

**Providence Public Schools:
An Assessment of the Need for District Transformation
To Accelerate Student Achievement**

Prepared for the Providence Public School District
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E D U C A T I O N

Executive Summary

The Providence Public School District (PPSD) stands poised to dramatically transform how its central office relates to and supports schools. Until recently, PPSD was led by a talented leadership team that made significant progress in improving the system to benefit students. There are successful practices being generated in PPSD schools, particularly within the Office of Transformation and Innovation. However, the rest of the central office has not yet been reengineered to perform at a high level. This report seeks to answer the following questions:

- What would it take for PPSD to replicate current successful practices at scale?
- How would the central office have to reinvent itself in order to make this happen?
- What pathways for transformation can be identified, chosen, and implemented?

The Case for Analysis

- The best available research on central office design for district-wide achievement, conducted by faculty at the University of Washington and supported by the Wallace Foundation, calls for developing central offices around five dimensions.
 - Learning-focused partnerships with school principals to deepen principals' instructional leadership practices
 - Assistance to central office-principal partnerships
 - Reorganizing and “reculturing” central office units to support teaching and learning
 - Stewardship of the overall central office transformation process
 - Use of performance measurement throughout the central office
- While PPSD has made efforts in four of the five dimensions, the current organizational and staffing design constrains these efforts and prevents their full-scale implementation.

Findings: The current design does not meet stakeholder needs

Finding I: The current central office design contributes to perceptions of bloat in the central office

- Only 8% of employees are in the central office, making PPSD lean compared to other New England school districts with similar demographics.
- The ratio of clerical and support staff to professional staff is higher than other New England city school systems (3:1). This creates a perception that the central office is bloated.
- The district lacks key capacities in project management, talent management, data analysis, and policy analysis. This reduces the speed and effectiveness of district initiatives.
- The district lacks the systems and processes needed to manage performance, which results in inadequate service delivery to families, schools and central office colleagues.

Finding II: Bright spots in current practice are constrained by district structures

- PPSD has a strong theory of action and aligned strategic priorities.
- Investments in principal leadership capacity need increased resources to be brought to scale.
- Under-resourced data and analysis systems hamper efforts to monitor school performance.
- Talent management and development functions need reinforcement in order to bring promising teacher performance improvement efforts to scale.

Finding III: Obsolete systems hamper the effectiveness of PPSD staff

- PPSD lacks the organizational capacity to inculcate a culture of evidence-based practice.
- Human resources' organizational structure is unsuited to PPSD's human capital challenge.
- Employee performance management systems are insufficient to develop staff.

Finding IV: Current organizational design is not aligned to the Strategic Direction Policy of Autonomy

- More than half of cabinet-level positions will need to see significant changes to the organizational structure of their departments in order to improve services to schools implementing autonomies.
- Central office investments in staff development and training to match redesigned systems are necessary to improve services to families, students, and schools.

Recommendations in Brief: Redesign the central office to meet service needs

Mass Insight Education believes a well-designed, well-executed central office transformation presents PPSD with the best opportunity to improve the experiences of students and families, school staff, and central office employees as they seek to collectively pursue their goal that all students graduate from PPSD "college and career ready." Such a transformation can be done within the current central office resources, but will require significant investments of time and expertise to realize this goal. PPSD should commit to pursuing a well-designed, thoughtful central office redesign that satisfies two overarching recommendations:

Recommendation I: Establish a change management team

- The Superintendent should establish a team that can work independently to conduct the deep analysis necessary to rebuild the core systems and processes of the central office.
- Provide the change management team with supports needed to ensure a thorough reworking of the structures, processes, and procedures of central office functions while respecting the need of central office staff to serve schools.
- The Superintendent should access needed city-wide supports to ensure that any dependencies or needed interactions with other city agencies are well coordinated.

Recommendation II: Create the conditions and capacity for transformation

- Business processes must be redesigned to increase efficiency and responsiveness.
- The central office's organizational structure must be revised to enhance productivity and customer service—particularly in support of students, families, and schools.
 - Develop career ladders for placing qualified staff into clearly defined, redesigned roles for which they are qualified; and reallocate positions (and/or the underlying financial resources) that are not aligned with the new design to schools or eliminate them responsibly.
- Central office human capital strategy and activities must be aligned with district goals.
- Data driven decision-making must be made ubiquitous and routine, incorporating performance management metrics as a key feature so that continuous improvement can be measured.

The Case for Analysis

The Providence Public School District (PPSD) stands poised to dramatically transform how its central office relates to and supports schools. PPSD has many of the necessary ingredients: a talented leadership team (until recently¹), a shared commitment to improvement, and an understanding at many levels throughout the district that the status quo will not prepare students for college and career in the 21st century. The question is how to use these ingredients to create a central office that does more for students, teachers and administrators, and families and community members. Mass Insight Education's (MIE) publication *The Turnaround Challenge* explains the conditions required for schools to make transformative gains in student achievement, and MIE's work with PPSD's Office of Transformation and Innovation (OTI) has shown that schools in which those conditions are met can indeed make rapid performance gains. The OTI also demonstrates that for these conditions to be met in PPSD right now, significant human resources must be dedicated to clearing the way for principals. With this in mind, this report is designed to answer the following questions:

- What would it take for all schools in PPSD to experience the same conditions for success as the schools supported by the OTI?
- How would the central office have to reimagine its role and reinvent its work in order to make this happen?
- What pathways to transformation exist, and how might the district choose one and implement it?

In recent years, an increasing amount of research has focused on just this question of how the central office can better work with and for schools to promote student achievement. Perhaps most comprehensively, research supported by the Wallace Foundation has identified five dimensions that are essential for such changes. In this section, we discuss these dimensions. We also revisit MIE's school performance framework from *The Turnaround Challenge* and explain how implementing these dimensions will set all PPSD schools up for success on MIE's framework.

Why central office transformation?

Why set the central office at the center of change efforts instead of focusing on individual schools or small groups, as in the OTI model? We find an answer in Wallace Foundation-supported research from Meredith Honig and colleagues at the University of Washington. Honig et al.'s 2010 report *Central Office Transformation for District-wide Teaching and Learning Improvement* represents the culmination of several years of research in a variety of districts, with diversity in both geographic location and size. The report presents its learnings as five dimensions that are critical for creating real and sustainable change. These dimensions are:

1. Learning-focused partnerships with school principals to deepen principals' instructional leadership practices;
2. Assistance to the central office-principal partnerships by the rest of the central office;
3. Reorganizing and "reculturing" of each central office unit, to support the central office-principal partnerships and teaching and learning improvement;
4. Stewardship of the overall central office transformation process; and
5. Use of evidence throughout the central office to support the continual improvement of

¹ On April 30th, 2015, prior to the publication of this report, Dr. Lusi tendered her resignation as Superintendent, effective as of the end of the school year.

work practices and relationships with schools.²

These findings are notable for two reasons. First, the researchers “aimed to understand ... specifically what these central offices were doing. This study breaks new ground in educational research by uncovering the daily work practices and activities of central office administrators as they sought not just to make the central office more efficient but also to transform the central office into a support system to help all schools improve the quality of teaching and learning.” In addition to being more specific about the practices that lead to success than previous research has been, they find that “districts generally do not see districtwide improvements in teaching and learning without substantial engagement by their central offices in helping all schools build their capacity for improvement” (Honig et al, 2010, p. iii). These dimensions serve as a roadmap for making transformative changes to the central office that will support teaching and learning improvements in every school in a district.

Dimension 1: Learning-focused partnerships with school principals to deepen principals’ instructional leadership practices

Honig and her colleagues find that the heart of successful transformation efforts is building principals’ capacity to serve as instructional leaders within their buildings. Successfully transforming districts have created principal supervisor positions focused exclusively on helping school principals improve their practice. Honig et al. identify core practices for principal supervisors in order to achieve this end: first, consistent differentiation of support for individual principals throughout the year; second, modeling of ways of thinking and acting for instructional leadership; third, developing and using tools that support principals’ engagement in instructional leadership; and fourth, connecting principals to sources of assistance and simultaneously buffering them from negative external influences. Another promising practice is creating opportunities for principals to participate in inter-school networks that allow them to serve as resources for one another (Honig et al., 2010, p. 19). The researchers note, however, that principal supervisors’ ability to engage in this work successfully with their principals depends on the support they receive from other staff in the central office (Honig et al., 2010, p. 55).

PPSD has already done significant work to put Dimension 1 into action. The district has three zone executive directors (ZEDs), directing the Elementary, Secondary, and Innovation Zones, who serve as principal supervisors. Because there are more than 20 elementary schools, the district also added a position, director of school support, in summer 2014; the director of school support reports to the executive director of elementary schools and is responsible for supervising half of the district’s elementary principals. This has left each ZED/director responsible for directly supervising approximately 10 principals, a manageable caseload.

In addition to creating the position of principal supervisor, the district has recently begun to work hard to move non-instructional duties off of ZEDs’ plates. In previous years, ZEDs were expected to work with principals on everything from instructional leadership to operational and administrative detail work. While efforts were made to relieve ZEDs of the burdens of managing non-instructional work earlier, in summer 2014, the ZEDs and the chief of instruction, leadership and equity (CILE) formalized the move of these non-instructional responsibilities away from ZEDs and to other, more appropriate central office staff. This allowed the ZEDs to focus on building principals’ instructional leadership capacity. The

² Honig, M. I., Copland, M. A., Rainey, L., Lorton, J. A., & Newton, M. (April 2010). *Central Office Transformation for District-wide Teaching and Learning Improvement*. Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington. Commissioned by the Wallace Foundation.

elementary principal supervisors are also currently working to create principal cohorts that will serve as learning communities. All of this work is perfectly aligned to the vision of principal supervision and development outlined in Honig et al.'s research, and speaks to PPSD's commitment to developing its school leaders.

Dimension 2: Assistance to central office-principal partnerships

Dimension 2 calls for other central office staff to support principal supervisors to enable them to do their best work with and for principals. Honig and colleagues name four activities that are key to allowing principal supervisors to work effectively: first, direct professional development for principal supervisors; second, taking demands off principal supervisors' plates; third, leading through – rather than around – principal supervisors; and fourth, developing and using an accountability system that does not place all responsibility for holding principals accountable for student outcomes on principal supervisors (Honig et al., 2010, pp. 56-57).

Most of these activities are relatively self-explanatory, but the idea of leading “through” rather than “around” is less obvious. What Honig and her colleagues mean by this is that “based on a shared conception of the nature of the [principal supervisors'] role vis-à-vis the principal, other central office administrators and board members did not circumvent the [supervisors] and work directly with principals, but through their actions reinforced the [supervisors'] essential role in principals' instructional leadership development” (Honig et al., 2010, p. 63).

As noted above, PPSD clearly has a vision of the ZED role that aligns to Dimension 1. To some extent, however, the district's vision for principal supervision and support outstrips its ability to enact Dimension 2. In recent months, ZEDs have found themselves increasingly drawn into old patterns of doing business, which force them to spend time on non-instructional tasks such as helping principals with personnel, facilities, and operations matters. Other central office staff have not fully embraced changes to their ways of working that would enable ZEDs to maintain a laser-like focus on building principals' capacity for instructional leadership. Some of this may be resistance to change, but there are also central office capacity constraints that make it hard for other central office staff to change their practices to fully support ZEDs. Freeing central office staff from the constraints imposed by outmoded ways of supporting schools and providing them with roles and opportunities to use new and developing skills to support schools is imperative. We address those constraints, and potential solutions, in this report.

Dimension 3: Reorganizing and reculturing central office units to support teaching and learning improvement

Dimension 3 addresses the need for change in other central office divisions to support the execution of Dimensions 1 and 2. For the most part, these are changes that have not yet been made in PPSD, slowing the ZEDs and lessening their ability to build principal capacity. Indeed, the specific activities that Dimension 3 calls for are nearly perfectly aligned with the gaps in PPSD's current staffing structure, underlining both the district's current inability to provide the ZEDs with needed support and the urgency of making changes that will make those supports readily available.

Honig and her colleagues identify three sets of activities that are critical to what they call reorganizing and “reculturing” central office units:

- Shifting the practice of central office administrators to a case and project management approach, personalizing services and focusing on problem-solving;
- Developing central office staff capacity; and
- Developing and using a system that holds central office staff accountable for high-quality performance, as we do for principals and schools (Honig et al., 2010, p. 70).

The approach outlined by the activities above is one in which central office staff work closely with a specified set of schools, getting to know them closely so that they can provide superior services – for example, human resources generalists who work with a cohort of schools can anticipate staffing needs and serve as strategic talent recruitment and development partners, rather than as mere paperwork processors (Honig et al., 2010, p. 72). It also demands that central office leaders commit to “build[ing] the central office’s human capital for project-management focused on teaching and learning by bringing in [*sic*] new and often non-traditional staff into the central office” (Honig et al., 2010, p. 78). Finally, implementing Dimension 3’s practices calls for a comprehensive data system – and staff to analyze and report out on that data – that allows central office performance to be tracked on a matrix of indicators. These needs are addressed in recommendations later in this report.

Dimension 4: Stewardship of the overall central office transformation process

Dimension 4 essentially calls for some central office staff to serve as stewards of the change process. These staff steward change by continuously referring to and updating the theory of action as needed, communicating frequently with all stakeholders about the theory of action, and serving as strategic resource brokers (Honig et al., 2010, pp. 88-89). These change managers may help district leaders pursue both knowledge (such as experts in specific aspects of central office transformation) and fiscal resources (such as support from local businesses or foundations).

It is essential to have a transformation management team in place: The process of change is challenging, and neglecting its management can negatively impact both the speed and the effectiveness of the process. PPSD must be ready to commit resources to managing change. We address this need in the recommendations section.

Dimension 5: Use of performance measurement throughout the central office

Finally, Honig and her colleagues emphasize the importance of using evidence to measure performance and hold central office staff members accountable. Effective implementation of Dimensions 1 through 4 depends on having staff both collect evidence and help incorporate that evidence into decision-making practices at the central office level (Honig et al., 2010, p. 22). Even in districts committed to transformation, lack of such staff stood out to Honig et al. as a common gap, slowing change efforts. As we discuss in this report, PPSD must be prepared to change its staffing model in order to build in positions whose main charge is the procurement, analysis, and reporting of data to drive decision-making.

Implications of the research

Taken as a set of practices, the dimensions of central office transformation identified in the Honig report have several important implications for PPSD. First, all central office staff must commit to focusing on building principals’ instructional leadership capacity. Second, staff must understand that these dimensions call for comprehensive changes to how all staff approach their work – not that some people

change their practices while others continue business as usual. Finally, it is less important who does what work; it is more important that the right work get done. This demands strong, frequent communication within and across divisions. District leadership must create systems that align individual central office staff members' interests with the interests of families, students, and school staff.

Developing a central office structure that can meet the criteria outlined by the Honig report is a necessary but insufficient step in creating an optimal central office that is well-positioned to support families, students, schools, and each other. Resources that are reclaimed through a central office redesign process will need to be used to help staff develop new skills and new habits of working that are more mission-aligned than before. Training and professional development on skills such as data analysis, project management, implementation science, conflict resolution, and case management will need to be provided throughout the organization.

Below, we briefly address the connections between the Honig research and Mass Insight Education's High-Performing, High-Poverty (HPHP) School Readiness Framework. We then move to discussing our findings from an analysis of the central office as currently staffed and provide a series of recommendations that will help PPSD's central office live the Honig Dimensions and create the conditions for success called for in MIE's framework at all district schools.

Creating a structure in which schools can act

Mass Insight Education's HPHP Readiness Framework synthesizes promising practices across nine elements within three domains: (1) Readiness to Learn; (2) Readiness to Teach; and (3) Readiness to Act. This framework, also known as the Readiness Triangle, was first presented in Mass Insight Education's *The Turnaround Challenge* (2007) and is shown below in Figure 1.

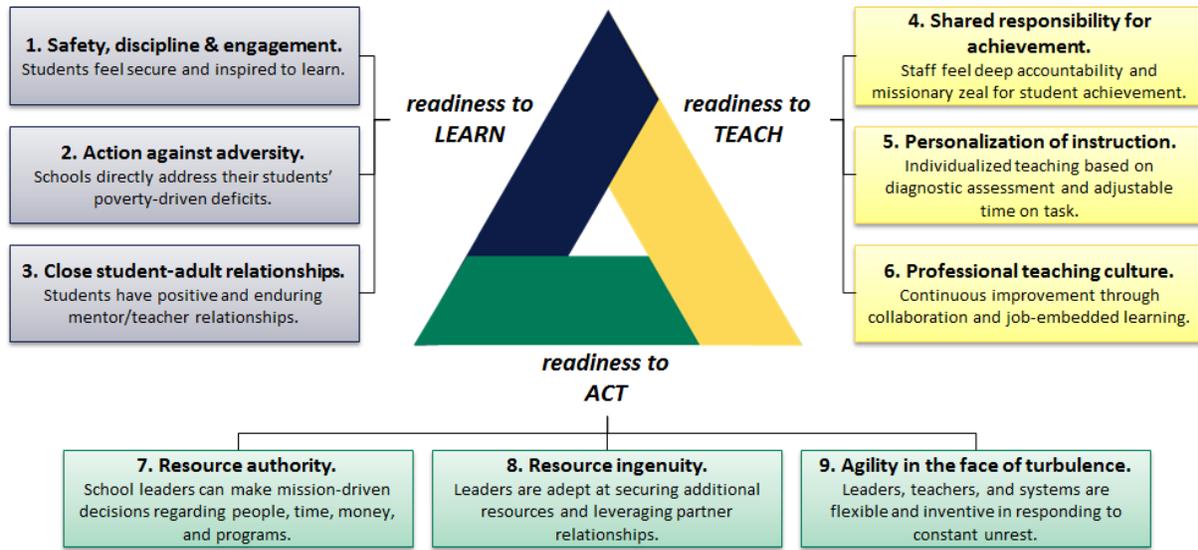
Readiness to Learn refers to a school's ability to proactively address the challenges that stand in the way of student learning. A school's Readiness to Teach depends on its ability to establish a culture where all staff share responsibility for student achievement, differentiate instruction based on timely data, and seek to continuously improve their practice through embedded, aligned professional development. Finally, Readiness to Act addresses a school's ability to remain both flexible and highly responsive in the face of a variety of obstacles that are particularly common to high-poverty school communities.³

Transforming the central office in PPSD using the practices identified by Honig and her colleagues is the best way for the district to create the readiness conditions MIE has identified as key to turnaround at the school level. Conditions at the school level are dependent upon actions by the central office; the more the central office focuses its work on building capacity to improve teaching and learning in schools, the more quickly schools will have the conditions in place to rapidly accelerate student achievement.

In this section, we have identified a central office transformation framework. We now turn to an analysis of PPSD in its current state in order to identify (1) areas of alignment with this framework and (2) areas where alignment currently does not exist or is minimal, and to propose solutions that will help the central office build alignment in order to create the conditions for success in every classroom in every school in Providence.

³ This last aspect, Readiness to Act, assumes increased importance in light of PPSD's strategic direction policy of autonomy, adopted in December 2014.

Figure 1. The HPHP Readiness Framework⁴



Study in Success: The Office of Transformation and Innovation

History and Context

In summer 2013, PPSD established its strong theory of action and nine aligned strategic priorities with an emerging emphasis on increasing school autonomy. In December 2014, the School Board passed an official strategic direction policy on autonomy. PPSD recognized from the outset that increasing school-level autonomy would require thoughtful planning and implementation. As an initial step, the district revised and launched the new Innovation Zone, creating a protected space for schools to work differently to increase student outcomes.

Using Mass Insight Education's model for partnership zones (see Appendix A), the Innovation Zone defined a space with flexible conditions and strategic clustering or functional grouping of schools. This functional grouping is called a *Lead Partner*, a semi-autonomous unit within PPSD whose charge is tied to specific performance targets. If these targets are not met, then the Lead Partner's staff are subject to reassignment or other sanctions. PPSD's Innovation Zone is comprised of three clusters of schools: the *Trailblazer schools*, existing elementary and middle schools managed by the Office of Transformation and Innovation (OTI) as the internal lead partner; *United Providence!*, an elementary, middle, and high school managed by a joint labor/management collaborative whose contract is monitored by OTI staff; and the *New Schools cluster*, made up of one new middle school supported by the OTI and two new schools seeded with grant money from the Carnegie Foundation that will open in September 2015.

⁴ Calkins, A., Guenther, W., Belfiore, G., & Lash, D. (2007). *The Turnaround Challenge: Why America's best opportunity to dramatically improve student achievement lies in our worst-performing schools*. © 2007 Mass Insight Education & Research Institute.

The Trailblazer Schools

The Trailblazer cluster was launched to function as a district incubator, piloting increased autonomy and school-based decision-making to identify, test, and implement innovative strategies to scale district-wide. Currently, the cluster includes Robert Bailey Elementary School, Esek Hopkins Middle School, and Roger Williams Middle School. These schools were invited to join the Trailblazer cluster after undergoing a rigorous school readiness assessment, which examined school performance across the MIE HPHP School Readiness Framework. These schools were selected to join the incubator as a result of positive evidence in the following areas:

- Upward trends in school improvement;
- Strong building leadership;
- Strong labor-management relationships;
- Shifting culture to make data-driven decisions;
- Strong team cohesion and shared accountability; and
- Ability to think creatively to reach the next level in improving student outcomes.

Findings: The current design does not meet stakeholder needs

Finding I: The current central office design contributes to perceptions of bloat

Large but lean

Serving nearly 24,000 students and employing nearly 3,700 full and part time employees, PPSD is the largest department in the City of Providence. In 2014-2015, there are 39 schools in Providence, with two more opening in September 2015. Yet while the School Department is large, its central office is surprisingly lean. The majority of the School Department's employees work at school sites; of the district's 3,617 active employees, only 298 – or eight percent – work in the central office, as shown in Table 1 below.⁵

Table 1.

Providence School Department Employees by Function and Location

<u>Employee Type</u>	<u>Central Office Staff</u> ⁶	<u>School-Based Staff</u>	<u>Total Staff</u>
District leaders	15	--	15
Administrative professionals	30	--	30
School leaders	--	89	89
Education subject-matter experts	90	2,183	2,270
Support staff	75	701	776
<u>Clerical staff</u>	<u>88</u>	<u>144</u>	<u>231</u>
All types	298	3,117	3,617 ⁷

⁵ "Active employees" do not include (1) employees currently receiving workers' compensation for on-the-job injuries but performing no work functions and (2) School Board members. There are 54 people currently receiving workers' compensation, and nine School Board members.

⁶ These numbers are drawn from payroll data current as of December 2014.

⁷ This total includes 202 transportation support employees (bus monitors and crossing guards) who are budgeted centrally but perform their work at school sites. For employee type definitions, refer to Appendix B.

As shown above, the district dedicates the vast majority of its human resources to student-facing positions. Indeed, Providence is one of only two districts in the region of comparable size and demographics to have fewer than 10 percent of its employees located in the central office (see Table 2 below).

Table 2.
Total Number of Employees and Employee Distribution in Comparable Regional Districts⁸

<u>State</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Total Central Office Staff</u>	Central Office Professional Staff	Central Office Support and Clerical Staff	<u>School-Based Staff</u>
CT	Bridgeport	20,155	13%	10%	3%	88%
CT	Hartford	21,545	16%	15%	1%	84%
RI	Providence	23,872	8%	6%	2%	92%
MA	Springfield	25,283	9%	8%	1%	91%
MA	Worcester	24,740	14%	13%	1%	87%

However, despite the district’s emphasis on pushing as many resources as possible out to schools, the current staffing model contributes to the perception (shared by stakeholders both inside and outside of the School Department) that the central office is bloated.

It is notable that clerical/support staff make up only two percent of Providence’s total number of employees, but these employees comprise 30% of the central office staff. *This ratio of support/clerical staff to professional staff in the central office – nearly 1:3 – is higher than the ratio in most comparable districts.* While Bridgeport also has a nearly 1:3 ratio of support/clerical staff to professional staff, Hartford, Springfield, and Worcester have significantly fewer support/clerical staff relative to the number of professional positions in their central offices. In Providence, three in 10 central office employees are members of the clerical union.

While the numbers make clear that the central office is overall relatively lean, some position groups are in fact bloated, while others are understaffed. This distribution of staff is a holdover from old ways of doing business; staffing practices have not been updated to account for new technologies, changing student and family needs, and new district goals and strategic priorities.

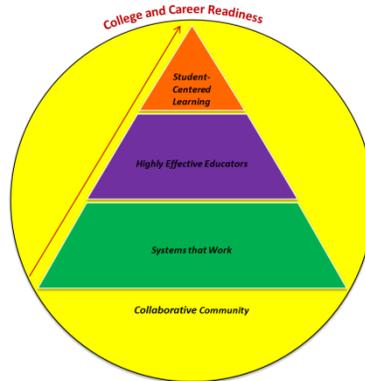
Finding II: Bright Spots in Current Practice are Constrained by District Structures

PPSD has a strong theory of action and aligned strategic priorities

The district’s theory of action is: “If we develop and retain effective school leaders and teachers, and if we differentiate the necessary resources and services to each school, and if our school leaders are responsible for individual student outcomes, then our schools will effectively serve every child.” The theory of action focuses district efforts to graduate all students prepared for college and career into three critical, and interrelated, areas: (1) Systems that Work; (2) Highly Effective Educators; and (3) Student-Centered Learning (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2. *PPSD’s Path to College and Career Readiness⁹*

⁸ Data source: National Center for Education Statistics. Data provided are the most recent available, AY 2012-2013. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.



The college and career readiness pathway in the above diagram makes clear the ways that each critical area interacts with the others. Consideration of the progression also reveals the importance of high-performing systems:

- Student-centered learning is dependent upon having highly effective educators in every classroom.
- Highly effective educators can best serve students when they are supported by seamless, responsive systems that let them focus on teaching and learning, rather than resource procurement and management.
- Systems that work must be built and maintained by skilled, creative administrative professionals who provide families, school personnel, and other stakeholders with timely, high-quality service.

The district’s theory of action is logically consistent, emphasizes meeting students where they are to best serve their needs, and appropriately drives the district’s strategic priorities (see Appendix B). However, it also makes clear the importance of several critical functions:

- Recruiting, developing, and retaining world-class staff;
- Providing differentiated resources to schools and classrooms in order to best meet the needs of students and teachers to dramatically accelerate student achievement; and
- Establishing comprehensive data collection, analysis, and reporting functions that allow the district to properly monitor inputs and outputs across all departments.

These critical functions are dependent upon smart, highly functional systems that work. Human resources must have the capacity to not only process employment paperwork but also identify strong candidates, develop staff through targeted trainings, and build career pathways and ladders that will keep top talent in the district. Schools must have the ability to choose the resources that best fit their students’ and teachers’ needs, rather than submitting to a “one size fits all,” top-down approach to resource distribution. Employees at all levels must have access to timely, accurate, and useful data in order to make good decisions.

While these statements may seem self-evident, truly supporting strong execution in these areas will require significant changes to the way staff are deployed in Providence’s central office. Fewer staff whose responsibilities revolve primarily around processing paperwork will be required at the central office and the district must build its capacity for human capital development, project management, and

⁹ This diagram can be found in the district’s publication *On the Move*, available on the PPSD website at: http://www.providenceschools.org/files/_3VDDr_/60196bfb17e98eb33745a49013852ec4/On_The_Move_2014_ENG-WEB.pdf.

data analysis in order to support the core work of teaching and learning.

Efforts to build school leadership capacity are constrained by resource limitations

In fall 2014, the district rolled out a new initiative, the Academy for Leveraging Leadership (ALL), aimed at building principals' capacity for instructional leadership. This is perhaps the most systematic reform effort for teaching and learning that the district has introduced since 2011, and it is well-aligned both to the district's strategic direction policy on autonomy and to what we know to be the highest-impact lever for central offices seeking to maximize their ability to support improved student outcomes.

The argument for transforming the central office in Providence rests on the assumption that doing so will ultimately improve student learning outcomes. While most central office staff cannot have a direct impact on student achievement outcomes, it is reasonable to assume that the central office can work to make principals better at their jobs in two ways: first, by supporting them with professional development that strengthens their instructional leadership abilities; and second, by providing services in a seamless manner that reduces operational/administrative burdens on principals. To use the language of Honig et al., the central office should be transformed in order to function as a service center for principals. ALL was developed specifically to address the first of these needs – building principals' instructional leadership skills – and early results have been promising.

ALL was designed and implemented by the district's instructional leadership team (ZEDs, the CILE, and other key cabinet-level leaders) in collaboration with National Academic Educational Partners¹⁰ and with a focus on three key levers for improving principal practice: (1) the instructional shifts required in order to fully implement the Common Core State Standards; (2) observation of and feedback to teachers on their classroom practice; and (3) data-driven instruction. In order to maximize the district's return on its investment in ALL, participants include not just principals but also assistant principals, math and literacy coaches, and instructional specialists.¹¹ Hence, all school leaders are receiving training and support on the three high-impact levers the district identified.

This delivery model is in keeping with what research from the University of Washington, supported by the Wallace Foundation, has identified as a best practice in terms of central office support of schools. As demonstrated in Figure 3 below, the central office should funnel school support efforts through principals (a term we use loosely here to indicate building leaders generally, inclusive of assistant principals, and, at the elementary level, instructional coaches). Essentially, principals are the fulcrum point on the lever that connects central office services to student outcomes.

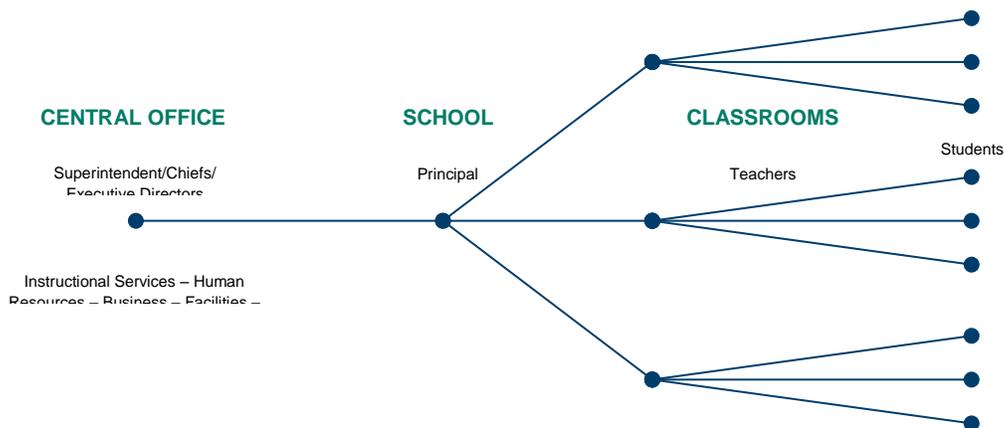
With this in mind, ALL was designed to provide principals with tools that were user-friendly and generated actionable data about teacher performance on identified high-impact levers. In 2014-2015, ALL has focused on an Anchor Standard from the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts, and two of the CCSS Standards for Mathematical Practice; additional focus areas for 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 have already been identified and shared with principals so that they can understand the rationale, see the connections and how the strands tie together, and share that information with their teachers and staff. All of this makes for more intentional and sustained

¹⁰ For more information on NAEP, please see their website: www.naeppartners.org.

¹¹ In Providence, math and reading coaches are school-based and work with teachers and students. Instructional specialists are based in the central office and work under the direction of Zone Executive Directors to provide supports to school leaders and teachers.

professional development than most PPSD staff have previously experienced. A common refrain in the district, from both school leaders and classroom educators, is that too often new initiatives seem to come and go before anyone can get a handle on them. The long-term planning for ALL has ameliorated that concern to some extent already, and principals have expressed relief at having clear priorities from the district to focus on for an extended time.

Figure 3. *How the Central Office Can Positively Affect Student Outcomes*¹²



Despite the major steps forward that ALL represents, there are some issues that continue to pose problems. Time for professional development is contractually limited, and as a result, most principals have essentially turned what should be common planning time into professional development delivery sessions. Although this has meant that all teachers receive the ALL trainings, it also means that time for teachers to collaborate, problem-solve, and plan instruction has been reduced or made voluntary. If more time to support teachers in making the shift to the common core is to be found, it will have to be paid for through identifying new resources or freeing up resources that are currently tied up in less urgent and/or important endeavors.

Although ALL has been more systematically rolled out than many initiatives before it, not every school rolled ALL out the same way – some schools chose to pilot it in some grades, while others immediately rolled the work out to the entire school – which has caused some differences in implementation rates and fidelity. While this flexibility was provided by design, the district lacks the analytic and implementation-monitoring capacity necessary to discern which implementation choices were more effective than others, controlling for local school culture. If the district could more closely track these implementation strategies, it could learn more lessons from these choices and apply them systematically in the future, shortening the ‘learning curve’ on subsequent large-scale implementations and helping principals act decisively and wisely.

Finally, the ALL work has ended up focusing primarily on the instructional shifts for the Common Core and on observation and feedback instead of data-driven instruction and decision-making. Currently, PPSD lacks the capacity to simultaneously resource instructional shifts, observation and feedback, and data-driven decision-making, and will not be able to fully realize the true value of the ALL work until schools have been trained in all three areas. However, it is fair to say that ALL is perhaps the best example in PPSD’s recent history of systematic reform of teaching and instructional leadership.

¹² Source: *Central Office Transformation Toolkit: Strengthening school district central offices in the service of improved teaching and learning*. © 2013 University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership.

A growing culture of performance monitoring is hampered by organizational deficits

School-level efforts are progressing

Both at the school and central office levels, PPSD is increasingly striving to become an organization where high-quality data drives decision making. While there are bright spots across the district, much work remains to be done in order for PPSD to be considered a fully data-driven organization.

All PPSD schools participate in quarterly performance monitoring meetings, facilitated by district staff and, in the case of schools identified as Focus or Priority, staff members from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE).¹³ While quarterly monitoring is only mandated for Focus and Priority schools, PPSD recognized the importance of providing both schools and district instructional leaders with opportunities to step back and assess performance on a regular basis and adopted the practice for all schools.

In preparation for the quarterly monitoring sessions, school teams are required to present and analyze data on adult behaviors (i.e., what adults are being asked to do to improve instruction, and whether they are doing it) and student outcomes (i.e., whether the work adults are doing is correlated to improvements in student outcomes). The meetings themselves are then an opportunity to dive deeply into the data to assess progress, discover the root causes of failure or sluggish progress, and create action steps for improvement.

Since their inception in the summer of 2013, the monitoring meetings have become consistently more successful. Some schools have developed sophisticated data teams that track data related to school improvement efforts and work hard to share that data with other school staff in order to improve student outcomes on both academic indicators, such as standardized test scores, and non-academic indicators including attendance and – for high schools – graduation rates. RIDE has singled out some of these teams for their good work and has held up some of the data reporting done by these teams as exemplary. School teams, in turn, have found the exercise of looking at data through a structured protocol on a regular basis to be helpful.

Too few systems and structures are in place to manage the workload

However, significant work remains to be done. Too little of this work is systematized: at many schools, if the data team leader were to leave, the school's capacity for high-quality data reporting would be greatly reduced. Moreover, reporting is not standardized across schools – schools report on self-identified metrics that are developed to align with their school improvement plans – making it hard for

¹³ There are six classifications in RIDE's system. In descending order, they are: Commended, Leading, Typical, Warning, Focus, and Priority. These classifications reflect schools' performance on a number of components, including (1) percentage of students scoring proficient or better on standardized tests; (2) percentage of students scoring above proficient on standardized tests; (3) participation rate on state assessments; (4) gap-closing (i.e., how well the school is serving all students, especially those with disabilities and English Language Learners); (5) progress toward performance targets; (6) for K-8, growth of all students; (7) for 9-12, year-over-year improvement; and (8) for 9-12, performance against graduation rate goals. In 2014-2015, 22 of Providence's schools are identified as Focus or Priority. For more information on RIDE's school classification system and detailed school and district report cards, please see their website:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InformationAccountability/Accountability/SchoolClassifications.aspx>.

the district to compare schools on key metrics. Additionally, because the meetings are currently structured to provide school teams with time to meet with a facilitator, there is no inter-school collaboration built into the quarterly monitoring structure. To their credit, the district's school and instructional leadership teams are currently working on several efforts aimed at solving these challenges. These include:

- A revised school improvement plan template that forces all schools to make better use of data to design goals, strategies, and action plans.
- A revised quarterly monitoring structure that better leverages schools as resources for one another.
- Universal reporting templates that ensure all schools report on shared performance metrics; schools would be able to supplement these templates with additional reporting focused on school-specific efforts and goals.

The CILE is working with the ZEDs to make data more central to their work with principals, which dovetails with the focus on data-driven instruction in ALL. However, these efforts are to a large extent dependent upon the district's building a more sophisticated data system that makes measurement easier and more user-friendly at all levels, from classroom to district. Universal reporting templates are part of this, so too will be investments in business intelligence systems and staff development.

The analytic, technological, and business analysis skills necessary to create robust systems for schools to manage performance are highly technical and constitute professional bodies of knowledge of their own. The district needs to invest in positions with these skill sets to insure that each school has access to robust data management systems that require minimal manual input at the school level. Then, schools will also need professional development and training resources so that staff already in schools can better utilize these new tools. Furthermore, once these new processes are developed, positions that currently manually input data will be obsolete. The need will then be for staff with the skills to help school staff act on that data to improve services to students. Moving from the current way of working to the future state will require investment in current PPSD staff, not just the addition of new positions.

District-level resources for performance measurement cannot meet the demand

Just as schools are working to put data more at the forefront of their work, the central office itself is working to build its own culture of performance monitoring. Multiple initiatives currently underway speak both to the district's priorities and to the obstacles slowing progress.

During their leadership retreat in the summer of 2014, members of the superintendent's Cabinet began the process of creating scorecards. These scorecards pushed Cabinet members to do two things that are not yet common practice district-wide but hold great promise for PPSD as a whole: first, to set specific, clear, and measurable goals for their divisions/departments; and second, to build data systems that would allow them to track progress toward those goals.¹⁴

The scorecard initiative has brought with it multiple benefits. First, during the development of the scorecards themselves, Cabinet members discovered several instances where functional silos had resulted in work living in the wrong division or in the duplication of work because of communication gaps. While the development process surfaced some of the business process failures that must be addressed in order for Cabinet members and their staffs to meet their proposed targets, it also created a

¹⁴ A sample scorecard can be found in Appendix D.

venue to discuss these problems and begin building solutions. Second, building the scorecards forced Cabinet members to articulate the three to five goals that are most indicative of their division or department's success. While this process took some time, it ultimately resulted in the Cabinet having a shared understanding of how each division contributes to the district's core work of teaching and learning, and what the most critical work of each division really is in support of the goal of dramatically accelerating student achievement in PPSD. Particularly for Cabinet members whose daily work is several steps removed from students – for example, those in Finance or Operations – this was an extremely helpful exercise. Finally, the scorecard work is pushing Cabinet members to hold one another accountable for progress and to collaborate and muddle through instead of just quitting on an endeavor in favor of something more transparent or less visible to leadership. In some ways, this is perhaps the most important benefit of the scorecards.

Although every Cabinet member recognizes the urgent need for rapid improvement, the prevailing culture at all levels in PPSD is one of niceness – that is, people throughout the district are not comfortable criticizing one another, even constructively, because it runs counter to district values. While teamwork and camaraderie are essential, it is also essential that team members dispassionately assess progress towards goals and engage in resolving conflicts openly. Scorecards allow Cabinet members to frame concerns as “you and me against the problem” rather than “you against me.” This distinction may feel semantic, but in practice it is a powerful tool that allows team members to show problems clearly so they can be faced head on and encourages team members to collaborate more productively to solve them.

As is true of school-level performance monitoring, however, a significant amount of work remains to be done. The scorecards have not driven the development of new data systems to the extent required for them to become truly useful tools on a daily basis. Only some Cabinet members have adopted the scorecard approach with all department members, and not all staff are aware of the priorities established by the scorecards, hampering efforts to align work to those highest-impact goals.

As with the school-level performance-management initiatives, the processes that central office teams use on a regular basis will require rebuilding to become more targeted to school needs, more differentiated by school, and more accountable for delivering services to schools to improve results. The same analytic, technological, and business analysis skills will need to be applied internally to redesign ways of working, and similar investments in staff will need to be made to reorganize and reculture the central office, consistent with Honig's research. Change management, employee relations, and training functions will also be called upon to support the requisite relearning of how to serve schools that this transformation will require. By making these further changes to support central office management of performance, PPSD should reap the benefits of employees performing more mission-driven activities with fewer constraints and clearer direction. In short, modernizing the working conditions for delivering services will allow employees to exceed their current levels of productivity and to improve service to schools.

Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) is a promising, but underutilized, program

PPSD staff and the Providence Teachers Union (PTU) collaborated to develop and implement PAR beginning in September 2012. Between 2012 and 2014, the program was refined and paired with a new teacher induction program (TIP). In 2014-2015, there are 71 participating teachers and 16 consulting

teachers (essentially personal coaches).¹⁵ Teachers receiving PAR supports receive a minimum of either 15 contacts with their consulting teachers (for teachers referred into PAR with a rating of Ineffective) or eight contacts (for teachers referred into PAR with a rating of Developing). These represent dramatic increases over the mandated minimum of three contacts between principals and teachers over the course of the year.¹⁶

Early results from PAR have been promising. While it is still too early – and the sample size still too small – to draw statistically significant conclusions about the program’s impact on teacher effectiveness and student outcomes, reports from PAR participants have been overwhelmingly positive about the effect of the program on their instructional knowledge and practices. In 2013-2014, 91 percent of participating teachers reported that their consulting teacher had been helpful or very helpful in supporting them in their weakest standard from the evaluation domains (Planning and Preparation, The Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Growth and Responsibilities). Additionally, 82 percent reported that PAR had positively influenced their students’ growth “a good amount,” “a lot,” or “more than you know” (scores of 3, 4, and 5 on a scale of 1 to 5).

The most significant challenge that PAR faces is that too few teachers participate because there are too few teachers who are self-referring into the program. In Providence, as in the rest of Rhode Island, the overwhelming majority of teachers receive evaluation ratings of effective or highly effective each year in spite of student achievement being very low. In order to ensure that teachers are being evaluated effectively and that classroom practice is fully examined through the evaluation system, the principals need to be supported by structures that remove non-instructional duties while easing the implementation of the evaluation system.

A professionalized human resources staff, however, might be able to address some of the issues, for example by providing trainings that would enhance principals’ comfort with addressing issues of under-performance. Increased allocations of instructional support staff and further enhanced principal supervision would also allow for more specific, targeted feedback for teachers – some of whom would then receive scores of Developing or Ineffective, inducing increased self-referrals into PAR. Ideally, PAR will also attract teachers with ratings of Effective and Highly Effective who seek to improve their instructional practices. In addition, expanded data analysis capacity at the district level would – as in the case of the Cabinet scorecards – allow for more targeted data reports that would in turn let principals work with teachers from a “you and me against the data” perspective rather than an adversarial “me against you” posture.

Finding III: Obsolete Systems Hamper the Effectiveness of PPSD Staff

Lack of organizational capacity to use data limits effectiveness of teams and initiatives

Each division would benefit from access to dedicated data analysis staff. Currently, almost all of the

¹⁵ Of the 71 PAR participants, 59 were referred into the program due to a final evaluation rating of D or I; 12 self-referred into the program. Consulting teachers also work with TIP participants, of which there are 110 in 2014-2015. Due to anticipated reductions in the number of enrolled teachers because of changes in the state evaluation schedule, the number of consulting teachers is being reduced to 14 in 2015-2016.

¹⁶ These three mandated contacts are in the form of one formal and two informal observations. Of course, principals visit classrooms regularly and work with teachers much more than three times per year; similarly, most PAR coaches spend more than the minimum amount of time with their assigned teachers.

district's data analysis expertise resides in the Office of Research, Planning and Accountability (RPA). This office is primarily responsible for coordinating, delivering, analyzing, and reporting the myriad assessments conducted by PPSD each year. It is a very time-consuming, detail-oriented scope of work. Additionally, this office is tasked with conducting the large number of surveys that PPSD has agreed to participate in over the last few years. Given this scope of work, when all data requests are funneled to this office, it gets overwhelmed and cannot respond in a timely manner to all requests. However, staff members are committed to completing all tasks: including those that are less academic and more operational/administrative in nature and do not by rights belong with RPA. This leads to crawl – slow, halting progress – on both the core mission of RPA and the other data analysis tasks that it is compelled to complete in order for the district to make data-driven decisions.

PPSD needs to create data analyst staff positions that can build the data systems that do not currently exist, can gather and analyze data on a proactive, ongoing basis (rather than waiting for requests), and can populate scorecards with updated data according to a regular schedule. With frequently updated scorecards in hand, Cabinet members would be able to better assess real-time progress. The data analysts would also work with one another closely, forming a strong, data-focused team that would further reduce instances of duplicated efforts and would help identify buckets of work that are currently misplaced.

Human resources' organizational structure is unsuited to PPSD's human capital challenge

The human resource office's current structure is designed to function as a paperwork processing center rather than as a talent development office. The senior executive director of human resources currently spends her time on matters that should more rightly belong to employee relations staff and department analysts. She currently spends an inordinate amount of time supervising and sitting in interviews, conducting investigations into employee complaints and disciplinary actions, and disciplining staff throughout the organization. The prior section's discussion of the district's teacher support initiative, Peer Assistance and Review (PAR), also highlighted the need for a talent development-oriented function within the office of human resources.

Employee performance management systems are insufficient to develop staff

The current contract for the clerical union contains the following language regarding employee performance evaluations:

Annual employee evaluations cannot be used for disciplinary purposes or presented in any grievance or arbitration hearing except where the employee has raised the issue of the evaluation or portion of it as part of his/her defense or proposes to introduce the evaluation in evidence.

While it is completely appropriate that an employee's annual evaluation be used, as also stipulated in the contract, "for the main purpose of evaluating and improving performance," it is also necessary for management to be able to measure employee performance against well-defined goals and make further employment or disciplinary decisions. Currently, Providence Public Schools does not have a single, unified system for evaluating all employee performance under a single set of guiding principles. While a new teacher evaluation regime has been put in place throughout the state of Rhode Island, the only other staff in PPSD with a similarly redesigned evaluation is the principal evaluation.

Currently, PPSD is piloting a robust performance evaluation for its at-will employees with the intention of expanding the evaluations to other staff groups and collective bargaining agreements over time. Currently, however, a lack of natural consequences for performance evaluations discourages PPSD leadership and managers from implementing a more robust set of evaluations that would be useful in setting employee growth goals, rewarding the development of new skills, and providing evidence to be used in competency-based, career-ladder oriented promotions. In such a system, more avenues for growth and advancement based on performance evaluations would be available, thus motivating employees to seek and meet goals – and motivating managers to develop staff in the clerical union.

It also follows that the employees that are able to grow and move forward in their careers for hitting goals and improving the district’s outcomes for students should not be subject to career stalls because ineffective colleagues cannot be removed from positions – fairly and with due process – as the result of a fair and effective performance evaluation. Therefore, the employee evaluation systems for staff whose employment is governed by CBAs should also be subject to adverse action if their performance is not satisfactory. While the current language for performance evaluations does not preclude the removal of personnel who have shown cause for removal, building an evaluation system that provides management with the right to use performance evaluations to make decisions about personnel actions would provide both management and labor with a system and structure within which performance can be more healthily managed.

Regular, cyclical evaluation provides uniform periods of performance that can be tied to relevant performance metrics, such as delivering school supports on time, providing materials to schools on time and on budget, and providing adequate professional development with high rates of satisfaction and high attendance.

Furthermore, employees must be evaluated under a system wherein the quality of the evaluation is monitored and managed effectively to promote the health of the overall operation. By using regular periods of performance and making decisions about district-wide, team, and individual employee performance during the same periods of time, the district better positions itself to evaluate the performance of its performance management system itself. By conducting such evaluations of the system and involving employees and their collective bargaining units in learning from such analysis, the overall health of the system can be improved.

Finding IV: Current Organizational Design is Not Aligned to the Strategic Direction Policy of Autonomy

The current PPSD strategic direction policy, adopted in November of 2014, reads (in part):

It is ... the policy of the Providence School Board that, to the extent possible and within the context of the Board’s vision, that important decisions regarding academic program design, instructional practice, personnel matters, building operations, and resource utilization should be made by the educational professionals closest to, and understanding of our students.¹⁷

Consistent with the findings discussed earlier in this report, we conclude that the current organizational design is inconsistent with the vision of increasing autonomy to schools and placing “important decisions” about schools in the hands of the school principals and leadership teams.

¹⁷ See Appendix E for the complete text of the policy.

In order to implement autonomy, district structures must be reengineered in a manner consistent with Honig's research regarding principal support. In short, districts must reengineer systems so that they can actually change current practice and also support schools in implementing the decided-upon changes in partnership with central office. Mass Insight Education's own research into autonomy suggests four basic types of autonomy are needed for schools to increase their level of autonomy: leaders need increased control over people (staff allocation), time (scheduling), money (budgetary discretion), and program (curricular and instructional choices).

The previous PPSD strategic direction policy was a call for an aligned curriculum, and the configuration of the at-will staff in the organization at this time is still largely aligned with such a mission. While efforts to bring instructional specialists into schools to support school efforts instead of to ensure progress according to a district-wide curriculum have paid dividends, this is a marginal change that only impacts a small minority of central office staff in two offices: the office of Curriculum and Instruction, from whence they came, and the Office of Schools, which they now support. None of the support positions or clerical positions whose responsibilities are to support schools have been reassigned to meet the different demands of a strategic direction policy of autonomy.

The primary barriers to improving organizational performance so it can support autonomy are structural: both the business processes used to support schools and the organizational design of many offices need to be changed to create an organizational structure consistent with the Honig research discussed in depth earlier in this paper.

It would be erroneous to conclude that employee skill deficits are the primary barrier to supporting autonomy. A survey of the management literature will reveal that when employees function within poorly designed jobs, poor performance is more a function of the inadequacies of the system than the performance of the personnel. Consider the role of a procurement specialist whose job was created to process purchases for schools. If that person is given new directions to support schools in choosing appropriate curricular tools, creating scopes of work, and helping conduct market research *without changing the tools they use or the structures within which they function*, they are not being set up to succeed regardless of his or her individual capacity to adapt to meet the new need. Yet there are currently numerous PPSD employees in similar situations, and the lack of deliberate job redesign and training/support for new roles has atrophied organizational capacity. With the new strategic direction policy in place and employee contracts up for negotiations, PPSD has an opportunity to make holistic changes to the central office structure and staff supports to rectify this situation.

Table 3 (below) shows which offices will need to significantly redesign structures and/or processes in order to fulfill the promise of the autonomy policy. Once these structures and processes are redesigned, staff will need to be supported through these changes in order to maximize the return on investment.

The table illustrates the complex relationship of changes that will need to be defined and managed in order to fully realize the potential of an autonomous district that devolves decision-making authority down toward the school level. All told, more than half of cabinet-level positions will need to see significant changes to the organizational structure of their departments in order to improve services to schools implementing autonomies. Currently, each of the offices suffers from the lack of performance measurement, data analysis capacity, and human resource management challenges described in greater detail above.

Table 3.
Autonomies and Offices Implicated by Increased Autonomy

Type of Autonomy	Offices most impacted by the types of autonomy
People (staffing and management)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Resources: recruitment and hiring, labor relations • Office of Schools: principal support • Office of Performance Management: employee evaluation, professional development • Finance and Budget: school budget development, • Federal Programs: Grant-funded positions
Time (scheduling of students and adults)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office of Performance Management: professional development scheduling • Office of Schools: common planning time, school-based professional development, school calendar, bell schedule* • Superintendent’s office: bell schedule changes* • Operations: transportation* • Finance: budgeting for substitutes, extended time • Human Resources: substitute staff allocation, labor relations
Money (budgetary discretion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office of Finance: school budgeting, procurement • Operations: school budgeting, technology • Federal Programs: grant allocation and reporting • Human Resources: staffing changes due to budget changes • Office of Schools: supporting budget development
Program (curriculum and instructional choices)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum and Instruction: developing and vetting a menu of preferred curriculum and instructional choices • Performance Management: professional development decisions • Office of Schools: supporting curricular choice in schools, developing leadership’s ability to make choices, measuring success of school curricular and instructional choices • Finance: procurement and budgeting for curriculum • Research, Planning, and Accountability: student assessment

**Some types of autonomy, such as bell schedules, are going to be inappropriate for PPSD at this time due to issues beyond its control. However, they are included in the table (a) for illustrative purposes, and (b) because out-year changes in school policies about autonomy could include such changes.*

Recommendations: PPSD Must Redesign Its Central Office to Align its Organizational Structure to its Strategic Goals

Based on Honig’s research and Mass Insight Education’s observations and findings from three years of work consulting with the Providence Public School Department as detailed above, we conclude that the central office must be redesigned if it is to meet the stated goals of the superintendent and the School Committee.

Such a process will not be quick, nor can it be conducted solely within the current organizational constraints. This will require new resources and significant investments of time from the current organizational staff. However, we do believe that a change management team can be assembled with an initial allocation of resources and, over the course of a thorough due diligence process, can determine the appropriate path forward for implementing the changes.

Recommendation I: Establish a change management team

A properly constituted change management team should be able to make recommendations to the executive in charge of the transformation. In this case, the owner is the superintendent. When the change management team makes recommendations to the superintendent, the superintendent then decides which resources (in addition to the change management team) should be involved in executing a given set of changes. For example, a change management team may recommend a redesign of a key technology system used to govern school performance. In this case, professionals from the data management functions from the organization should be brought in to support the changes in technology. HR professionals should be involved to do any impact assessments for staff who worked on the old technology system and to help find resources for training. The Offices of Schools and the Office of Curriculum and Instruction would need to be involved so that they could help design any training or reassign duties of staff who might now have new responsibilities.

The current change management demands require a change management team with high levels of access to the superintendent but that can also act independently to develop the change management plan. In short, executive owners should be able to continue to manage and lead the organization in its current state without also managing the development of the change management strategy. The following roles are important – necessary but perhaps not sufficient – to have on this change management team:

- A project manager who has the trust, confidence, and authority to speak on behalf of the superintendent and who can liaise with other city officials if cross-department implications arise.
- Human resources expertise, particularly in working with collective bargaining agreements.
- Business process redesign expertise, for ensuring the adequate changes to core business processes are made to make any role changes meaningful.
- Policy analysis expertise, needed to ensure all legal requirements and parameters are satisfied.
- Organizational design expertise, to align new roles and responsibilities with new processes.
- Performance measurement expertise, to ensure that the new processes are mission-aligned and measureable.
- Relevant subject matter experts to consult with the change management team on relevant areas. For example, experts on special education service design would be needed to help ensure that special education requirements were part of the change management plan for that functional area.

Ultimately, the superintendent, her direct reports, and the change management team will effectuate the changes within the school system.

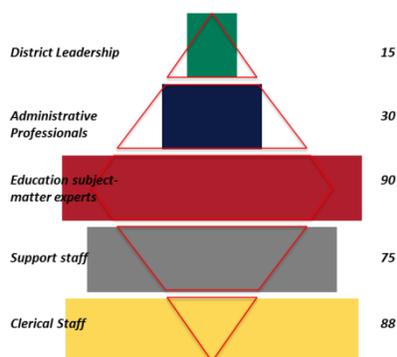
Recommendation II: Create the conditions and capacity for transformation **Current structure**

As of December 2014, there are 298 people whose work location is primarily the central office. (For details, refer to Table 1 above.) Currently, the distribution of these staff members is relatively pyramidal (see Figure 4 below).

As has been discussed at length above, this staffing model does not optimize the central office's ability to enact all five dimensions of central office transformation cited by Honig and colleagues and described

above. Where PPSD currently comes closest is Dimension 1, learning-focused partnerships with school principals. Both the work of ALL and efforts to change principal supervisors' roles so that they are more focused on instructional leadership and less concerned with providing operational assistance speak to the district's understanding of and commitment to this dimension. Nevertheless, principal supervisors are routinely pulled away from their core duties to respond to operational (including human resources) issues because there is a lack of appropriate staff to provide direct support to principals elsewhere in the central office. In other words, while the district has created dedicated principal supervisor positions that should fulfill the necessary conditions for Honig et al.'s Dimension 1, the lack of appropriate capacity to meet the requirements of Dimension 2 has slowed the pace of change efforts.

Figure 4. *Current structure of the PPSD central office*



Dimension 2 argues that professional development for principal supervisors is critical, as is removing non-instructional work from principal supervisors and developing and implementing an accountability system in which principal supervisors are not the sole arbiters of performance. As we have noted above, PPSD is not currently structured to fully deliver on these requirements. Doing so will require:

- Investments in PPSD's human resources capacity, so that the office functions not just as a paperwork processing center but as a pipeline for talent recruitment, retention and – crucially – development.
- Reallocating resources to allow central office departments to create positions responsible for ensuring that services and supports from their department are delivered to a defined portfolio of schools.
- Increased data analysis and reporting capacity to develop, implement, and manage an accountability system that delivers real-time results to central office and school-based staff.

Investments in human resources capacity at the district level and changes to how human resources is understood as a unit in the district is also essential if PPSD is to achieve success on Dimension 3, reorganizing and “reculturing” each central office unit. HR will play a similarly important role in stewardship of the overall central office transformation process (Dimension 4), as will investing in the appropriate positions elsewhere in the central office – particularly project management positions, which will provide needed cross-functional capacity precisely to manage and sustain change efforts. Finally, Dimension 5 calls for the “use of evidence throughout the central office to support the continual improvement of work practices and relationships with schools.” As illustrated above in the discussion of scorecard development and use by the Cabinet, this is currently a critical gap in PPSD's capacity: it is a place where the district has the will but not the skill. The Cabinet's commitment to the scorecard development process emphasizes district leadership's understanding of the need to use data to drive decision making at all levels of the district, while the poor follow-through on using the scorecards demonstrates the need for data analysis and reporting capacity that does not currently exist.

Necessary conditions for successful central office transformation

For change efforts to have the desired results, PPSD’s transformation plan must meet and/or create certain conditions that are fundamental to successfully overcoming the obstacles we have laid out in this report. Change efforts that do not meet the conditions below will fall short of creating the conditions for transformative change.

To be more specific, four key processes are integral to a complete redesign of the central office:

- Reengineer the business processes and data management systems of functional units to align supports to schools and build school support networks; and
- Reorganize central office positions so that each position is clearly linked to functional goals that align to the organization’s strategic direction policy, mission, and vision; and
- Develop career ladders and other systems for placing staff into clearly defined, redesigned roles for which they are qualified;
- Reallocate positions that are not aligned with the new organizational structure to schools where appropriate, or eliminate them responsibly.

Below, we outline the conditions that must be met in four areas – business processes, organizational structure, human capital, and data analysis – in order for these elements to be fully addressed.

Actions that will develop the necessary capacities for a complete central office transformation

It may be tempting to read the proposals below as linear – for example, to assume that business processes must be redesigned before the central office structure can be changed. However, because of the highly interrelated nature of the work outlined in this section, this is not the case. There may be multiple iterations of workflow revisions, for instance, as staffing structures change over time or as new metrics and data systems are put into place and provide better information about the effectiveness of given approaches. The district must be able to flexibly respond to these and other changes throughout the transformation process while making progress on multiple fronts at once.

Business processes must be redesigned to increase efficiency and responsiveness

To improve the flow of work within and from the central office, PPSD must redesign its critical business processes and workflows in a manner that satisfies the four key criteria discussed in brief below.

Redesign workflows for all critical functional areas to increase efficiency and responsiveness to stakeholder needs.

PPSD’s current workflows are not designed with end users in mind. Too often, systems have developed through inertia rather than strategic planning. An essential ingredient in successful transformation will be assessing and redesigning workflows for all critical functional areas to increase their efficiency while simultaneously improving responsiveness to stakeholder needs. Although such redesign efforts may increase costs in the short run, they are a long-term effort in cost-effectiveness.

Build performance metrics into all workflows to better utilize data-driven decision-making, to facilitate continuous improvement measures, and to better understand process impacts on stakeholders.

Designing workflows to facilitate collaboration between education subject matter experts and administrative professionals to deliver services and supports to schools has the potential to quickly improve the interactions between families, central office, and schools. Furthermore, such arrangements provide permanent venues for collaboration when it becomes necessary to revise the business processes as the needs of schools and families shift over time. Redesigning workflows will also allow PPSD to improve communication by building cross-functional workflows that ensure that the key participants in projects hear messages at the same time and have an opportunity to “get on the same page” in terms of how to communicate group messages. This is an example of the cost-effectiveness of investing in business process redesign: reducing duplications of effort in functional silos, increasing cross-team collaboration, and taking a project-management approach to work will pay dividends in the long run.

Put school needs and systems at the forefront, in alignment with the district’s strategic direction policy of autonomy.

As noted above, all of this must be done with end users in mind. Because the district’s ultimate goal is improving student outcomes, workflows should be redesigned to make life easier for school-based staff, allowing school leaders to access services quickly and without diverting them from their core work of instructional leadership. Additionally, workflows must be built to be responsive to the disparate needs of diverse school populations led by leadership teams that are empowered to make autonomous choices about key aspects of school functioning.

The central office’s organizational structure must be revised to enhance productivity and customer service

In order to create the conditions to improve the productiveness and customer service orientation of the central office, PPSD must:

Establish a Constituent Response Team (CRT) to field and respond to inquiries from schools and from families, community partners, and the public.

The district should streamline points of entry and contact for all stakeholders, including parents and community members. This will entail building a Constituent Response Team that manages a caseload of constituent issues to solve. CRT members would be responsible for inquiry, feedback, and complaint intake and would work with departments within PPSD to ensure that customers receive quick, responsive, and satisfactory resolutions to their concerns. This team would not just field and forward calls – cases would not be considered “closed” until the constituent was given a conclusive response. Additionally, the customer service team would work with data analysis staff to aggregate the kinds of concerns that arise most frequently, the average time to close a case, and other key metrics, allowing the district to identify areas in need of improvement and to make data-based decisions about where to invest resources at any given time. Finally, a dedicated CRT will ensure that all people contacting PPSD hear consistent messaging and receive the same high level of service whatever their concerns.

Create networks of central office staff that prioritize collaboratively supporting schools in pursuit of student-centered goals over outdated, siloed definitions of success.

Developing these networks first requires organizing the central office in accordance with school needs first and central office concerns second. Cross-functional school support networks made up of principal supervisors, instructional support staff (including content specialists and staff from the offices of English Language Learners and Special Education), and HR and data analysts – as well as dedicated liaisons from departments within Operations – will ensure that schools can reach all of the people they might need with one phone call, and will allow central office staff to develop expertise about a network of schools that will help them improve hiring, technology services, supports for struggling students and more.

Central office human capital strategy and activities must be aligned with district goals

In order to build a workforce that is prepared to carry out transformational change efforts in each PPSD school and at the central office, PPSD must commit to five key activities as part of a comprehensive human capital strategy.

Expand and redesign the HR department to provide a comprehensive suite of professional human resources and talent development services.

A more professionalized human resources department that includes positions with professionals who can support schools and central office in change management, labor relations, and the implementation of management best practices would be able to develop district leaders into stronger leaders who are better able to manage staff toward performance targets. Furthermore, the human resources needs dedicated staff who can work with schools to assess school staffing needs, craft recruitment and selection processes to fill vacancies, and work to creatively resolve persistent shortages in hard-to-fill positions through efforts such as university and recruitment partnerships.

Redesign positions to emphasize analytic skills, cross-functional collaboration, and data-driven decision-making – and implement strategies to fill these positions from within and from new staff.

As noted above, even good employees are unlikely to excel when the systems in which they work inhibit them or require different skills without providing an opportunity to acquire them. PPSD must invest in its human capital by providing more training and development for central office staff; professional development cannot be the purview of schools alone. To both attract and retain world-class staff, PPSD must invest in employee growth.

Build career ladders that ensure talented employees are motivated to stay and grow within PPSD.

Similarly, PPSD must build avenues for growth for talented employees currently working in positions that do not tap their full potential. By working with staff to redesign roles so that functions that have been rendered obsolete through technology or changing needs, PPSD can create roles that are less tailored to completing processes and more tailored to providing stakeholders with solutions. Investments in these career ladders that will both sustain change efforts and ensure motivated and talented staff stay in PPSD.

Renegotiate contracts to strengthen management rights for personnel performance management.

Finally, PPSD must renegotiate contracts to improve the district’s ability to employ performance management approaches with personnel. Performance evaluations should be used both to highlight strong performers and to identify staff in need of additional support to be successful; rigorous evaluations should also be used to ensure that personnel decisions are driven by data.

Reallocate positions and/or resources schools where appropriate.

PPSD is already a lean district. While the changes recommended within this paper will result in an overall reduction in the number of staff employed in central office, the aggregate number of positions reduced across the district is likely to be low and aggregate personnel costs are unlikely to change significantly due to the changes in position types that will result from transformation efforts. However, the opportunity to reallocate staff in roles that have fewer positions will present an opportunity to reallocate these positions (or equivalent financial resources) to schools or in support of central office functions that may need an increase in the number of positions. A strong central office maintains the flexibility to reallocate resources to emergent needs and to new, more effective ways of working. This is a key moment for PPSD to seek and exercise the flexibility to reallocate.

Data driven decision-making must be made ubiquitous and routine

In order to execute change and to ensure the sustainability of transformation efforts, PPSD must make performance management central to the central office. In this case, we mean the performance of teams, initiatives, and departments – not individual personnel performance. While the performance of initiatives and of personnel is highly correlated, both types of performance measurement are needed to truly understand what is happening with both systems and with individual people performing within those systems (consider the example of the procurement staffer earlier in this paper).

Use implementation science as a key part of a performance management system.

PPSD must use high-quality data to assess the alignment of programs and services to strategic priorities, the success of these efforts, and the need for their continuation, change, or cessation. This performance management approach is critical to ensuring that change efforts are successful and sustained. Performance management depends, however, on maintaining readily accessible, high-quality data that can be presented frequently to key stakeholders at both the district and school levels to drive decision-making. Such data is only available if there is dedicated staff with data analysis capacity.

Increase the capacity for data analysis through building an analytics team.

This team must be separate from the team in the Office of Research, Planning and Accountability, which is focused on student learning indicators. Currently, RPA staff is called upon to fulfill both missions, and therefore are overtaxed and suffer performance challenges not of their own making. Central office data staff should help design, implement, and analyze metrics that focus on employee performance. They can also help division and department heads set measurable goals that are aligned to district priorities and assess progress toward them. Data staff would work on projects including scorecards for all central office departments; data decks for presentation to the superintendent, Cabinet, and School Board on a regular basis; analysis of the return on investment of initiatives throughout the district; and public-facing data reports to keep stakeholders throughout Providence informed of progress in PPSD.

Approaches to change efforts

Whatever timeline the district identifies for its change efforts, it is essential that PPSD start building the conditions that will support central office transformation now. In Table 4 below, we outline the strengths and weaknesses of more and less conservative approaches to change.

Change approach	Timeline	Advantages	Disadvantages
Conservative	7-10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides some immediate support for senior PPSD staff • Has least risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constrains change efforts to an incremental approach • Lengthens time to payoff and results • Requires enduring labor challenges while not getting desired service results • Offers least opportunity for short-run increases in school-level resources
Moderate	5-6 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible within current policy and CBA constraints • Gives PPSD tools to invest in services now and savings later • Could generate short-run opportunities to shift some resources to schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires contentious personnel actions within current rules without achieving significant change • Prolongs timeline for completing district transformation
Transformational	3-4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes changes in services most palpable to families and schools • Most rapidly achieves desired workforce changes • Re-centers PPSD infrastructure to focus on school needs • Visibly changes PPSD • Generates most short-run opportunities to shift resources to schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires political capital to achieve the policy and CBA changes that would make the full transformation possible • Magnitude of change would require high investment in change management

On the positive side, a conservative approach still provides some much-needed support for district leadership by creating a few mid-level professional positions that will add some analytic capacity to operations, teaching and learning, and human resources. Because this approach is the most conservative, it also requires the least expenditure of political capital and the fewest changes to collective bargaining agreements. Essentially, a conservative approach would rely on natural attrition (retirements and people moving out of the district for personal reasons), freezing some vacant positions deemed non-essential, and limited layoffs that do not hit the workforce reduction caps outlined in the district’s contracts with the various bargaining units representing its employees.

The strengths of a conservative approach, however, are also its limitations. This represents an

incremental approach that has the potential to constrain change efforts rather than encourage them. Similarly, the incremental approach by definition will lengthen the time from embarkation on a change process to arrival at real results. A conservative approach may force the district to continue to endure labor challenges without getting desired results for service provision. Finally, more aggressive change models are predicted to result in additional resources available to schools, one factor that may make them more appealing.

A moderate approach has several advantages. First and foremost, it represents a more aggressive level of change but is possible within current policy and collective bargaining agreement constraints. This level of change also gives PPSD tools to invest in services now – by appreciably expanding the ranks of administrative professionals – and reap savings later, through efficiencies generated by the added capacity of these administrative professionals and redesigned processes and procedures, and the requisite retraining and development opportunities for all staff.

The most significant drawback to a moderate approach is that it may not go far enough. While some human resources would shift from the central office to schools, under this model we do not anticipate that the district would immediately be able to create any additional school-based resources (in money or positions). We do anticipate that the efficiencies and savings generated by having more administrative professionals and fewer clerical and support positions would enable the creation of additional positions in schools, but the timeline is uncertain. Thus, while a moderate approach allows the district to move faster than would the changes outlined in the conservative approach the timeline for completing district transformation is still prolonged.

The transformational approach is both the most aggressive and the shortest path to significant change. It has the most potential to provide additional resources at schools that would allow them to handle greater community access and engagement. Freeing positions or equivalent resources for use in school buildings has the most potential to provide material benefits while reducing resource constraints on building leaders, leaving them freer to focus on their core work of instructional leadership and improving student outcomes.¹⁸

The magnitude of the changes called for would require significant investment in change management, as well as some policy and collective bargaining agreement changes in order to make transformation at the scale and pace desired possible. The school district would require the city's support in both negotiations and communications in order to achieve these goals. A transformational approach would be the most challenging to implement successfully, but it is also the only approach that comprehensively satisfies our recommendations and provides PPSD central office with the conditions and capacities needed to solve its most urgent and important challenges in meeting the needs of students.

Change is difficult and must be managed carefully. PPSD does not have but needs the budget, policy, and collective bargaining conditions that make managing employee performance and improving employee working conditions easier, that provide more career ladder opportunities for staff, and that provide the resources necessary to continuously retool the workforce to adapt to the very dynamic urban education environment in Providence. But change on this scale is also the only way to move from a model of incremental improvement to rapid, discontinuous leaps in student outcomes. Mass Insight

¹⁸ Whatever the district's approach, some of the reduction in the centrally-based clerical and support staffs would be achieved by creating opportunities for advancement for high-performing members of those bargaining units through new career paths, some of which would include public-facing positions in schools.

does not believe that PPSD can fulfill its obligations to students, families, and citizens without pursuing a transformational approach.

Vision: A New and Improved PPSD

In this report, we have discussed at length the need for specific changes that will enhance central office operations and, in turn, create conditions for readiness at schools. In this section, we present a vision for what this would actually *feel* like on a daily basis – the experience all stakeholders, both internal and external, would have when interacting with PPSD’s central office.

An improved work environment for central office staff

Central office staff would find themselves performing work aligned to a clearer set of goals, increasing the pace of implementing new initiatives, executing assignments, and communicating results to stakeholders. Additionally, increased investments in analysis and project management capacity would ensure that staff had the appropriate mix of technical skills to perform their work efficiently and effectively. This would allow the district to redesign workflows in order to take advantage of a more appropriately skilled workforce, reducing stress for employees and improving outcomes. Finally, transforming the central office would give PPSD the opportunity to create career ladders and help employees climb them, building a loyal, skilled, and motivated workforce.

Study in Success: Reorganizing Roles and Responsibilities in the OTI

The OTI organized its staffing structure, roles, and responsibilities to support successful implementation of the internal lead partner responsibilities and achievement of performance targets. Currently, the OTI staff includes five FTEs and one consultant:

1. An **executive director of transformation**, responsible for the design, development, and delivery of services to the schools in the OTI portfolio.
2. A **director of school transformation** primarily responsible for partnering with school leaders to drive dramatic student achievement gains.
3. A **transformation coordinator**, focused on providing instructional services at schools, leading parent and community engagement efforts, and strengthening labor/management relationships at schools.
4. A **content specialist**, focused on providing ELA and math instructional services and leading progress and performance management efforts at schools.
5. A **clerk**, tasked with supporting office functions and providing significant operational supports to schools, allowing them to focus on instruction and the academic core.
6. A Mass Insight Education consultant, who has supported the incubation and development of the OTI and the Trailblazer Cluster of schools, as well as the development of new schools.

These positions are specialized and mainly focused on supporting instructional quality at each school. While the clerk provides regular operational supports including managing internal communication, connecting and coordinating central office services such as substitutes and more, each person on the team also owns a non-instructional area such as budgeting, staffing, technology, and building operations, in which they intervene when needed. This system allows the ILP to systematically and quickly remove central office barriers that can detract a school’s attention from focusing on the instructional core.

Improved interactions for school-based staff

For staff working in schools, these changes and benefits would translate to an improved experience

interacting with the central office. Points of entry into the central office would be clearer, with key lines of responsibility made more obvious and user-friendly for school-based staff. Moreover, school communications with the central office would be more focused on finding (or building) effective solutions to school-specific concerns, rather than on implementing one-size-fits-all, top-down district initiatives. Schools would have access to a network of staff with skills in project management, data analysis, and human resource management to help them work collaboratively with the central office to solve problems. Last, but certainly not least, improved technology tools (managed by skilled central office staff) and operations services will simplify schools' responsibility for administrative and operations tasks, giving staff more time back to focus on students and families.

Study in Success: Making the Central Office Work for Schools

As a result of successful reorganization and implementation of the internal lead partner model, the OTI has produced positive results for student performance and promoted broader systemic changes at the central office. After less than one year of implementation, Trailblazer cluster schools are showing exciting progress on leading and lagging indicators. Across grade levels, content areas, and assessments, these schools are successfully moving students into proficiency and out of urgent intervention levels, *outperforming most schools in the district and surpassing district averages.*

At the central office level, the OTI has also fostered systemic changes on behalf of schools in central office operations. For example, after reviewing student achievement data, one school determined students would benefit from a reading specialist to provide direct interventions to students below grade level. They sought to create the position by eliminating two instructional aide positions and reallocating funds for the new role. The district did not have a process in place to facilitate the transaction. As central office services broker, OTI worked with the appropriate departments, including Human Resources and Finance, to set precedent and establish a new process for schools to strategically reallocate resources to accelerate student achievement.

Better experiences at all levels for families

As would be true for school-based staff, families (and community members) would find themselves with fewer but more targeted points of entry into their interactions with the district. Starting with increased capacity at the school level in the form of more front-line clerical staff and increased building leader time to focus on family and community needs, families would experience reduced "runaround" when they needed answers. Interacting with the district would be less work and would produce quicker return on investments of time, reducing anxiety – particularly critical when, for example, families are dealing with high-stress issues such as bullying, learning needs or problems, or changes to school placement. In turn, families would be able to appreciate the talented educators and staff working with their children, and would be better able to team with district staff to address their children's needs, instead of developing an adversarial relationship based on frustration.

Study in Success: Improved School Culture

The Trailblazer schools are seeing strong evidence that students and families are receptive to their work: all three schools have seen very strong attendance in 2014-2015, with decreases in chronic absenteeism as well.

Equally importantly, each Trailblazer school has also had significant decreases in the number of student suspensions in 2014-2015. All of these indicators speak to the schools' successes in both engaging students and families in their work, and to the OTI's success in supporting schools to execute initiatives that help schools increase Readiness to Teach and Readiness to Learn in their buildings.

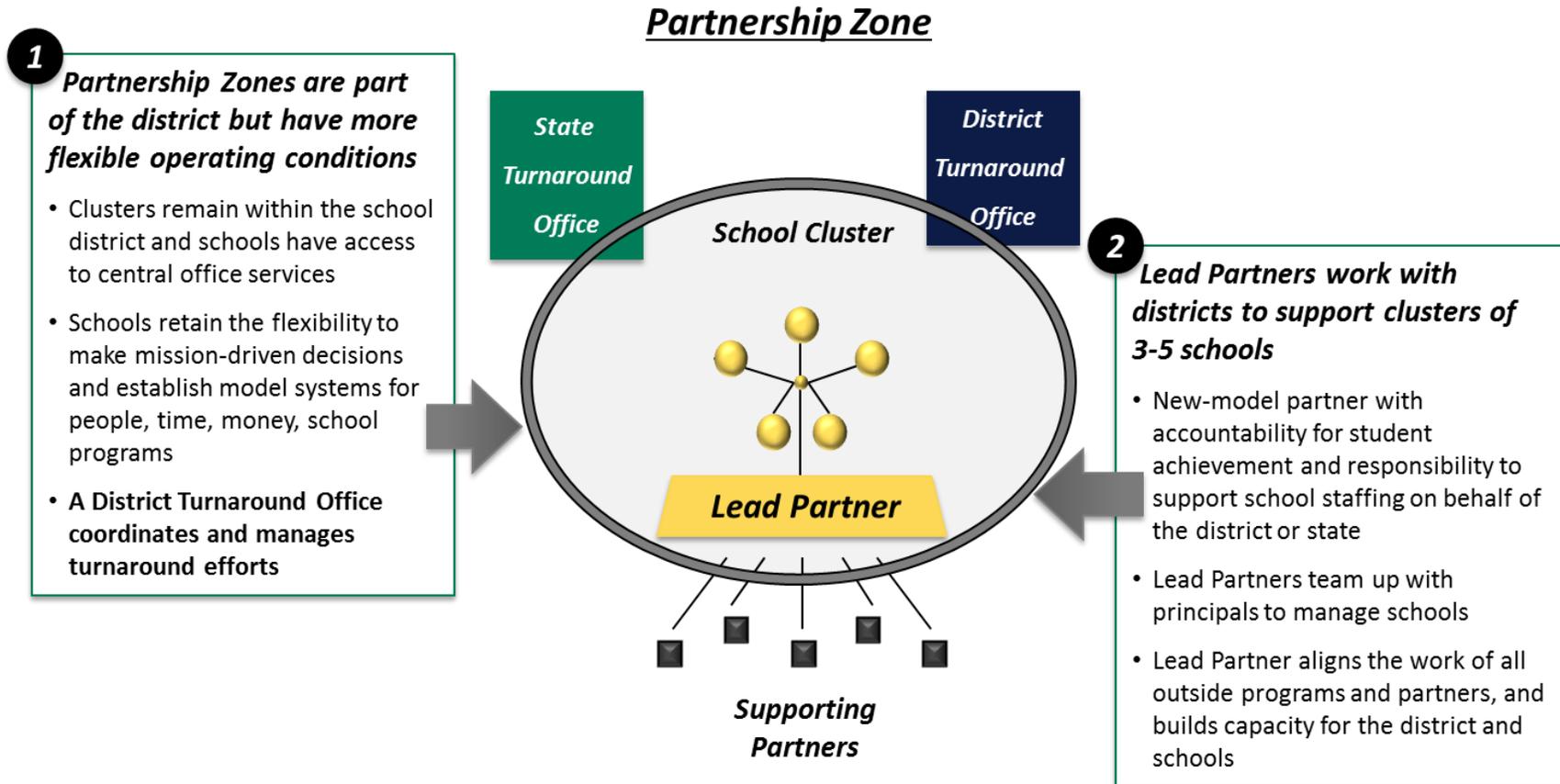
Importantly, central office transformation that provides schools with more targeted supports and technical assistance will in turn allow those schools to better tailor their programs to student-specific needs, making solutions easier to come by and more satisfying for school staff, students, and families. In addition, providing more technical assistance would allow schools both to pursue community partnerships to address needs and to constantly assess the impact of those partnerships in order to make decisions about whether to continue them.

A transformed central office would also be able to provide parent- and community-facing staff with better training and supports. Some of these supports would be focused on customer service, allowing these front-line staff to not only access resources from the central office more efficiently but to make the process of doing so more transparent to families and community members, again reducing frustration and increasing customer satisfaction.

More than anything else, the central office's goal must be helping schools help students. Transforming the way the central office is staffed and works is the first step on that path. Success in reaching the destination will take dedicated, sustained effort by a staff that has technical skills and a customer-service orientation. It will require short-term investments to realize long-term savings. And it will require support for the district from the city and from committed partners who are willing to work in alignment with the district's vision. With these ingredients in place, PPSD will be well-positioned to rapidly increase student achievement, improving outcomes for today's students and tomorrow's leaders, in Rhode Island and beyond.

Appendix A. The MIE Partnership Zone Model

The graphic below illustrates the Partnership Zone model and provides brief explanations of the key features of such zones. More detail can be found in *The Turnaround Challenge*, available online at www.massinsight.org.



Appendix B. Employee Type Definitions

Job Grouping	Positions/Titles Included	Count by Position/Title
District Leadership	Business Manager	1
	Chief	3
	Director ¹⁹	2
	Executive Director	7
	Senior Executive Director	1
	Superintendent	1
Administrative Professionals	Administrator	1
	Attorney	1
	Coordinator	4
	Deputy Controller	1
	Director	9
	Facilitator	1
	Grant Writer	1
	Manager	3
	Nurse	2
	Ombudsman	1
	Program Manager	1
	Specialist	3
	Supervisor	2
	Education Subject-Matter Experts	Collaborative Teacher
Consulting Teacher		16
ESL Specialist		5
Evaluator		1
Guidance Counselor		2
Intervention Specialist		24
Manager		5
Officer		1
Psychologist		1
Screeners		2
Social Worker		9
Special Educator		3
Specialist		7
Speech/Language Pathologist		7
Supervisor		6
Support Staff	Administrative Assistant	1
	Administrator	3
	Aide	4
	Aide Liaison	15
	Analyst	2
	Assistant	1

¹⁹ Two directors are included here because they are the highest-ranking people in their departments and sit on the superintendent's Cabinet.

	Coordinator	1
	Coordinator, non-certified	2
	Director	1
	Facilitator	1
	Foreman	3
	Generalist	1
	Nurse, non-certified	6
	Occupational Therapist	1
	Officer	12
	Officer, non-certified	2
	Specialist	15
	Supervisor ²⁰	2
	Technician	1
	Translator	2
Clerical Staff	Analyst	1
	Assistant	1
	Bookkeeper	1
	Buyer	4
	Clerk	42
	Driver	1
	Executive Assistant	3
	Receptionist	2
	Secretarial Assistant	5
	Secretary	26
	Specialist	1
	Technician	1

²⁰ Supervisors who are categorized as support staff are members of the Local Union 1033, affiliate of the Laborers' International Union of North America, AFL-CIO.

Appendix C. PPSD's Strategic Priorities

PPSD has three priority areas:

- Student-Centered Instruction
- Highly Effective Educators
- Systems that Work

In light of these goals, the district has identified nine strategies that are essential to creating and improving the necessary conditions and infrastructure within PPSD's central office to differentiate its support and resources to schools. These strategies are listed below; more information can be found in PPSD's publication *On the Move*.²¹

1. Negotiating breakthrough contracts that align to the district's strategic priorities with competitive compensation packages.
2. Developing coherent assessment and data monitoring systems to improve instructions.
3. Designing and implementing a system-wide accountability framework.
4. Revising and improving critical business processes.
5. Effectively implementing a teacher and school leader evaluation system to improve practice, increase accountability, and address employee needs.
6. Implementing innovative, scalable, and sustainable reform strategies that increase options for high-quality education by providing flexible conditions and differentiated autonomy to Innovation Zone schools.
7. Providing robust, research-driven, differentiated, and targeted professional development to support teachers and administrators in creating learning communities that ensure every child in every grade is on track to graduate college and career ready.
8. Strengthening our support for students' social and emotional needs by implementing proven, research-based programs that help teachers, students, and families foster positive decision-making and academic success for all children.
9. Designing and implementing a comprehensive training program for all employees that provides outstanding customer service to students, families, and fellow staff and community partners. The district's goal is to build a long-lasting customer service culture where employees are motivated, energized, and empowered, and where students and families are treated with dignity and respect.

²¹ *On the Move* is available on the PPSD website:

http://www.providenceschools.org/files/_3VDDr_/60196bfb17e98eb33745a49013852ec4/On_The_Move_2014_ENG-WEB.pdf.

Appendix D. Sample Scorecard

Below is the Chief of Instruction, Leadership and Equity (CILE)'s scorecard as it was drawn up in summer 2014. The CILE oversees all teaching and learning-related activities and personnel in the district; her direct reports include the executive directors of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Learning; the Elementary and Secondary Zones; and Performance Management; as well as the director of Research, Planning and Accountability. Each of these staff members has his or her own scorecard, whose goals are aligned to those reflected here; this is the 30,000-foot view of work that happens at ground level in multiple departments.

Alignment ²²	Objective	Owner	Measure(s)	Base	Goal	YTD	Status
SCI	Math achievement will increase across the district	T&L	30% increase in # of students at/above benchmark on STAR	ES: 54% MS: 41% HS: 48%	ES: 70% MS: 53% HS: 62%		
SCI	Improve reading proficiency by EOY	T&L	30% increase in # of students at/above benchmark on STAR	ES: 29% MS: 22% HS: 24%	ES: 38% MS: 29% HS: 31%		
HEE	Teachers will demonstrate proficiency on ELA Anchor Standard 1 and SMPs 1 and 6	T&L	% of teachers rated proficient or higher on ALL look-for tool	N/A	80%		
HEE	Principals demonstrate growth in 3 critical leadership areas.	Office of Schools	% of all observations rated green by EOY	N/A	75%		
HEE	Teachers provided with regular instructional feedback.	OPL	Evaluations on pace for timely completion	72%	100%		
STW	Accurate data usage across district	RPA	Ps & Ts report greater access/use of data	TBD			

²² This column reflects which of the district's priority areas a particular goal aligns to: Student-Centered Instruction (SCI), Highly Effective Educators (HEE), Systems that Work (STW).

Appendix E. PPSD's Strategic Direction Policy

**Providence School Board Policy Strategic Direction:
School-Based Autonomy
Amended and approved by the School Board
11-24-14²³**

Purpose:

To articulate the Providence School Board's strategic direction to drive significant improvement in student achievement consistent with the Providence School Board's Statement of Core Beliefs and Commitments.

The fundamental intent of the Providence School Board's strategic direction policy is to allow all stakeholders at the building level (administrators, teachers, students, parents and community partners) to take greater ownership of their school community through autonomous, shared decision-making.

Background & Issue:

Providence must create a high-performing school district that educates all students at high standards and eliminates the achievement gap. The Providence School Board believes that this goal can most effectively be achieved by empowering our school-based administrators and teachers who work directly with our students and families. It is further the expectation of the Providence School Board that our school-based professionals shall work in a spirit of labor management collaboration in making student-centered decisions that serve the interest of improving student achievement. In return for greater autonomous decision-making authority, the Providence School Board and the Providence School Department shall hold our school-based professionals accountable for achieving meaningful and sustained results in increasing student achievement and developing positive school cultures.

Much work has already been done in the area of developing an aligned curriculum and providing appropriate teaching materials and supports from the Providence School Department to our schools. However, the Providence School Board believes this foundation can be built upon by providing principals and/or school-based leadership teams with the authority to use their professional discretion and expertise and allow them to become the primary drivers of sustained improvements of teaching and learning in their buildings.

School-based Decision-making and Autonomy:

School-based leadership teams, comprised of administrators and teachers, are best positioned and equipped to understand the particular learning and social/emotional needs of their students. Therefore, schools shall be given as much flexibility as practicable to design and implement effective academic program designs, teaching and learning strategies, support services, and operational methods within the standards established by the R.I. Department of Education, the Providence School Board, and the Providence School Department and shall be based upon knowledge of research, best practices and the results of rigorous performance monitoring.

²³ This document is available on the district's Electronic School Board in the Policies and Regulations section of the reference library, under "I – Instruction": <http://www1.providenceschools.org/pesb/>.

School site teams will be given as much latitude as possible to manage budgets; procurement; staffing; professional development; workforce configuration; schedules; student affairs; extra- curricular activities; wrap-around services; and parent and community relations. Schools may also adapt and/or change district curriculum and teaching approaches, with agreement from the school district, based on evidence of student need, best practices for addressing those needs, and an articulated plan for effective monitoring of the new approach.

Providence School District Role:

As the transition to greater school-based autonomy is made, the role of the district's central office will shift from one of mandating uniform practices, services, and approaches in all schools to one of:

- Building the capacities needed to ready each school site for flexibility and autonomy.
- Providing resources in a way that is equitable based on student numbers and need.
- Providing differentiated services to schools based on the requests from the school sites.
- Developing and implementing accountability and performance monitoring systems that ensure that differentiated approaches among schools results in high quality and common learning outcomes for all students.
- Reporting on results, lessons learned, and consequent adjustments to the Providence School Board and the public at large.
- Deliberately planning and facilitating cross-site learning to support innovation and continuous improvement through sharing best practices and lessons learned.

Policies and Practices:

The Providence School Board recognizes that providing school-based autonomy will require changes in the policies of the Providence School Board; changes to administrative practices and the structure of the Providence School Department; changes to provisions of all collective bargaining agreements; re-designing of leadership training for building-level administrators; and a re-distribution of resources within the Providence Public Schools District to be directed towards the school sites and away from central district administration. Effective implementation of school-based flexibility and autonomy will also require greater analysis of current building-level readiness and capacity to take advantage of this autonomy.

Providence School Board Policy:

It is, therefore, the policy of the Providence School Board that, to the extent possible and within the context of the Board's vision, that important decisions regarding academic program design, instructional practice, personnel matters, building operations, and resource utilization should be made by the educational professionals closest to, and understanding of our students.

The principal, as the site-based leader and the person responsible for the overall operation of the school, in accordance with state and local guidelines, shall work collaboratively with teacher-leaders, students, parents, and community partners in a shared decision-making process at the school site. Mechanisms such as teacher-led committees, student councils, parent councils, and community partnerships should be engaged to ensure that there is meaningful stakeholder voice in the school-based decision-making process.

It is further the expectation of the Providence School Board that all such school-based decisions shall be student-centered and purposely intended to increase student achievement and improve school culture and climate.

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