



Strategic Plan 2018-2022

**Rhode Island School
for the Deaf**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rhode Island School for the Deaf (RISDeaf) is a co-educational public school for students in grades Pre-K through 12. It provides extensive and individualized services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) children in both its school setting as well as through a number of community initiatives including: the Parent Infant Program, Preschool and Early Childhood, Speech and Occupational Therapy Services, Out-of-School Time activities, Academic and Career Exploration Partnerships, Transitional Services, and Audiology Center.

The purpose of a Strategic Plan is to provide the school and community with a road map that describes the most important factors in moving the school forward. It brings the school's hopes and dreams to life. The designers of our Strategic Plan are the many diverse stakeholders from across the state of Rhode Island who gave original insights during the many data-gathering phases. From these insights, we created this rigorous and equitable vision for our community- all for the ultimate goal of producing graduates who are ready to excel in college and careers.

This Strategic Plan is also designed to respond to our stakeholder's priorities with objectives that are informed by research and best practices. The collective knowledge of the community helps to guide our strategy. With the support of expert educators and knowledgeable community members, we will enact this plan to ensure our students' academic, social, and career aspirations. As a total community investing in our students, we will reap the economic and civic benefits that will multiply as we advance this shared plan.



PLAN COMPONENTS

MISSION

A mission is an enduring statement of purpose for an organization that identifies the scope of its operations and reflects its priorities. It should reflect: What you do; Who is served; and What is achieved.

The Rhode Island School for the Deaf 's mission is to ensure that all Rhode Island children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing become literate, independent, and productive citizens who set and achieve life goals.

VISION

The Rhode Island School for the Deaf will serve Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts as a respected, statewide resource center, with a service delivery system that is guided by a series of student-centered core values and is focused on four key functions:

1. Educational Center

- Early Childhood programs for deaf and hard of hearing youngsters who communicate and learn through sign language and/or communicate and learn through listening and speaking, including those children with cochlear implants who use either or both modalities. Children with significant speech challenges who might benefit from sign language, hearing siblings of deaf and hard of hearing children, and hearing children of Deaf adults (CODA) may also be eligible to enroll.
- Comprehensive and rigorous educational programs for Pre-K- Grade 12 or to age 21
- Participation in community inclusion/mainstreaming services that deliver highly-individualized education and career pathways for high school students
- Transition services and planning for students to prepare for graduation or school exit
- Rich student life and extracurricular activities including sports, the arts, social events, and other opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing students at the Rhode Island School for the Deaf and in local school districts throughout Rhode Island
- Advanced Coursework offerings in American Sign Language to RI high school students

2. Comprehensive Student Assessment Services

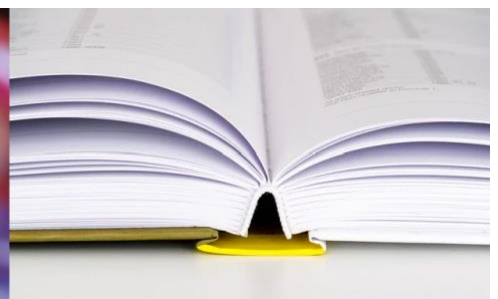
- Audiological, linguistic, speech/language, educational, social/emotional/behavioral health, and other assessments provided to students in Rhode Island, wherever they are learning
- Audiology screening services, early identification, and consultation provided on-site and to students in all schools (public, private, parochial, and prep) throughout Rhode Island at no charge

3. Family and Community Support Services

- An early intervention family support program (PIP-Parent Infant Partners), serving infants, toddlers and their families, ages 0-3
- A continuum of family resources and support to build healthy, informed, and positive family life
- Community education and advocacy
- Family ASL classes and Deaf Awareness activities for the school and larger community
- Partnerships with other agencies and/or groups to educate families, school departments and the general public about careers in Deaf education, student needs and services, and educational interpreting

4. Professional Leadership and Development and Outreach Services

- Coordination or provision of consultative services for school districts, families and the larger community
- Professional development services that include specialized resources, training, events, and partnerships with universities and colleges designed to meet the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing community
- Communication and marketing initiatives that build awareness about the continuum of services offered at the Rhode Island School for the Deaf.
- Faculty and staff with skills and expertise that can be shared, wherever deaf and hard of hearing students are learning.
- Building state-wide capacity to serve deaf and hard of hearing children through staff training offered to districts, charter schools, and agencies on issues related to educating students with different hearing levels.



CORE VALUES

A set of values define the enduring and essential character of an organization or initiative. They provide a consistent identity that transcends trends, cycles, technology, management fads, and individual leaders. Principles endure as a source of guidance and inspiration; they help define the school, what it stands for, and why it deserves respect.

We value and welcome a diverse range of students, faculty, staff, and families, including those students who are deaf and have learning challenges. This is reflected in all programs, curriculum, resource allocation, and talent management.

We celebrate the positive identity of all deaf and hard of hearing children through healthy family support, linguistic competence, and high quality education that provides options and different pathways to personal success. Our students have the right to an educational program that is rigorous and prioritizes the integration of academic, social, and emotional development.

We believe that children will benefit when their families and RI School for the Deaf build strong partnerships.

Early language acquisition is the foundation of a quality education. Along with language development, respect for deaf individuals and access to deaf and hard of hearing peers and role models, are important to foster optimal intellectual, social, and emotional growth.

Deaf and hard of hearing children should be provided full language and communication access in school and in the community. No matter what the child's hearing level, thoughtful and individualized language planning provides the best opportunity to maximize language access for learning.

A substantial body of research demonstrates that fluency in American Sign Language and English offers deaf and hard of hearing students opportunities for academic and social success, thus both should be important parts of a language-rich and fully accessible learning environment.

American Sign Language and English are two separate languages. Both languages are equally valued in our School, and students learn the unique grammatical, semantic and pragmatic structures and features of both languages through a bilingual approach.

Rhode Island School for the Deaf is a public school and statewide resource committed to building capacity of all educators to better serve deaf and hard of hearing students wherever they learn.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

OUR PROCESS

Developing the Strategic Plan was a true collaborative process that documented hundreds of conversations, focus groups, survey questions, and comments. This process helped gain an understanding of the strengths and opportunities of the school from the perspective of its internal and external stakeholders. The Strategic Plan captures those perspectives and translates them into a set of informed priorities over the next five years.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The Strategic Plan is further guided by the following principles:

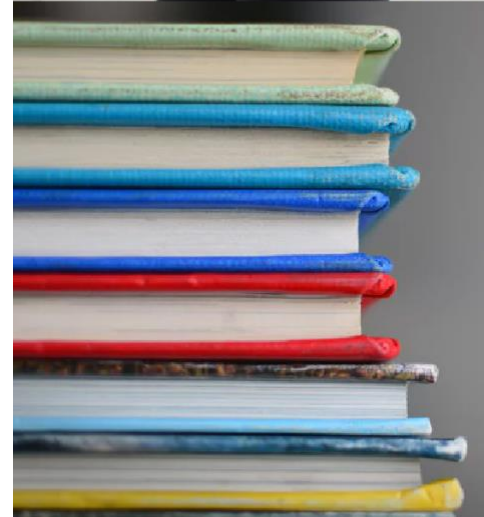
- The Plan is not fixed in time. The school will revisit it regularly and make adjustments as needed;
- For each broad goal, stakeholders, committees, and work groups directly responsible for the work will develop specific strategies, timelines, and benchmarks to ensure success;
- Resource allocation will be an important component of implementing this Strategic Plan. The School will identify appropriate funding to achieve each goal through a multi-year budgeting process; and
- The success of any individual goal will depend on how well they work together. Taken together, the goals of this plan work to support the biggest dream of the community- the ongoing success of the School.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Five strategic goals will drive our work and focus our efforts toward accomplishing our mission and vision for students. The following pages present the five primary strategic goals. For each goal, there is a specific set of objectives and implementation strategies.

Five Primary Strategic Goals:

- 1 Enhance Academic and Career Pathway Expectations and Rigor
- 2 Enhance Internal Vision and External Communications
- 3 Increase Parental Engagement and Involvement
- 4 Improve Language Accessibility for Students and Stakeholders
- 5 Support Extracurricular and Social-Emotional Development of Students





GOAL ONE

ENHANCE ACADEMIC AND CAREER EXPLORATIONS EXPECTATIONS AND RIGOR

All students can and should have access to a rigorous, relevant, and meaningful academic and career experience(s) in their strongest language(s) for learning.

OUTCOMES

Develop a school-wide culture of high expectations for academic rigor and meaningful experiences in career exploration across all subject areas and 21st century skills.

TIME FRAME

September 2018-June 2020

RESEARCH RATIONALE

Establishing and maintaining high expectations will increase student achievement and academic performance.

Engaging curriculum will inspire learning and enhance critical skills necessary for students to succeed in the careers of tomorrow.

Continuing to improve academic achievement will better prepare students for challenging and rewarding post-secondary education and training leading to satisfying careers.

A variety of career pathways offers students applied learning in the world of work that attracts them to ensure their global competitiveness.

OBJECTIVES

1 Establish a culture of high academic expectations for all students
Create consistent opportunities for all students that continue to raise their academic success.

- 1: Define and discuss rigor and school expectations with the school community and stakeholders
- 2: Seek and hire certified teachers and support personnel with experience in academic content areas, especially in areas of STEAM applications.
3. Increase teacher knowledge and experience with project based learning.

2 Identify career exploration and academic partners that diversify and increase capacity
Create relationships with academic and career-focused organizations that expand the ability for RISDeaf to align the passions of students with experiences that engage real-world learning.

1. Expand career exploration activities, supports and career pathways

3 Establish a consistent language for learning and implement cognitive development strategies across all classes and grades at the school.

- Continue the school-wide implementation of Thinking Maps to Level 5, including all levels of writing.



GOAL TWO

ENHANCE INTERNAL VISION AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Aligned, mission-driven messaging cuts across all internal and external channels of communication. It ensures all stakeholders are accountable and working towards the same goals.

OUTCOMES

All stakeholders of RISDeaf are aware of the nature and benefits of the School programs, including programs serving students at the school and programs serving other constituencies, statewide, and are advocates for the School and all of its programs.

TIME FRAME

September 2018- August 2021

RESEARCH RATIONALE

Schools for the deaf to remain viable must be perceived as statewide resources. Strong Deaf Community involvement is a hallmark of a thriving school for the deaf. High performing schools have a strong commitment to the school's mission by all stakeholders. Effective internal and external communication is a hallmark of an effective school

OBJECTIVES

1. Strengthen transparent, clear communication among the staff and community stakeholders.
2. Ensure that all stakeholders are aware of and support the school's mission and vision through enhanced internal and external communication.
3. Continue to grow Alumni and Deaf Community involvement and positive perspectives of the school through enhanced communication and specialized programs that serve and benefit the Deaf Community.
4. Provide the supports for faculty and staff that allow them to authentically advocate for the school, its mission and students and their families.
5. Develop an aggressive public relations and marketing plan to ensure that stakeholders and community members are aware of the value of the school, its mission and benefits to its students, their families, school districts and the community.
6. Recruit and retain Board members who are committed to the School's mission and are willing and able to work actively to advocate for and promote the School.



GOAL THREE

INCREASE PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT

Parents play a critical role in both expanding the exposure of their child to language and in engaging the school as a central agency of support.

OUTCOMES

Parents and families are supported and empowered to advocate for the success of their child through a strong partnership with RI School for the Deaf

TIME FRAME

September 2018- August 2020 and continuous

RESEARCH RATIONALE

Active parent engagement is essential for increased student academic performance.

Community centers that provide valuable services to the community are recognized, utilized, and supported by stakeholders.

Parents play a critical role in the ongoing development of their students. Supporting parent/child relationships provides the foundation for all academic and career success.

OBJECTIVES

1. Establish a work group and/or advisory council that facilitates and researches positive parental engagement efforts
 1. RISDeaf stakeholders come together to understand the complexities of parent engagement while directly providing and implementing solutions that increase engagement and student attendance.
2. Increase parental involvement in school activities
 1. The work group participants identify activities parents can engage in while deepening the participation levels for those that attend. These efforts support the ongoing relationship between the school and its parents and encourage the increase in parent skill with American Sign Language.
3. Challenge the perception of student opportunity
 1. A focus of the work group will be to expand the number of opportunities available to illustrate and encourage parents and staff to believe students can achieve.





GOAL FOUR

IMPROVE LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY FOR STUDENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Language acquisition will be understood and addressed as the foundation for all learning.

OUTCOMES

Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing students receive exposure to visual and spoken language early and often at home, at school, and in the community.

TIME FRAME

July 2018 – July 2021

RESEARCH RATIONALE

Language acquisition is the foundation for all academic and career success.

Students learning in their strongest language will make educational gains more efficiently and effectively.

Successful language acquisition will provide the foundation for students to be successful in every area of their life.

OBJECTIVE

1. Maintain and increasingly improve efforts to expand early access to language for all
RISDeaf has made significant changes that have expanded the opportunity for students to receive exposure to language early and often. Over the next five years, RISDeaf will develop stronger access to programs such as the Parent-Infant-Program (PIP), Family Sign Language, Home visits, and Audiology services, to improve language accessibility across the community.
2. Continue to improve supports in the strongest language(s) for learning of students and the preferred languages of communication of families and community members
 1. The RISDeaf community welcomes a diverse population of students and families, many who speak languages other than English. The school will enhance its capacity to serve these families by engaging them in a language that best serves their needs.
 2. RISD will explore the establishment of a high quality school program for intentional auditory-oral learning for specific students who learn best in this fashion.
 3. RISD will further augment its bilingual programs to include strengths-based approaches and opportunities to increase auditory language skills for those students who so desire and have the ability to use spoken language.



GOAL FIVE

Support Extracurricular and Social-Emotional Development

Comprehensive opportunities develop 21st century skills and encourage appropriate behaviors, meaningful interactions, positive self-concept, and holistic well-being.

OUTCOMES

Cultivate the depth and breadth of extracurricular opportunities to ensure graduating students have the life and relational skills necessary to live independently, productively and happily as a member of their community when they have completed their school experience.

TIME FRAME September 2018- June 2021

RESEARCH RATIONALE

Engaging students in character and leadership activities will enhance career opportunities and the development of necessary 21st century skills.

Building a thriving school culture based on strong social-emotional skills is essential for improved and teacher practice and student performance and outcomes.

Building partnerships that provide social-emotional development experiences motivates and prepares students for successful careers in the global economy.

OBJECTIVES

1. Build a dynamic school culture based on strong professional and social-emotional skills that are essential for improved student and teacher performance and outcomes.
 1. Expand after school activities to involve community based opportunities that enrich and expand student real world experiences.
 2. Encourage professional development in areas that benefit and strengthen our school community.
 3. Explore and offer opportunities for students to get involved in work, social groups, and volunteer service opportunities that encourage character development and confidence in the larger community.
2. Nurture relationships with partner organizations that improve RISDeaf's capacity to support career exploration.

As students explore career paths, they will need additional support systems to provide the hands-on technical skills and experience necessary for career success. RISDeaf can build its capacity to meet those needs by partnering with external organizations that place students directly in those programs

 1. Expand classroom support and access in multiple partnerships with career and technology education
3. Increase community partnerships that align extracurricular and academic opportunities with other strategic opportunities that help students and teachers thrive
 1. RISDeaf will seek to start and nurture relationships that help achieve goals related to academics, parental engagement, after school enrichment, language acquisition, and communication.