

R H O D E I S L A N D

Urban Education Task Force



The Rhode Island Young Professionals
An Auxiliary of the Urban League of Rhode Island



Coming Together to Build Better Schools: Urban Education for the 21st Century

Uniéndonos para Construir Mejores Escuelas:
Educación Urbana para el Siglo Veintiuno

Central High School
October 4, 2008

Goals for Today

- Explain the goals and emerging thinking of the UETF
- Share our synthesis of urban education solutions and issues defined by students, teachers, families, and community shareholders
- Hear from national and local experts
- Hear from you
- Chart next steps

Charge to the Task Force

- To develop specific recommendations for consideration by the Governor and the General Assembly
 - Identify effective state support and intervention strategies;
 - Strengthen collaboration opportunities among our urban schools and districts as well as between state agencies and organizations; and
 - Create new relationships and partnerships to support our most challenged schools.

Task Force Subcommittees

- Youth, Educator, and Community Engagement
- Human Capital Development
- System Innovation

Initial Priorities: Human Capital Development

- Describe the effective urban teacher.
- Develop incentives and policies to attract and retain effective teachers.
- Develop and target supports to address needs of struggling and high performing teachers.
- Strengthen the link between teacher evaluation, best practice, and student performance.
- Reinvent and consolidate certain human resource functions across all five districts.

Initial Priorities: System Innovation

- Implement an expanded learning time initiative similar to the one in Massachusetts.
- Focus on early literacy.
- Involve teachers and the community in the development and alignment of the instructional core (curriculum and instruction, assessment, and professional development).
- Develop an innovation zone that would include schools in all five districts.

Initial Priorities: Public Engagement

- Inform public.
- Gain insight from a wide group of stakeholders.
- Get feedback on recommendations as they emerge.
- Work with partners to mobilize community support.

Synthesis of Past Community Engagement Efforts

■ Sources:

- District Wide Student Government
- READY Study Circles
- Student Success Initiative
- Mental Health & Wellness Initiative
- Focus groups with students in alternative placements
- Young Voices

Major Themes

- Learning & Development
- Relationships & Respect
- Facilities & Resources
- Information & Communication

Learning & Development - Issues

- Limited access to rigorous coursework and relevant learning experiences
- Instruction is seldom dynamic and often teachers are unprepared
- Students and families have little opportunity for input, lack leadership roles in schools
- Not enough community partnerships
- Student supports are limited and hard to get at

Learning & Development - Solutions

- Increase the number of advanced courses, hands-on experiences, and links to real life
- Ensure teachers teach in different ways and are always prepared
- Increase student and family leadership in schools
- Increase community partnerships for learning and after school opportunities
- Improve student supports for academic, social, emotional, and basic needs
- Develop a K-12 pathways for learning

Relationships & Respect - Issues

- Poor Student-Teacher-Family relationships
- Schools are not welcoming
- Cultural and language-based misunderstandings negatively impact relationships and learning
- Oppositional environments in schools cause student disengagement
- Expectations are unclear and discipline inconsistent

Relationships & Respect - Solutions

- Establish school-wide practices and events celebrating successes and talents.
- Create opportunities for students and faculty to get to know each other outside the classroom.
- Enhance cultural and language competence of staff.
- Create multi-lingual receptions at school entrances.
- Increase opportunities for families to contribute to school communities.
- Only suspend students for violent and criminal behavior. Use discipline as a way to connect students to supports.

Facilities & Resources - Issues

- Limited access to school libraries and computer labs before, during, and after school
- Old facilities – leaking roofs, broken windows, poor lighting, too cold or too hot, stuffy, broken dirty bathrooms, etc.
- Outdated technology & communications systems
- Not enough books for students to take home, inadequate basic supplies – paper, pencils, copy toner
- Buildings are easy to get into and leave from

Facilities & Resources - Solutions

- Open libraries and computer labs before and after school
- Renovate and/or create safe state-of-the-art schools
- Increase quality and number of computers and improve internal communications systems (loudspeakers)
- Update and adequately supply textbooks, library books, and classroom supplies

Information & Communication - Issues

- Students are not well informed about credit and course requirements or college and career opportunities.
- Family contact information is out-of-date.
- Student and families are unclear about their rights and responsibilities.
- Schools do not provide information about community programs, services, or after school opportunities.

Information & Communication - Solutions

- Update students and families regularly about credits, course requirements, and college and career opportunities
- Update family contact information quarterly
- Create regular multi-lingual communication with students and families regarding their rights and responsibilities
- Make schools gateways of information about community opportunities and support services

Questions for Table Conversations

- What solutions that you heard today should be top priorities and what's missing?
- Which issues would you like to see the community and the task force pay more attention to in the future?
- What needs to happen to mobilize our urban communities to transform public education?

Next Steps

- Spread the word about the work of the UETF and continue to provide feedback and ideas
- Post comments at www.annenberginstitute.org/uetf
- UETF will submit a final report of recommendations to the governor in June 2009