the school.” Provide more information to parents about what they can do to contribute. “Parents should be viewed as stakeholders in a company and be briefed throughout the year by school and district staff. Meetings should be staggered to allow parents with tight schedules attendance options.” Create ways for teachers to reach out to parents.

**Student-parent connection** If the students are going to be involved, the parents should also be engaged. Regular parent conferences should be available and schools should try to provide a more welcoming and hospitable environment, in which parents are comfortable. Parents should motivate their children to do better.

Children were treated better when parents were involved. “The school should offer its facilities to parents and families when school is not in session.”

### Training and Empowerment for Families

Participants also said it was important to create “pathways for parents to become part of the fabric of their children’s education.” One participant remarked that “we need systems to improve parent and family engagement.” The need was expressed for empowering parents to engage at the school level so that parents can reinforce what is happening in schools and vice versa, and more support and training for parents to support their kids and help them engage with schools.

### Communication and Trust

Participants identified a need for greater communication between schools, principals, teachers, parents, and the community. They also called for communication to be more consistent and in the proper language of the parents. A request was made to “make sure mailings home from school are in the correct language.” There were also calls for activities that allow parents and teachers to interact and provide access to teacher and high school leaders, as well as greater accessibility to principals for parents. Suggestions included regular emails, phone calls, and even door-to-door organizing of parents and home visits.

**Ongoing conversation** Convene an honest conversation; keep having conversations like these forums.

**Trust** Set a table of trust: “When we get together to know who is there to help and who has a resource to provide, we can create trust.” Hold trust-building workshops.

**Respectful communication** “Engage parents based on their cultural and language competencies”; address language barriers in communication. “Parents need centers, places and interpreters, so they can learn about the school system, and the forms they need to fill out.” “At schools there are not translators for Spanish-speaking parents, and the ones that do have them . . . the parents feel the translators are talking down to them.”

### State–District Responsibility

There were many issues brought up which have deep systemic roots and cannot be addressed without participation from the state and the district.

**Politics** Several comments argued that politics has come to dominate education policies and must be curbed. There was a call for “good leadership and less politics” and to “focus on the necessities of our students and not pay attention to what our politicians say.”

**More equitable funding and resource allocation** “Address inequalities both within urban districts and between suburban schools.” Highest need should have the most funding. Equitable statewide educational funding formula is needed with better allocation of resources. More money is needed. “Funding fuels all!” Students need more financial support: “Equal access to SATs in terms of cost”; “the college financial support system is not well known.”

**Equity** High standards, equal access, and equal engagement for all. Equalize race, class, and social differences; equal rights for special needs kids.

**Diversity** Increase number of minority teachers and administrators in schools through state or district policy: “hire within urban” and “diversify teachers to reflect the community.” Invest in urban educators, have minority representation.

## Curriculum and Standards

Participants agreed that schools need to raise the bar and move to a curriculum that is more challenging, both in breadth and depth, and to ensure that the curriculum is taught in challenging and hands-on ways that are relevant to young people's lives and future careers.

## School Climate and Culture

Comments addressed changing the school culture to be more welcoming for students and making the schools a positive learning environment that would "celebrate success" and "believe in our kids." Suggestions include: "make children feel valued," "changing apathetic culture," and "create a student-first culture."

**Violence** "Increase true safety in school and between students outside of school."

**Respect** A need for people to understand and respect the culture of the schools. "Culture is academic and social and can include community, parents youth, CBOs and youth workers, school classroom, district, teachers."

**Student-first culture** Promote and foster student and youth voice.

**Accountability** Create a culture of accountability. A "lack of 'It takes a village' mentality" was cited.

## Relationships with Adults

There were several comments on the issue of current relationships between teachers and students. Many dealt with creating trust and honesty. Others pointed out that teachers need to discuss with the students the "why" of schooling: "talk to our children about what they need and how they view school." The most resounding theme was to have a secure channel of communication between the two constituencies.

Each student needs an adult they can trust and have positive contact with, caring adults with positive attitudes and higher expectations, and good communication between adults and students.

## Summary of Other Perspectives

Top issues mentioned were funding and parent engagement. There were many references to school culture, trust, communication, and meaningful relationships between students and adults. There was also significant mention of issues around equity and diversity.

Overall, a desire for action was expressed: "More action and less talk!" Finally, participants in the forums wondered, "What are the action steps that are going to be taken? What's the follow-up and how?"

*Summary prepared by Ina Anderson, Rhode Island Young Professionals and public engagement consultant, and Nick Vockerodt, graduate student, Urban Education Policy Program, Brown University*