

**RHODE ISLAND STATE IMPROVEMENT GRANT**  
**Annual Performance Report Summary**  
**Year 1**

**Executive Summary**

The Rhode Island State Improvement Grant (RISIG) was developed in response to the needs identified in the Self-Assessment phase of the Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (CIMP), completed by Rhode Island in December 2001. The goals and activities of the RISIG are rooted in the RI Comprehensive Educational Strategy (CES) and the IDEA mandate that all students will participate and perform in the general curriculum.

The partners in CIMP identified three primary needs. First, the number of “highly qualified teachers” and paraprofessionals to provide effective instruction for children with disabilities in the general curriculum is insufficient. Second, twenty local school districts in Rhode Island have been identified, through the RI School Accountability for Learning and Teaching process, as having “low performing, not improving” schools. These schools will be targeted to expand the staff’s capacity to increase opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in the general curriculum, and to improve their performance with effective instructional strategies. Third, leaders with the knowledge and strategies to facilitate students’ with disabilities increased participation and performance in the general curriculum are lacking.

The three goals of the project are:

- **Goal 1** – to insure that all students with disabilities are taught by highly qualified teachers.
- **Goal 2** – to expand the opportunities for children with disabilities to participate in the general curriculum and to improve their performance on state assessments and other outcome measures.
- **Goal 3** – to develop and inform educational leaders who will facilitate the participation and progress of children with disabilities in the general curriculum.

Systems change will result from the activities through which these goals will be achieved. Specifically, systems change will be evident through:

- Alternative approaches to recruit and prepare personnel
- An increased number of personnel trained to effectively educate children with disabilities in the general curriculum
- Increased capacity of the sixty lowest achieving schools in the state, and other schools, to educate children with disabilities in the general curriculum
- Increased participation by children with disabilities in the general curriculum and improved performance by these children on state assessments and other outcome measurements
- Increased capacity of local leaders to develop and support policies and practices to change how Rhode Island schools educate children with disabilities.

## **Project Status Related to Intended Goals**

Since the grant was awarded as of November 1, 2002, just before Rhode Island's governmental administration change, operational grant activities began as of February 2003. In this short period of time, much has been accomplished to achieve the three major goals of this grant.

**Goal 1** - to insure that all students with disabilities are taught by highly qualified teachers.

### **Component 1**

#### **Activity 1.1A – Faculty Academy for Educational Change**

The Assistant Professor Faculty Coordinator for Rhode Island College has been hired and began work in September 2003. Collaboration between General Education and Special Education departments has begun. The Assistant Professor will supervise student teachers in the dual general elementary/special education program. Department chairs in Elementary and Special Education have created an "open class" policy, enabling the Assistant Professor to visit and observe classes and become familiar with course curricula, as well as co-teach some classes.

#### **Activity 1.1B - Faculty Academy for Educational Change – URI**

The RI Department of Education's Office of Special Needs (RIDE, OSN), the Sherlock Center, RI Department of Health, Medicaid and the University of Rhode Island faculty have been planning to increase the grant-funded .25 Assistant Professor Faculty Coordinator position to a full-time, FTE, funded by various sources outside the grant. URI's Department of Education faculty are developing a proposal.

#### **Activity 1.1C – Family Centered Practice in Teacher Education Programs**

The Rhode Island Parent Information Network and the Rhode Island Family Coalition are developing a family-centered practice instructional module.

### **Component 2 – Recruitment**

#### **Activity 1.2A – Special Education Recruitment Coalition**

The Higher Education Coordinating Committee has been established and meets on a regular basis to oversee and advise on all Goal 1 activities. The Recruitment Coordinator, who was hired and began in September 2003, is developing the statewide Recruitment Plan, along with contacts in organizations representing the recruitment target population.

#### **Activity 1.2B – Non-Traditional Path to Certification**

The RIDE Office of Certification has developed and piloted an alternative teacher re-certification program, the I-Plan, in which certified teachers who are pursuing re-certification, develop continuing education/professional development plans. These plans must be pre-approved by a RIDE review panel, prior to implementation. Currently, 400 RI teachers are involved in the pilot.

The Office of Certification has developed the Non-Traditional Certification Program for alternative teacher certification. This offers a detailed framework for potential providers, Institutes of Higher Education (IHE), and promotes collaboration between local school districts and the IHEs in developing a non-traditional program for high need areas. Currently, the

program is in the approval process, and is scheduled to be piloted in 2004-2005. The RIDE, OSN, in conjunction with Providence College and the Northern RI Collaborative, implemented an alternative certification program for teachers with emergency certificates. The first cohort of twelve students is entering the second year of the program and another cohort is beginning in Fall 2003.

#### **Activity 1.2C – Regional Recruitment**

See Activity 1.2A

#### **Activity 1.2D – Statewide Job Fair**

The Recruitment Coordinator is developing preliminary plans for the Job Fair.

### **Component 3 – Meeting Specific Personnel Shortages**

#### **Activity 1.3A - Teachers of Children with Visual Impairment**

Three RI teachers have been recruited and enrolled in the Master's Program for Teachers of Visually Impaired (TVI) at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, with tuition support from the RISIG.

#### **Activity 1.3B – Teachers for Children with Low Incidence Disabilities (RIC)**

The Rhode Island College Personnel Preparation Project for teachers for children with low incidence disabilities continues. RIDE, OSN, RIC and the Sherlock Center have submitted a grant proposal to expand the program.

#### **Activity 1.3C – Bi-Lingual Special Educators**

The RIC/Urban School Districts' Collaborative *Teaching English Language Learners with Special Needs* program continues. Forty-six teachers have been, or are currently in the program. Twenty-two have completed it, ten with Masters of Education and twelve for certification. Another twenty are scheduled for Fall 2004.

**Goal 2** - to expand the opportunities for children with disabilities to participate in the general curriculum and to improve their performance on state assessments and other outcome measures.

### **Component 1 – Building the capacity of low-achieving schools**

#### **Activity 2.1A – Coordinating Mechanism**

The Research to Practice Coordinating Committee has been established and is meeting on a regular basis to oversee and advise on all Goal 2 activities. The Master Teacher for the RISIG Cycle 1 schools has been selected and will begin in October 2003.

#### **Activity 2.1B – Select Target Schools**

The Research to Practice Coordinating Committee established selection criteria and the Cycle 1 RISIG schools have been selected. Eleven elementary school principals and faculties agreed to participate.

#### **Activity 2.1C – Self Assessment and Development of School Improvement Plans**

The self assessment instrument(s) and process are under development by the Coordinating Committee and RISIG project evaluator.

### **Activity 2.1 D, E, & F – Core Curriculum Technical Assistance, measurement of outcomes**

The core curriculum for each Cycle 1 school will be selected based on their self assessment. Technical assistance providers have committed time for Cycle 1 schools. The project evaluator is developing a data collection plan to identify RISIG goals/outcomes, the data that will be collected and the means to do so, as well as who will be responsible for collecting it.

### **Activity 2.1G – Dissemination**

The RISIG/CSPD Leadership Team has received a report on RISIG activities and progress, which will be presented to all three coordinating committees by September 30, 2003. The RISIG has established a web site which can be access at this address: [www.risig.net](http://www.risig.net) or [www.sherlockcenter.org](http://www.sherlockcenter.org)

### **Activity 2.2A – Demonstration Schools**

The Committee is developing the criteria to select the demonstration schools.

### **Activity 2.3A – Core Curriculum**

Currently, several modules are being finalized, with work scheduled to begin on the remainder in October 2003.

### **Activity 2.4A – Facilitators**

No activity undertaken yet.

**Goal 3** - to develop and inform educational leaders who will facilitate the participation and progress of children with disabilities in the general curriculum.

### **Activity 3.1A – School Committee Policy Maker Meetings**

The contract with the RI Association of School Committees (RIASC) has been formalized. Topics for the first workshop, scheduled for October 2003, are NCLB and IDEA Reauthorization.

### **Activity 3.1B – Principals' Workshops**

The contract with the RI Association of School Principals (RIASP) has been formalized. A Leadership Series Workshop has been developed and begins in September 2003. The series covers ten course topics and requires attendance at one RIASP or RITAP Leadership Institute. Over seventy administrators applied for this course for first year and aspiring principals and special education directors, which had been capped at twenty-five participants. Due to the large response, the class was expanded to 38 participants. Plans are under development to provide a condensed version to applicants who were not selected.

### **Activity 3.1C – Dissemination**

A RIC graduate student has been hired to develop modules based on the series' topics. These will be provided to those enrolled and will be available on the RISIG website.

**Activity 3.1D – Principals’ Track in Summer Institute**

A principal’s track was included in the 2003 Summer Leadership Institute and RIASP also sponsored a two-day leadership conference.

**Activity 3.2A – Special Education Directors’ Mentor Program**

The contract with the Association of RI Administrators of Special Education (ARIASE) has been formalized. A process and criteria were developed by ARIASE, and five mentors and mentees have been selected. The program is scheduled to begin in October 2003.

**Activity 3.3A – Family Leadership Institute Training**

The contract with the RI Parent Information Network (RIPIN) has been formalized, and two leadership institutes are under development for Spring 2004.

**Activity 3.3B – Ongoing Support to Family Leaders**

RIPIN conducted a workshop for members of Special Education Local Advisory Committees (LACs) in June of 2003. Over thirty LAC members attended.

**Activity 3.4A – Leadership Institute**

The contract with the RI Technical Assistance Project (RITAP) has been formalized. RITAP conducted a two-day Summer Leadership Institute, featuring Dr. Alan Coulter and Dr. David Tilly, and focused on IDEA reauthorization and the Iowa Learning Disabilities Identification Model.

## **ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS**

### **GOAL 1**

**To insure that all students with disabilities are taught by highly qualified teachers**

- Higher Education Coordinating Committee established and convened.
- Gained a common base of knowledge about higher education programs.
- Gained a common base of knowledge about current and future alternate certification programs.
- Developed RIC Faculty Academy Faculty Coordinator job description, hiring process and hired an Assistant Professor.
- Assistant Professor co-teaching a scientific research-based reading class, with the Department Chair of Elementary Education, supervising student teachers in general elementary and special education placements, and teaching a class in student teaching seminars in elementary education.
- Developed Recruitment Coordinator job description, hiring process and hired a Coordinator.
- Recruited three students for the University of Massachusetts' TVI program.
- Met with URI Education Department leaders and staff and discussed various proposals for Assistant Professor position.

### **GOAL 2**

**To expand the opportunities for children with disabilities to participate in the general curriculum and to improve their performance on state assessments and other outcome measures**

- Research to Practice Coordinating Committee established and convened.
- Developed Cycle 1 Master Teacher job description, hiring process, and hired master teacher.
- Developed criteria and process to select Cycle 1 RISIG schools and selected schools.
- Developed framework for self assessment instrument.

### **GOAL 3**

**To develop and inform educational leaders who will facilitate the participation and progress of children with disabilities in the general curriculum**

- Leadership Development Coordinating Committee established and convened.
- Contracts formalized with RIASC, RIASP, ARIASE, RIPIN and RITAP.
- Developed 10 session Leadership Series for aspiring and first year principals and special education directors, and selected participants.
- Developed Mentor Program for aspiring and first year special education directors and selected five mentors and mentees.
- Developed LAC network and conducted first meeting.
- Planned and scheduled first workshop for school committees and policy makers.
- Conducted two-day Principals' Leadership Institute.
- Conducted two-day Summer Leadership Institutes for educators.

## **BUDGET INFORMATION**

A budget summary report, prepared by the Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of Finance and Accounting, is attached. The report reflects RISIG expenditures through June 30, 2003.

Year 1 RISIG Funds have not been fully expended because:

1. The grant was awarded November 1, 2002.
2. Due to an administration change in state government, the subcontract to Sherlock Center/Rhode Island College was not executed until February 2003.
3. Many grant activities are school year sensitive, thus most of these activities are taking place as of September 2003.

We will carry over any unexpended funds from Year 1 (2002-2003) into completing RISIG activities in an extended 6<sup>th</sup> year (Fiscal Year 2008).