Providence Report
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Introduction: The Schools Providence Children Deserve

Providence children deserve a high quality, well-rounded, well-resourced, equitable education. They deserve emotional and mental health supports. They deserve a safe school community and safe, healthy school buildings. They deserve culturally relevant curricula. Providence parents deserve a school system that partners with them, engages them, and provides space for them to voice concerns and share ideas. Providence educators deserve well-resourced schools and classrooms, safe and healthy workplaces, excellent professional learning opportunities, and respect for their professional expertise. Providence neighborhoods deserve schools that serve as central hubs of the community.

On average, Providence schools spend slightly more per pupil than other Rhode Island districts,[1] but Providence students also experience poverty at greater rates than the rest of the state.[2] Providence public schools serve a student body that faces many challenges. 17% of Providence students have IEPs. 28% are English language learners – half of all of Rhode Island's English language learners attend Providence Public Schools. 37% of children in Providence live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level. 56% live in families using food stamps or SNAP.[3] Providence Public Schools educators are working hard to meet the needs of their students, from actively seeking out professional development on trauma-informed practices and advocating for greater resources for social-emotional learning to pushing for improvements to school buildings in dire need of repair and continuing to engage students in the classroom despite many obstacles. Providence educators are ready for the schools Providence children deserve, but they need more support. Providence kids need and deserve the support of their communities and the state of Rhode Island behind them.

Rules about hiring, transfers, evaluation, and many other management-focused strategies have been thrust upon Providence schools. Despite all these management-based reforms, our schools still have not made much progress. It is time to stop thinking that we can "manage" our way to better schools. Instead, we must place our focus on teaching and learning at the classroom level. We must ensure students have the tools and supports they need to learn and that educators have the tools and supports they need to do their job. On February 29, 2020, members of the Providence community came together for a day-long event organized by the Providence Teachers Union to brainstorm ways to provide these tools and supports. This report reflects the problems and proposed solutions prioritized by Providence teachers and the Providence school's community.

Proactive Community Engagement

Students' needs are best met when parents and the community are deeply engaged with their local schools and the work educators are doing. Many parents in Providence schools are interested and eager to understand better what is happening with their child's education and learning community and to take greater part in supporting students, teachers, and staff. However, Providence parents face a lot of

[1] RI Department of Education. FY2018 Per Pupil Expenditures – Sorted by Net PPE. 21 June 2019.
[2] National Center for Education Statistics. ACS 2013-2017 Profile. Table CDP03.4.
[3] NCES 2018 data. nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch.

obstacles to deeper engagement in their school communities, including poverty, language barriers, and lack of a clear avenue to voice their concerns. A robust approach to meeting the diverse needs of Providence students includes meeting the needs of their families, specifically by providing services that both address challenges families are facing and draw parents into the school community. This robust, proactive approach to community engagement includes developing the district's wrap-around services and school environments that can serve as community hubs, as well as supporting educators and parents in building improved communication and stronger partnerships.

Community Schools and Wrap-around Services

What We Know

Community schools are places where teachers, families, community members and service providers can come together in coordinated, purposeful and results-focused partnerships. These schools become the center of their communities by providing the services to students, families and neighbors that best serve their needs, while at the same time promoting stable, healthy neighborhoods.

Community schools provide more than one type of service to students and the community, including things such as tutoring, community-based learning and other enrichment activities, medical services like primary, vision, dental, mental health and nutritional services, adult education classes, early childhood education, career and technical education, and restorative practices. Effective community schools are governed at the local level. Decisions are made by consulting with all stakeholders, including teachers and other school personnel. These adults, who interact with the students every day, can let others know the barriers that students face and need support with, in terms of helping prepare them for classroom learning.

Community schools work with students but also engage families and communities. Not only are families and communities the recipients of programs and supports in these schools, but they should also be seen as assets and become a fundamental part of the decision-making process in this strategy. When families and community members are a part of the process of planning and implementing a community school, they begin to have a deeper investment and ownership in the success of their own children and the school community.

The community school strategy for education can have a positive impact on student attendance, grade progression and graduation rates, and relationships among students and between students and adults in the school community.[4]

What We See

Many Providence families are struggling with the challenges posed by poverty, food insecurity, the immigration process, learning English, accessing consistent medical, dental, and mental health care, and finding the time and resources to provide academic, athletic, and social enrichment activities for their children. Providence educators have identified a need for more social workers and school psychologists, more community-based programs for students coping with anxiety, family challenges, and economic

[4] RAND NYC Community Schools study. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3245.html.

issues, and a need for more constructive afterschool program options for students. Families need access to adult English as a second language programs in addition to assistance meeting basic needs.

Community stakeholders agree that schools that currently do have more robust wrap-around service offerings are making a big difference in Providence.[5] There are many needs in the Providence community and with the right infusion of resources, vision, and community partnerships, Providence public schools can provide for those needs, build stronger school-community ties, and provide a healthier, safer learning and living environment for its students.

What We Hope For

Providence children deserve schools that serve as hubs of their neighborhoods and communities and that serve not just their academic needs, but nurture their physical, mental, and emotional well-being so that they can succeed in the classroom, as well as thrive in everyday life.

Our Goals:

1. Partner with local organizations and businesses to increase field trip offerings, school clubs, afterschool programs, and other enrichment activities (during the school year, weekends, and summer.).

2. Work with the district and community organizations to reduce chronic absenteeism by ensuring that children can get to school safely and efficiently. This includes advocating for "walking pools," bus passes, and guaranteed access to transportation to and from school for all Providence children, including those experiencing homelessness or displacement.

3. Create programs that help parents and students learn together by partnering with volunteers and community groups to offer evening and weekend ESL classes to parents at Providence schools.

4. Advocate for a district-wide commitment to deep anti-bias work with educators, administrators, students, and the community.

Making Parents Partners

What We Know

Research has established that parent engagement is a core component to student success. When parents are involved, students are more likely to earn higher grades, graduate from high school and attend post-secondary education, develop self-confidence and motivation in the classroom, and have better social skills and classroom behavior.[6]

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[5] Johns Hopkins School of Education. "Providence Public School District: A Review", June 2019. https://edpolicy.education.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/PPSD-REVISED-FINAL.pdf, 77.

[6] Henderson, A. T. & K. L. Mapp. (2002). *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Experts advise that communication between school and families should be initiated by teachers and staff, should be timely, and should be consistent, frequent, and free of jargon.[7]

What We See

Providence parents are concerned about the state of their kids' schools, expressing concerns about lack of academic rigor, low expectations, insufficient support services and negative school culture,[8] but many parents currently feel cut off from communication and engagement with their kids' schools, in addition to facing other challenges in the form of systemic discrimination, poverty, and language barriers.[9] When parents are marginalized or demoralized, it can be challenging for schools to keep them involved, particularly for families of English language learners. Schools are not equipped with sufficient bilingual supports to communicate with families who speak languages besides English.

Several barriers to parent engagement exist in Providence but they are not insurmountable. Addressing other issues in Providence schools, including class size, access to student services, and supports for ELLs and their families can have great effect on educators' capacity to involve parents, and parents' ability to stay engaged. Smaller class sizes that allow teachers more time to engage with individual families, more comprehensive wrap-around services for students and families, and sufficient bilingual staff to communicate with parents who speak another language all serve to facilitate better communication between schools and parents and keep parents engaged in their children's education.

What We Hope For

Our Goals:

1. Identify parent leaders and volunteers and work with parents and school communities to establish a PTA or PTO in every school and provide parents assistance accessing the background check process so that they can more easily volunteer in schools.

2. Ensure that language translation services are available to families for parent-teacher conferences, parent-teacher organization meetings, and any other school-based meetings seeking to engage families.

(www.sedl.org/connections); Mapp, K (2004) *Supporting Student Achievement: Family and Community Connections with Schools*. Family, School and Community Connections symposium: New Directions for Research, Practice and Evaluation at http://sedl.org/symposium2004/resources.html.

[7] Jayanthi, M., Nelson, J. S., Sawyer, V., Bursuck, W., D., Epstein, M.I H. (1995). Homework-communication problems among parents, classroom teachers, and special education teachers: An exploratory study. Remedial and Special Education, (16) 2, 102-116. March.

[8] Johns Hopkins, 53.

[9] Johns Hopkins, 4.

3. Appoint a bilingual parent liaison at each school who can help coordinate efforts to send regular school communications to parents and keep families apprised of school events and opportunities to engage.

4. Build on work educators are already doing to keep parents informed about their children's progress via two-way communication platforms with interpretation abilities.

Purposeful Governance & Collaboration

Educators in the district are frustrated by constant principal turnover, repeated changes to curriculum and testing, lack of time to work together with colleagues, and significant lack of support for special education, ELL programs, and social emotional learning, all of which are critically important to many of the students Providence serves.[10]

School Climate

What We Know

A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. School climate is informed by norms, values and expectations that support students and staff feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe. Collaboration between educators and stakeholders around a shared school vision can serve to improve situations where school climate is challenging.

What We See

Bullying among students is an issue in many Providence schools. Students and staff have witnessed daily bullying during lunch periods, as well as fights between students.[11] Educators have expressed concerns for the safety of both students and staff in Providence schools. As noted already, and elsewhere in this report, educators feel challenged by the lack of sufficient mental health support staff in the district to help kids build coping mechanisms and de-escalate tense situations.

Teachers and staff also worry about their lack of access to trauma-informed professional development because they know that the difficult circumstances many students face in their personal lives inform their behavior at school. Providence educators are concerned that the district has not fully equipped them to help these students and to offer the supports that could vastly improve school climate.

Many Providence educators feel deeply demoralized by what they are experiencing, both in terms of students having difficulty behaviorally and academically and feeling powerless to help them, and by a

[10] Johns Hopkins, 44.
[11] Johns Hopkins, 46.

lack of collaboration, trust, and vision from school and district administrators. An environment in which educators do not feel respected as professionals and experts in their fields, and where resources are insufficient to meet students' needs is not one in which teachers, staff, parents, and students can build the close, trusted relationships needed for learning to really blossom.

What We Hope For

Providence students and educators deserve safe learning environments and workplaces. They deserve a feeling of belonging and ownership over learning and teaching. Students deserve educators who have received relevant training and are well-prepared to meet their needs and educators deserve ongoing professional learning that supports the work they are doing with all students, but particularly students facing personal and academic obstacles.

The Providence community deserves a school system that engages all stakeholders to develop sustainable school wide culture and climate plans and stable, devoted leadership with the vision and capacity to implement those plans.

Our Goals:

1. Provide training to school leadership, teachers, and staff on trauma-informed responses to student behavior.

2. Build trust and comradery among staff by carving out time for team-building activities and collaborative planning and goal setting and prioritize educator mental health and well-being by offering time and space for meditation and reflection during the school week.

3. Create collaborative working groups comprised of school leadership, teachers, counselors, psychologists, and support staff to look at implementing restorative justice practices across the district.

Staff Diversity, Recruitment & Retention & Teacher Leadership

What We Know

A high degree of labor-management collaboration, positive school climate, and educators who reflect student body racial demographics have a significant impact on reducing turnover and improving student academic outcomes. Providence is not the only district facing these issues. Recent work on the Bronx Plan model in New York City provides an example of the transformative potential of deep union-district collaboration. In New York, The United Federation of Teachers' (UFT) 2018 contract created a model known as the Bronx Plan for transforming school culture, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and recruiting and retaining teachers and staff at schools facing challenges such as high turnover, vacancies, and high-needs student populations.

The model centers on labor-management collaboration at both the school and central administration level. Union chapter leaders and principals at participating schools must both agree to participate for a school to be eligible, and the program is guided by a central committee of UFT and chancellor-appointed

representatives, as well as school-level committees at each participating school. The committees take part in joint professional development on collaboration, facilitation, and shared decision making, and work twice a month with a trained facilitator.

The Bronx Plan school committees review their individual school's needs, look at the data, engage parents and community, and choose relevant supports and strategies to move the school community forward with support from the central committee. Some of these strategies for turnover and retention include holding school hiring fairs, creating a teacher recruiter position, and providing salary differentials in hard-to-staff areas. School committee strategies include ensuring that committees are selected collaboratively, and that school administration and educators are represented equally, ensuring access to job-embedded support as committees work to implement their plans, and ensuring that committee members have the space and safety to practice a "speak up" culture. The Bronx Plan also includes priority considerations for centrally funded initiatives including facilities upgrades, professional development programs, and community engagement and empowerment.

Research shows that union-district collaboration that in turn increases school-level collaboration, have a positive effect on student outcomes.[12] The Bronx Plan uses this model of collaborative work to implement strategies that will reduce teacher vacancies and turnover, improve recruitment efforts, and help school communities develop individualized solutions to the challenges they face.

What We See

As noted elsewhere in this report, Providence schools are suffering from teacher shortages, bilingual and ELL-certified staff shortages, and significant vacancies of counselors, psychologists and nurses who help meet students' most critical needs. Some of the schools serving the highest-needs students are suffering most from insufficient staffing, lack of consistent leadership, and a general sense of demoralization as the result of the state and city's disinvestment in Providence schools. Providence educators and willing and ready to take part in shaping the district's path forward and building a school system that Providence children deserve, but the lines of communication and collaboration between the district, school administrators, and educators have been cut off. Difficult school climates, pervasive under-resourcing, and overall stress and demoralization have taken a toll on Providence schools.

Further, Providence schools lack a teaching force that is representative of the racial and ethnic backgrounds of most of its student body. 67 percent of Providence students are Hispanic, and 16 percent are black, while 76 percent of Providence educators are white.[13] Only 9 percent are Hispanic and only 7 percent are black.[14] Educators of color have a positive effect on students of color, providing academic, social and emotional benefits.[15] Recruitment and retention of a diverse teaching force needs to be a critical priority of the district and the state. Providence educators need to be included in plans to recruit new teachers and staff, reduce turnover, build leadership opportunities, and improve morale.

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[12] S. Rubinstein & J. McCarthy. (2017). "National Study on Union-Management Partnerships and Educator Collaboration in US Public Schools."

[13] Rhode Island Department of Education. 2018-19 District Report Card for Providence.

[14] Rhode Island Department of Education. 2018-19 District Report Card for Providence.

[15] Carver, Desiree (2017) Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color. Learning Policy Institute; Cherng, HYS (2016) The importance of minority teachers: Students perceptions of minority versus white teachers.

What We Hope For

A model of deep, intentional, collaborative decision-making, community engagement, and targeted prioritization of needs, similar to New York's Bronx Plan could serve the Providence schools community well in terms of recruiting and retaining bilingual, ELL, and arts, science, and specialized staff, improving trust between educators, administrators and the community, providing leadership and professional development opportunities for educators, improving school climate, and ultimately building a path to the schools Providence students deserve.

Our Goals:

1. Create a "Grow Your Own" style program such as the "RI Pathway to Teaching program" to help paraprofessionals earn teacher licensure and attract young people of color to professions in education and develop community-based partnerships with the school district and local colleges and universities.
2. Mentoring programs have a positive effect on recruitment and retention for educators of color.[16] Develop a mentorship program for new educators of color in Providence schools, to improve long-term retention of diverse faculty and staff.
3. Expand mentoring and induction programs and the current Peer Assistance and Review program to support all new teachers and leaders in Providence.

Parent and student representation in collective bargaining

What We Know

Engaging parents and students in their schools is a critical factor in student academic success, positive school climate, social and emotional growth, and more. An active, invested community is also critical to ensuring that the school district and the state are providing Providence educators with the tools and resources they need to facilitate the education Providence children deserve.

What We See

From St. Paul, MN, to Chicago and Los Angeles, we have seen a number of recent examples of parents and communities joining educators in their efforts to win fair contracts that include not just fair pay and living wages but demand equitable resources across their school districts. With the backing of parents and the community, these campaigns have ensured student access to support services, including extra counselors, restorative justice coordinators, and librarians in high needs schools, improved supports for ELL teachers, students, and their families, won funding to decrease class sizes and reduce the high workload of special education teachers and staff, and banned ICE from entering school buildings without a criminal warrant. Providence teachers gathered with parents and community members in February of this year to collaborate on a way forward in response to the state's takeover of the Providence school system. That meeting led to robust, productive conversations, and many of the concerns and proposals highlighted in this report.

[16] Exploring New Pathways to Recruit and Retain, AACTE 2019.; Phillips Joplin, Orman& Evans, 2004.

Across the country, Teachers are including parents and community members in study groups and in bargaining. In St. Paul, MN for example, during the union's 2013 contract negotiations parents testified on class size and about how important Pre-K was for their children.[17] In St. Paul, where community has become deeply engaged and supportive of the collective bargaining process, educators have also developed contract language implementing a Parent-Teacher Home visit project which saw increases in achievement and attendance and decreases in suspensions.

What We Hope For

Educators often note that "teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions." Parents and educators share many of the same goals – for children to have safe, enriching learning environments with all the resources needed to support their growth and development.

Our Goals:

1. Include parents as partners in developing union goals for advocacy and bargaining and find ways the PTU can mutually support the work parents are doing to engage with the district.

2. Hold union-organized meetings and community events that welcome parents and families to share their concerns, collaborate on goals, and build social ties.

Robust Student Support Services: Educating the Whole Child

Children are best served by an education that allows them to bring their whole selves to school and that supports all aspects of their development – mental, physical, emotional, and academic. Students thrive on individualized academic attention, support for second language acquisition, space for creative expression through music and the arts, and a safe educational environment that addresses traumas they face outside of school and nurtures their mental and emotional health. Smaller classes, school communities infused with comprehensive curricula and social emotional learning programs, ample school counselors, nurses, psychologists, and social workers in every school, and appropriate support for English language learners will provide an environment in which Providence schools can truly educate the whole child.

Providence Students Deserve Smaller Classes

What We Know

[17] https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/teacher-community-unionism-lesson-st-paul

Evidence demonstrates that reducing class sizes, particularly in the early grades and for disadvantaged students, has a positive effect on student achievement. The Tennessee STAR study shows student achievement of students in small classes exceeding that of their peers across grade and subject level.[18]

There are also long-term effects to small classes in early years. The Tennessee study also indicated that for students in grades K-3, smaller class sizes had positive effects even when students returned to regular sized classes after third grade. Additionally, students who were assigned to smaller classes in early grades graduated on schedule at a higher rate than students from regular size classes (76% compared to 64%), dropped out less often (24% compared to 25%), and had a higher rate of graduating with honors (45% compared to 29%).

Smaller class sizes allow teachers to have more interaction with each student and recognize individual student needs. Problems and special needs can be recognized earlier with this closer interaction. Students tend to be on task more often and create fewer discipline problems, allowing teachers to spend more time on instruction.

One study suggests that smaller class sizes can lead to improved teacher recruitment and retention, because teachers perceive small class size as a positive working condition.[19] Another study of new teachers in New York City found that class size was a top three working condition that would impact a teacher's decision to stay in their school.[20] Teacher retention benefits overall school success as well as the financial impact of having to hire and retrain new teachers.

Class size is particularly beneficial to disadvantaged students from high-poverty and at-risk schools. One study showed lower than expected achievement gaps for grades 4 and 8 in states with lower student/teacher ratios.[21] In France reducing class size in high-poverty schools led to an achievement gap reduction.

What We See

Along with the evidence showing how students benefit from smaller classes, robust, fully staffed ELL programs, support for their social and emotional development, access to tutoring, and access to mental and physical health resources, Providence schools have a long way to go in terms of ensuring resources are in place to educate the whole child.

The benefits of small class sizes are clear, particularly for students experiencing poverty and other challenges faced by many Providence children. Despite this, Providence schools are inconsistent in enforcing appropriate class sizes. While the average elementary class size statewide is 20 students,[22]

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[18] Word, E., Johnston, J., Bain, H., Fulton, D. B., Boyd-Zaharias, J., Lintz, M. N., Achilles, C. M., Folger, J., & Breda, C. (1990). Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR): Tennessee's K–3 class size study. Nashville: Tennessee State Department of Education.

[19] Baker, B. D., Farrie, D. and Sciarra, D. G. (2016), Mind the Gap: 20 Years of Progress and Retrenchment in School Funding and Achievement Gaps. ETS Research Report Series, 2016: 1–37

[20] New York City Council Investigation Division. (2004). Report on Teacher Attrition and Retention.

[21] Baker, B. D., Farrie, D. and Sciarra, D. G. (2016), Mind the Gap: 20 Years of Progress and Retrenchment in School Funding and Achievement Gaps. ETS Research Report Series, 2016: 1–37

[22] EdCounts. Education Week Research Center. https://www.edweek.org/info/about/education-counts.html.

Providence – which educates a high-needs student body, including over half of Rhode Island's English language learners – has a maximum class size of 26 students. In some cases, up to 29 students may be in a class on a given day, and class sizes within subjects, buildings, and the district overall are not consistent. Overcrowding in Providence's ELL classes is also an issue of considerable concern given the needs of students learning English and adapting to a new culture and community. Teacher shortages as well as substitute shortages are an issue across the district.[23]

In the district's early childhood program, some pre-K teachers have expressed concern that frequently a single adult is alone in a full classroom,[24] potentially violating Rhode Island state regulations for pre-K classes, which require an adult to child ratio of 1:10 for four- and five-year-olds and 1:9 for three year olds and mixed three and four year old classes.[25]

What We Hope For

Providence children deserve class sizes that ensure they receive one-on-one attention, maximize their academic, social, and emotional development, and promote teacher retention and school staff stability.

Our Goals:

1. Aim for each class to have no more than 20 students rather than aiming for a school or district-wide average to ensure that each child is in an optimally sized class.[26] Consider incentive programs to recruit and retain teachers and staff in hard-to-staff schools or schools with significant vacancies.

2. Prioritize reducing class sizes in ELL classrooms, which are overcrowded and put ELL students at high risk for falling behind both in terms of language acquisition and academic growth.

ELL Assistance Programs

What We Know

New or emerging English speakers need teachers who are supported by ELL coordinators and staff. In addition to learning a new language, most ELLs also have to adjust to a new environment and culture, as well as learn new academic skills and content knowledge. Having access to bilingual teachers and staff as part of a bilingual program can be critical to quicker language acquisition. Research indicates that ELLs in high-quality bilingual programs develop academic proficiency as much as 3-6 years faster than students in English-based, non-bilingual programs.[27]

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[23] Johns Hopkins, 44.
[24] Johns Hopkins, 44
[25] https://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Regulations/200ricr20106%20.pdf?ver=2019-07-24-162248-613.
[26] https://www.aft.org/position/class-size
[27] Collier, V.P. (1995) Acquiring a second language for school. Directions in Language & Education, National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education. 1(4).

The national research indicates that there must be a focus on literacy programs for ELLs. Key components of effective reading instruction for native English speakers identified by the National Reading Panel—phonemic awareness, phonics, oral language fluency, vocabulary, text comprehension and writing—also benefit ELLs, but with necessary adaptations such as extensive academic vocabulary instruction and oral English language development, cognate connections, and the explicit instruction of idioms and words with multiple meanings. A variety of interventions and instructional program models for ELLs are necessary.

Currently, schools around the country with effective instructional programs for ELLs implement various programs and strategies. Programs that are based on native language instruction are most referred to as "bilingual education" programs. These programs include dual immersion programs, two-way bilingual programs, transitional bilingual programs, developmental or maintenance bilingual programs and others. In such programs, ELLs are often exposed to content instruction in their native language for specified periods of time during the school day.

In programs such as English-as-a-Second Language (ESL), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), English Language Development (ELD) and sheltered instruction, native language instruction is often minimal, but they include structured research-based supports and methods.

Regardless of the type of second language acquisition program (dual immersion, ESL, ESOL, sheltered instruction, transitional bilingual, etc.) a school is implementing, the key to a program's effectiveness is that it be based on the research of language acquisition, that it include special instructional supports such as materials and resources designed for ELLs, and that it be staffed by educators who know how to work with this group of students and who receive ongoing professional development support. Colorín Colorado, the American Federation of Teachers' partnership project with PBS Station WETA, offers comprehensive guidance and multiple resources for ELLs, from Pre-K to 12th grade. It is the most widely accessed web resource on ELLs nationwide. The content has been developed by some of the most prominent researchers in the field and veteran practitioners in the instruction of ELLs.

What We See

28% of PPSD students are English language learners (ELLs), and Providence schools educate over half of all of the ELLs in the state of Rhode Island.[28] Fifty percent of Providence residents five years old and older speak a language other than English at home.[29] Despite this, the district lacks sufficient ELL coordinators to meet current student needs as well as sufficient bilingual staff to best support students and facilitate communication with their families.[30]

ELL students deserve teachers certified in the requisite areas who are well-prepared and knowledgeable about second language acquisition and strong support by school administrators who understand the challenges educators of ELLs face and what it takes to help their students succeed, as well as wraparound services to address their unique needs and keep their families connected to the school community.

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[28] NCES 2018 data. nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch.
[29] NCES 2018 data. nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch.
[30] Johns Hopkins, 44.

What We Hope For

The PTU's goal is to promote educational excellence and equity for ELLs and to help them become proficient in reading, writing, and communicating in the English language—to ensure they meet the same challenging standards required of all students.

Our Goals:

1. Make recruitment and retention of ELL certified teachers as well as bilingual teachers and staff a district priority and ensure regular, ongoing professional development for staff on best practices for ELL education. Resources should be made available for current Providence educators who do not already have ELL certification to get it.

2. Work with the district and community organizations to build wrap-around services geared towards the families of ELL students, including multilingual supports and parent councils to keep parents informed and engaged, as well as physical and mental health supports, food security assistance, social services and counseling, and extracurricular enrichment activities to meet the needs of students and families adjusting to a new environment and culture.

3. Maintain and expand the district's current transitional and developmental bilingual programs, as well as its existing dual language program.

School Support Services

What We Know

Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP) are essential to making sure students have the services they need to succeed academically and socially, inside and outside the classroom. They include professionals such as school counselors, psychologists, school social workers, occupational therapists, media specialists, speech-language pathologists and others. School counselors help all students in the areas of academic achievement, and social and career development.

While these jobs are essential to the academic and emotional success of students, Providence schools currently have a shortage of nurses, school psychologists, and counselors. Educators in Providence schools need resources and support professionals in place to work with students who have experienced trauma or family difficulty, who need extra learning supports, who are experiencing physical or mental health challenges, or who are at risk for engaging in behavior that is potentially harmful to themselves or others. Educators need support to help de-escalate tense situations, and help all students thrive academically, socially, and psychologically. Providence children deserve well-resourced schools with sufficient staffing to meet their complex needs.

What We See

17 percent of Providence students have IEPs.[31] Teachers in the district have expressed concerns that a high number of their students have experienced trauma. Some schools with high needs lack social workers, counselors and other specialized support staff.[32] Overall, despite the high needs of its student body, the district has one student support services staff member for every 83 students.

The National Association of School Nurses (NASN) recommends that schools have at least one Registered Nurse for 125–775 students, depending on the student population's health issues. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that each school have a dedicated nurse.[33] Rhode Island's average student-to-nurse ratio of 632:1 is one of the lowest in the nation. However, it's not clear that the same can be said of Providence schools. Enrollment in PPS is currently close to 24,000 students across 43 schools but the district currently has 13 openings for school nurses in Providence.

Rhode Island has one school counselor ratio for every 392 students, the highest ratio in New England but better than the national average of 444.[34] The recommended student-to-counselor ratio is 250-to-1. With a student population of 24,000, Providence would ideally have at least 2 counselors per campus or a total of 96 counselors across the district. Currently, there are over two dozen openings for school counselor and psychologists' positions in the district.

There are currently seven full-time school psychologists' positions, and six part-time positions open in Providence School District. This deficit represents a severe backlog of requests to test and assist students who may have been referred for instructional supports, special education testing, mental health supports, and a variety of other critical academic and behavior supports that cannot be addressed due to personnel shortages.

These staffing shortages have significant consequences for students. According to RIDE, the PPS graduation, and drop-out rates for its students with IEPs did not meet the state targets for the 2015-16 school year (the most recent data available). In the five school years from 2011-12 to 2015-16, the district did not once meet state graduation targets for students with IEPs. The district met dropout rate targets for students with IEPs in only three of the five years. As of 2015-16, only 54% of students with IEPs graduated, and 23% dropped out.[35]

What We Hope For

Our Goals:

1. Take steps to address the school nurse shortage by working with local institutions of higher education to create pipeline opportunities for support personnel, high school students, family, or community members who have an interest and ability to enter the school nursing profession.

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[31] NCES data nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch.
[32] Johns Hopkins, 44.
[33] American Academy of Pediatrics. "Role of the School Nurse in Providing School Health Services." *Pediatrics.* 2016, 137 (6): e20160852.
[34] Find citation: according to a report by the American Civil Liberties Union
[35] RIDE DataCenter https://datacenter.ride.ri.gov/specialeducation.

2. Increase incentives for recruitment and retention of school psychologists, counselors, social workers, and nurses, including at the elementary school level, and including a push to employ a proportionate number of bilingual professionals to support the large proportion of ELLs enrolled in Providence schools.

Social Emotional Learning

What We Know

Advancements in the science of learning and development show that students do best when social, emotional and cognitive learning are connected. More than two decades of research from the Aspen Institute National Commission on Social Emotional and Academic Development demonstrates that learning is dependent on the relationship between educator and student.[36] Integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) and academic learning leads to improved outcomes on a number of school success metrics including attendance, academic performance in terms of grades and test scores, graduation rates, college acceptance and attendance, career success, and more.[37]

Students do best academically in a school environment in which they feel safe enough to learn. A safe environment to learn is one where students' personal strengths are valued, and their identities and cultures are respected and one that emphasizes positive, equitable discipline practices over punitive, exclusionary discipline. Evidence suggests that the efforts to reduce punitive discipline and promote positive behavior supports has an especially great benefit for children historically marginalized by race and class.[38]

Small class sizes, a clear message of respect and affirmation of students' cultures and identities, and constructive discipline practices that provide encouragement and praise for positive behavior all foster strong relationships between students and educators and produce an environment where students feel safe enough to learn.

Relationships between educators and students are further enhanced when educators feel supported and valued. Supports for overall educator well-being and efforts by school districts and administration to reduce educator stress via fostering positive school climate, encouraging peer mentoring, and providing effective, relevant training, are all factors in the success of student social and emotional learning as well.[39] Ensuring that educators have needed supports and resources in place ensures that they can build deep relationships with students and families and best facilitate growth and discovery.

What We See

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[36] From A Nation At Risk To A Nation At Hope: Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (2018)

[37] From A Nation At Risk To A Nation At Hope: Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (2018), 18.

[38] From A Nation At Risk To A Nation At Hope: Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (2018), 38.

[39] Cook-Harvey, C. and Darling-Hammond, L. (2018) Educating the Whole Child: Improving School Climate to Support Student Success, 45.

Providence educators have expressed strong interest and pride in the work they are already doing to promote social and emotional learning. However, teachers have felt cut off from access to professional development that would more deeply support SEL, and the district has not fostered collaboration between educators, staff, and administrators on ways to better develop approaches to SEL in Providence schools.[40] Further, despite teacher and staff concerns that a large number of students in Providence have experienced or are experiencing trauma, and some staff seeking out trauma-informed training on their own, Providence educators are not receiving sufficient trauma-informed SEL preparation across the district.[41]

What We Hope For

Our Goals:

1. Implement changes such as small classes and sufficient staffing of counselor, school psychologist and paraprofessional positions, that allow all educators the time and resources to nurture deep relationships with students and families, and ensure a culturally relevant, positive, and safe education environment for all students.

2. Identify opportunities for all Providence educators to attend SEL-relevant professional development, including trauma-informed training and work towards developing an educator-led ongoing SEL professional development program in Providence schools.

3. Prioritize positive behavior reinforcement over punitive, exclusionary discipline practices. For example, Providence could consider a program like what educators have recently negotiated elsewhere. In Boston, for instance, this looked like adding four district-wide restorative justice coach positions funded by the district.

Tutoring Programs

What We Know

Even with a well-rounded curriculum and excellent educators at the helm of classroom instruction, additional factors both in and outside of school can impede student progress. Academic tutoring programs provide supplemental academic support for students in school-based, home-based, or center-based settings. Schools can implement one-on-one or small group remedial programs for students and have a variety of provider options including university partnerships, teacher-led tutoring, or community organizations. Positive effects from tutoring rests on the individualization of instruction, in addition to the nurturing and attention provided by educators.

Reviews of research on academic tutoring programs pinpoint four key findings that support the positive impact of tutoring programs. Research indicates that tutoring by paraprofessionals (teacher assistants) and teachers is the most effective method – paraprofessionals and teachers have a greater positive effect on students than volunteer tutors.[42] Any in-person tutoring is more effective than online

[40] Johns Hopkins, 43.
[41] Johns Hopkins, 44.
[42] Amanda Inns et al. (2018); Ariana Baye et al. (2017); and Marta Pellegrini et al. (2018)

computer-based tutoring, which research indicates has little effect on student outcomes.[43] Research on tutoring programs at the high school level suggest academic tutoring may be an effective intervention to help students improve academic skills, stay in school, and graduate from high school.[44]

What We See

The need for additional tutoring supports in Providence schools is also clear. Over half of Providence students live in single-parent households. Nearly a third of parents of PPS students do not have a high school diploma. Many Providence parents speak a first language other than English, which may make it difficult for them to engage with school administrators and educators, most of whom are not bilingual, and may also make it difficult for them to help children with homework. In addition, for students experiencing trauma, disruptions at home, or other challenges, having access to one-on-one academic support as well as needed social, emotional, and health supports, is critical to ensure they do not fall behind. Expanded wrap-around services to students and their families should include a tutoring program geared towards kids who need additional academic help outside of school hours.

What We Hope For

Our Goals:

1. Secure state funding to offer academic support and enrichment after school and during the summer, especially to students needing extra support, such as students experiencing learning challenges, and provide sustained, guaranteed extra support to students who are socially, but not academically ready for promotion to the next grade level.

2. Partner with community organizations to identify volunteers willing to commit to tutoring Providence students and build an afterschool tutoring program accessible to PPS students and families.

3. Work with current community partners such as PASA, ARISE, Sweet Creations, PRYSM, STEAM Box, Providence Student Union, Young Voices, Beat the Streets and other thought partners to develop systems and support both within and outside of the school day for all of our youth. High Quality Professional Development led by certified educators, that is a cycle of professional development that include learning, reflection, and revision. as opposed to high paid consultants.

Clinically Focused Professional Learning

What We Know

[43] Amanda Inns et al. (2018); Ariana Baye et al. (2017); and Marta Pellegrini et al. (2018)
[44] https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/10/19/tutoring-kids-chicago-study-215729 and https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/high-school/academic-tutoring.pdf.

Educators must continue to grow knowledge and skills throughout their careers. Critical to this growth of knowledge is access to high quality professional learning that is job-embedded and peer-led. Professional development is a continuous process of individual and collective examination and improvement of practice.

High quality professional development should provide knowledge about the teaching and learning process, align with standards and curriculum teachers currently use, and allow sufficient time, support, and resources to enable teachers to master new content and pedagogy and to integrate these into their practice. Educators and administrators must establish and communicate a clear vision, setting goals and objectives that align with the needs of the students, staff, and community.

There is a growing recognition that labor-management collaboration is an essential condition for improving student achievement.[45] Partnerships and shared decision-making hold more promise for meaningful reform than top-down policies made without teacher input. Collaborative practices around professional development in high-performing schools include a high degree of engagement between administrators and teachers in developing and selecting instructional materials, assessments and pedagogical approaches, embedded time in the workweek for teacher collaboration to improve instruction, and an openness among teachers to share best practices by visiting one another's classrooms.[46]

What We See

The district does not devote sufficient resources and funding to professional development. Teachers and administrators across the district lament the lack of meaningful professional development time.[47] Educators are not provided with opportunities to learn how to implement frequently changing curricula or develop new skills.

Of great concern, Providence educators do not have consistent access to professional development related to special student populations in the district. Special education teachers, have concerns that the district's lack of training prevents them from meeting Individualized Education Plan (IEP) requirements for their students.[48] Some teachers in the district have sought trauma-informed PD on their own via AFT. Teachers have lamented the lack of professional development supports regarding SEL and childhood trauma.

What We Hope For

Providence students and educators would be well-served by the creation of a labor-management professional learning committee that could provide space for both educators and administrators to work together to develop much-needed professional learning opportunities for Providence teachers and school staff.

Our Goals:

[45] American Educator. Winter 2019-20.
[46] American Educator. Winter 2019-20.
[47] Johns Hopkins, 3.
[48] Johns Hopkins, 43.

1. Develop a labor-management professional learning committee to ensure that educators have input in professional development decisions and to build trust and common vision between the PTU and the district.

2. Ensure that professional development is job-embedded, provided in a variety of formats, and specific to the needs of educators in the Providence community.

3. Encourage educator-led programs of professional learning that provide meaningful opportunities for teachers and staff to take on leadership and mentorship roles within their school and district communities and ensure that professional development opportunities are reflective of Providence educator and student needs.

Educator-Led Common Planning Time

What We Know

Cooperation is a key element of professional development and necessary to ensure a high-quality teaching force. When educators collaborate to share knowledge and to develop their skills and improvement strategies, students are likely to perform better.[49] Necessary to this collaboration is common planning time, where teachers are assigned to the same planning time during the school day with other educators in the same grade level or subject area. Educators need to be engaged with ideas and colleagues as part of the normal workday.

International research indicates that collaborative practices among teachers "lead to innovations in teaching and learning" and are a critical driver of school improvement.[50] In Singapore, for example, schools focus on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to allow teachers to work as professionals and share their expertise with each other. Peer collaboration also serves as a form of accountability. Teachers working together create a shared concept of good practice and are able to hold each other accountable to those practices. An international survey of teachers found that educators who were able to collaborate and exchange ideas with fellow teachers reported a more positive school environment and better student-teacher relationships.[51]

Making sufficient time for collaboration and cooperation can ultimately have a positive effect on student academic outcomes. A study of over 9,000 teachers in Florida public schools found that teachers and schools that engage in quality collaborative activities have better gains in math and reading.[52]

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[49] Schleicher, A. (March 9, 2013). Collaborative Culture is Key to Success. TES Connect. http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6323243

[50] McKinsey (2010). How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better, https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/industries/social%20sector/our%20insights/how%20the%20worlds%20most%20improved%20school%20systems%20keep%20getting%20better/how_the_worlds_most_improved_school_systems_keep_getting_better.ashx, pg. 44

[51] OECD (2012). TALIS, https://www.oecd.org/berlin/43541655.pdf, p. 122

[52] Ronfeldt, M., Farmer, S. O., McQueen, K., & Grissom, J.A. (2015). Teacher collaboration in instructional teams and student achievement. *American Education Research Journal, 52*(3), 475-514, http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.921.1537&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Research reviewing several other large-scale studies about teacher collaboration has found similar positive connections between collaboration and student achievement.[53]

What We See

Providence educators have noted that little time is set aside for planning and cooperation, and that it is difficult to have meaningful collaboration among staff in a school building without buy-in from administration.[54] Providence educators need time to plan, communicate, and collaborate around effective co-teaching and to make sure they are meeting students' needs, especially for ELL and special education students. Due to the complex needs of so many Providence students, ensuring that educators have time to work together and collaborate around school-wide approaches to academic programs and social and emotional learning is critical to Providence children's success.

What We Hope For

Our Goals

1. Ensure that principals and other school leaders at all grade levels, elementary through high school, prioritize collaborative planning in the daily school schedule, secure meeting space, and coordinate training for all educators, including teachers and support personnel.

2. Improve channels of communication among administrators and staff within schools to ensure that special education students and those with IEPs receive the supports they need quickly and consistently.

Team Teaching in High Needs Situations

What We Know

Team teaching requires co-planning, co-instruction, and co-assessing. The team-teaching model is typically used in inclusive settings with a content lead and a special education lead to better support individualized instruction for all students. However, team teaching can benefit all students in all types of classrooms. Benefits to students include deepening of analytical abilities, strengthening academic communities, improved teacher-student relationships, greater curricular coherence, and improved student learning outcomes, retention rates, and interpersonal skills.[55]

Teachers can also benefit through collaboration with and observation of their colleagues on a regular basis. General education teachers can learn strategies for supporting ELL and special education students, and ELL and special education teachers and staff can take advantage of the general curriculum and its

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[53] Ronfeldt, M. (2016). "Improving Teaching Through Collaboration," in *The Social Side of Education Reform*, ed. Esther Quintero (Washington, DC: Albert Shanker Institute), p. 7. http://www.distributedleadership.org/assets/asi-(2016).pdf

[54] Johns Hopkins, 43.

[55] https://ctl.byu.edu/tip/team-teaching-brief-summary

instruction. Other benefits include developing stronger collegial relationships, avoiding teacher silos, having more creative opportunities, and making connections across disciplines.

What We See

Students in high needs areas can certainly benefit from having two lead teachers in the classroom, a significant issue in Providence schools. For students with special needs, team teaching allows those students to be in the same classroom as their peers while providing all students with the same general curriculum. Teachers of English Language Learners also typically support this model because their students receive the general curriculum and also the additional language supports they need.
The shortage of teachers and staff in Providence schools, particularly in ELL classrooms, makes team-teaching a challenge currently, to the detriment of many PPS students who could benefit from this approach.

What We Hope For

Providence children deserve well-resourced classrooms, that in some cases, due to the district's high ELL population and significant number of students with special needs, means having more than one teacher in the room, representing needed specialties.

Our Goals:

1. Build intentional co-teaching teams and foster team-teaching environments for special education and ELL classrooms to allow students access to both specialized support and content, teachers, and staff from mainstream classrooms.

2. Ensure that planning time is built into the daily schedule for co-teachers to work together on classroom issues, lesson plans, and long-term goals.

High Quality Comprehensive Curriculum

Providence children deserve a high quality, comprehensive curriculum that honors their diverse cultures and experiences, fosters creativity and critical thinking, and sets high expectations for their academic achievement.

District-wide Curriculum Alignment & Fully Resourced Curriculum Implementation

What We Know

Students are best served by an evolving curriculum that matches their learning experiences in school to societal changes and lays the groundwork for their future success. Providence children deserve a robust, culturally responsive curriculum that integrates creativity and critical thinking into everyday lessons and prepares students for a successful future in a rapidly changing world. Curriculum should not be limited to math and reading instruction but must include opportunities for students to explore questions and express their creativity through science, social studies, physical education, art, and music.

Research shows that integrating the arts into curricula has many positive benefits for student achievement, behavior, children's self-confidence, and social skills, and overall engagement in learning.[56] These benefits may be amplified for economically disadvantaged or at-risk youth.[57] Further, many Providence educators envision a project-based, hands-on curriculum for their students, with real-world applications, that can help students think critically, connect with the learning material, and make sense of their own lives and communities.

What We See

School administrators, teachers, and students have concerns that district does not have a coherent, comprehensive curriculum plan in place, in addition to lack of professional development available to teachers and staff to implement such a curriculum.[58] Providence teachers have seen students struggle with curricula that are inconsistent within and across grades.[59] In addition to problems already noted in terms of lack of teacher training, planning and collaboration time, many teachers feel that frequent changes to curriculum and not having sufficient access to curriculum materials prior to the school year (or even within the first couple of months) have made it even more challenging to provide their students with a coherent experience.[60]

Parents and teachers have expressed concern that resources are distributed unevenly across the school district. Further, some Providence schools lack sufficient teachers to provide consistent arts, social studies, and science education, including at least one school that lacks a science teacher for an entire grade level, and another that lacks a social studies teacher.[61] In other schools, gym facilities are either in such bad repair that they are difficult for students to access, or physical education classes are limited to the very basics.[62] Children at some Providence schools have access to recess, as well as arts and music programs, but many others go without.[63] ELA and math curricula in the district are inconsistent, including within schools and classrooms in the same grade and same building, with some principals having purchased a dozen or more different curricula for use in their buildings, often without providing relevant professional development.[64] The lack of training on available curricula has led some teachers to rely on older curricula, limiting their access to and capacity to implement a culturally relevant curriculum with diverse representations that better reflect Providence's student body.

What We Hope For

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[56] Catterall, J.S. (2002). The arts and the transfer of learning. In Deasy, R.J (Ed.), Critical links: learning in the arts and student academic and social development. Washington, D.C.: Arts Education Partnership. Retrieved from: http://www.aeparts.org/files/publications/CriticalLinks.pdf; Iwai, K. (2003). The contribution of arts education to children's lives. Retrieved from http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/files/40522/12669211823contribution_AE.pdf/contribution%2BAE.pdf.

[57] U.S. Department Of Education, (2004, August 26). The Importance of Arts Education. Retrieved from: http://www2.ed.gov/teachers/how/tools/initiative/updates/040826.html.

[58] Johns Hopkins, 39.

[59] Johns Hopkins, 46.

[60] Johns Hopkins, 44, 46.

[61] Johns Hopkins, 44, 46.

[62] Johns Hopkins, 41 and 55.

[63] Johns Hopkins, 54.

[64] JH, 32-33.

Providence children deserve an equitable education and a culturally relevant curriculum. They deserve an investment in their future from the state of Rhode Island via a fully resourced, comprehensive, arts-integrated curriculum.

Our Goals:

1. Employ a district-wide comprehensive curriculum plan selected and developed in collaboration with school and district leadership, teachers, and staff that includes robust arts, science, social science, and physical education offerings, as well as ongoing job-embedded, educator-led professional development to support the curriculum.

2. Ensure that the district is properly staffed to offer a comprehensive curriculum to all students, including implementing practices that recruit and retain a diverse, well-rounded teaching force.

3. Provide educators access to learning materials that reflect the population of students in Providence schools, including diverse viewpoints and diverse visual representation in textbooks, media, and other classroom resources.

ARISE and Social Justice Infused into Daily Curriculum

What We Know

Like many U.S. cities, historical patterns of racial discrimination have left a legacy of neighborhood and school segregation. We know that school segregation leads to unequal distribution of resources and can concentrate poverty and marginalization in some buildings while hoarding opportunity in others.

Pressure on test results and student academic achievement without regard for the barriers to effective instruction facing children and their teachers, can lead to punitive discipline measures against both students and educators. Nationally, children of color are suspended from school at significantly higher rates than white students.[65] Equity in education means that students who have been historically marginalized and are facing the challenges of racism and poverty need the same access to a high quality education that many privileged children receive, but also need additional supports to foster growth and ensure their future success. Many of the supports noted in this report, while important for students of all backgrounds, are particularly critical for historically marginalized children and youth, and often have a more significant positive impact on the lives of those students than they do for students who already have access to wealth, resources, and racial privilege. Likewise, lack of teacher and staff diversity, high turnover, and punitive discipline practices have a greater negative impact on the students largely served by districts like Providence.

What We See

[65] U.S. Government Accountability Office. "K-12 Education: Discpline Disparities for Black Students, Boys, and Students with Disabilities." GAO-18-258: Published Mar 22, 2018. Publicly Released: Apr 4, 2018. https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-18-258.

Roughly 65% of Providence students are of color. Providence schools serve a student body with a significant immigrant population, including many English language learners. Half of all the ELLs in the state of Rhode Island attend Providence public schools. The district also educates a significant number of students with IEPs.

Teachers and community members have pointed to organizations like ARISE, whose mission is to "prepare, promote, and empower Rhode Island's Southeast Asian students for educational and career success." In addition to running afterschool programs in PPS at Central High School and Classical High School, ARISE also organizes campaigns around issues relevant to the students it works with. ARISE provides a look at some of the ways that PPS can infuse social justice themes into a culturally responsive curriculum aimed at acknowledging and addressing the challenges of poverty and racial marginalization facing many of its students.

What We Hope For

Providence children deserve social justice. They deserve a curriculum informed by realities facing their communities including racial and economic marginalization as well as fair, responsive, restorative discipline practices. Due to the high concentration of needs in the district, for Providence children to get the education they deserve, the district and the state must make an intentional, sustained investment in Providence schools and promote teacher stability, mental and physical health of students, culturally responsive curriculum and school climate, and restorative justice.

Our Goals:

1. Build on the work of organizations like ARISE to empower marginalized youth and infuse social justice and equity into the daily life of students at school.

2. Push for a district-wide commitment to deep anti-bias work, including educators, staff, school and district administrators, as well as students and families.

Quality School Facilities

What We Know

Excellent teaching, and a comprehensive curriculum are insufficient if communities lack safe, clean, updated school facilities. Evidence shows that an unhealthy physical school environment has a negative impact on students' health, academic achievement, and daily attendance.[66] Leaks from rain or damaged plumbing, overcrowded classrooms, and broken classroom furniture can cause distraction and detract from learning. Mold and HVAC issues affect air quality and can aggravate asthma and other existing conditions. Poor lighting can make it difficult to read, write, or do other work. Asbestos and lead exposure are known serious health hazards. Asbestos can lead to lung damage and cancer. Though there is no "safe" level of lead exposure for anyone of any age, lead poisoning is a particularly serious concern

[66] U.S. Department of Education, *A Summary of Scientific Findings on Adverse Effects of Indoor Environments on Students' Health, Academic Performance, and Attendance*, Mark J. Mendell, and Garvin Heath (Washington, DC 2004).

for children aged six and under, due to the profound effect it can have on their physical and cognitive development.

Unhealthy and unsafe facilities also influence recruitment and retention of teachers and staff. A survey from 2004 showed that school building quality could predict whether teachers wanted to leave their positions, or even the profession entirely.[67] In the study, which looked at Washington, DC and Chicago, 40 percent of respondents who had suffered poor health outcomes related to school facility issues said they were considering leaving teaching.[68]

What We See

Many Providence school facilities are in poor physical condition. The Johns Hopkins report on Providence schools released in 2019 notes that in all but one of the elementary schools the research team visited, buildings were in a condition that "clearly disrupted learning and possibly students' health."[69] Children in some school buildings are exposed to lead via drinking water and peeling paint, and asbestos exposure was a concern at others.[70] Across the district, school buildings suffer from insufficient lighting, rodent problems, mold issues, HVAC issues, as well as water fountains, walls, and classroom furniture in need of repair. Requests for basic facility repairs such as broken windows meet with slow responses.[71]

What We Hope For

Providence students and educators deserve school buildings that foster, rather than hinder, learning and that communicate to children that their community and state values them and is invested in their well-being and success.

Our Goals:

1. Prioritize and develop a plan for renovation of buildings with unsafe or unhealthy conditions such as exposed asbestos, lead contamination, mold, crumbling walls, warped floors, and exposed plumbing and guarantee that all students and staff in every building have access to clean, safe drinking water.

2. Improve the maintenance request system so that teachers and staff can report needed repairs, receive clear confirmation of their complaint and a clear timeline for when the repair will be made.

3. Upgrade Providence school buildings with well-lit, flexible classroom layouts and furniture that can accommodate both individual and small group work, as well as modern technology,

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[67] Jack Buckley, Mark Schneider and Yi Shang, The Effects of School Facility Quality on Teacher Retention in Urban School Districts (Washington, D.C.: National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, 2004).
[68] Mark Schneider, Public School Facilities and Teaching: Washington, D.C., and Chicago (2003), www.21csf.org/csfhome/Documents/Teacher_Survey/SCHOOL_FACS_AND_TEACHING.pdf.
[69] Johns Hopkins, 28.
[70] Johns Hopkins., 40-41.
[71] Johns Hopkins, 41.

including a smart board in every classroom, chrome book access for students, and access to updated computers and technology for educators.

4. Advocate for safe, healthy outdoor recreation and play spaces at every Providence school.