

Wednesday, February 12, 2025

Dear Providence Public Schools Community,

The City of Providence recently released its 2024 Community Engagement Report, "Community Voices on Providence Public Schools." While I appreciate the City's focus on education, I'm concerned that the report relies mainly on anecdotal feedback and disregards key student data, including assessment results. It also fails to acknowledge the significant strides our students have made, particularly given the challenges of the nationwide pandemic.

To provide a more balanced perspective, I want to share some important data points that demonstrate the progress Providence Public Schools has made:

**Academic Progress:**

- **School Star Ratings:** 59% of Providence Public Schools now hold a 2-star rating or higher, a 9% increase since the State intervention began. We are especially proud of Classical High School's rise from 2 to 4 stars, and Asa Messer Elementary's remarkable jump from 1 to 3 stars. Messer was the only elementary school in the state to achieve a two-star increase in 2024.
- **MLL Target Achievement:** Preliminary data shows a significant improvement in MLL progress, with 70% of students meeting their annual targets on the ACCESS assessment, compared to just 37% in the 2018-2019 school year.

**Student Attendance:**

- **Chronic Absenteeism Reduction:** The District has led the state in reducing chronic absenteeism, decreasing from 48.4% in 2022-2023 to 36.2% in the 2023-2024 school year. This represents a 12.1 percentage point decline and is even lower than the pre-pandemic rate of 37.3% in 2018-2019.
- **Consistent Attendance:** 64% of students are present for at least 90% of the school year, a 2% increase since the 2018-2019 school year and in the wake of the pandemic. We are actively working towards our 90% Target Attendance Percentage (TAP) goal.

**Parent and Family Engagement:**

- **Increased Participation:** Parent engagement with district-led advisory groups has grown significantly, from 55 to nearly 400 participants since the start of the intervention. This growth includes groups like the Parent Advisory Council, the Parent Leadership Academy, the Districtwide Advisory Council, and PPSD volunteers exceeding our TAP target.
- **Positive Family Feedback:** School leaders developed a Family Feedback Survey on the TAP progress that was open from October 9, 2024 to November 27, 2024, and was promoted through the ParentSquare Family Communication platform. The survey was open to parents and guardians and received 400 responses. In addition, the Office of Family and Community engagement hosted five family engagement sessions to gather additional feedback on TAP progress. The survey revealed that

67% of families feel informed about progress and opportunities and 58% feel informed about their child's school's goals and how they can support them. Seventy-seven percent of caregivers agreed or strongly agreed that they know how their child is performing academically and 72% agreed that their child receives appropriate academic support in school. In response to suggestions and strategies, families felt that the District should focus on making efforts to make students feel safe in school and emphasize the importance of attendance; work to strengthen and increase early intervention programs for students with language challenges and special needs; continue to improve facilities centered on safety and security features; and offer career development pathways for current staff.

### **Student Achievement:**

- **3rd Grade Math:** We've seen a 10% increase in the number of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the 3rd grade Math RICAS assessment, surpassing pre-pandemic levels.
- **3rd Grade ELA:** While we've seen an overall 4% decrease in students meeting or exceeding expectations on the 3rd Grade English Language Arts (ELA) RICAS, we are actively working to better support students and teachers to improve literacy outcomes.
- **Student Growth:** PPSD has seen steady progress in the percentage of students showing academic growth. During the 2023-2024 school year, 62% percent of students in grades 3 through 8 showed growth in ELA RICAS and 60% of students showed growth in Math RICAS. Prior to the intervention, one of the biggest contributing factors to the District's low performance was that students were not even making at least one year of growth.
- **Graduation Rate:** The four-year graduation rate has improved from 73% in the 2018-2019 school year to 77% in the recent 2023-2024 school year.
- **College and Career Readiness:** The percentage of students graduating with college credit, AP credit, or a CTE credential has remained stable. We have significantly expanded opportunities in these areas adding 40% more CTE programs, increasing AP programming by 12%, and seeing growth in the number of students earning AP credit (from 1,165 to 1,369).
- **Early education:** PPSD has increased the number of four year olds enrolled in high-quality Pre-K programs during the intervention with two schools earning the prestigious BrightStars 5-star rating for creating a nurturing and stimulating learning environment. PPSD expanded its pre-K capacity to 963 seats in SY24-25 from 506 seats in 2020-2021 school year.

As a community, we must celebrate the successes of our educators and students. I value the voice of our students, families, staff, and the greater community. My leadership team will continue to work closely with the community to move our District forward. We look forward to supporting a collaborative effort by District, State, and City leaders, to build the exceptional school district our students deserve.

Sincerely,

Javier Montañez, Ed.D.  
*Superintendent*