

# Think Forward New England

## How high school education systems are adapting and innovating during COVID-19



As COVID-19 caused unimaginable disruptions to public education, some schools and districts doubled down on innovation and commitment to supporting high school student success. CRPE is working with a diverse group consisting of researchers from the Center for Public Research and Leadership (CPRL), SRI International, The Christensen Institute, and the Education Trust to map a new way forward. This project is supported by [The Barr Foundation](#) and focuses on the high school experience.

**Think Forward New England** explores the region's landscape of learning, surfaces new instructional approaches and strategies that solve essential problems while centering the adolescent perspective, and probe on the conditions that shape high school systems' adaptations. Research findings will translate into actionable insights for parents, practitioners, and system leaders in New England and beyond.

The six states of New England—Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont—reflect America with sprawling metropolises and vast rural areas. The region is home to increasing diversity in communities and schools, and a deep, historical commitment to improving public education. The independent efforts of schools and districts to reframe the profile of a graduate to include more than academic assessments and to provide students with more personalized learning along with state initiatives like New Hampshire's competency-based performance assessment pilot, Massachusetts' investments in college and career pathways, or Rhode Island's advancement of new learning models show the imprint the region continues to make on the future direction of public education.

In October 2020, we built a regional district response database that tracks 80 districts. Our sample, though not statistically representative, was drawn to include the largest districts by enrollment in each state and to include high-poverty, as well as a spread of rural, urban and suburban districts from each state. The average sampled district has 18% of students living in poverty, and 40% of the districts have more than 20% of students living in poverty. Sources include publicly available information from district websites, social media, and news media reports. Data was collected between October 19 and October 31, 2020 and again from January 15 to January 28, 2021.

From December 2020 to July 2021, our researchers are also conducting longitudinal interviews with parents, teachers, students, principals, and district staff. We are diving deep into districts in order to profile innovation and document adaptations over the course of the school year.

This project is designed to uncover examples of innovation, ingenuity, and strength to bring forth insights from those who blaze new trails. Examples that recognize and respond to students' context and identity will be invaluable as educators and education leaders navigate the pandemic. They will also be critical to building a stronger and more resilient school system in the future.

**If you see information in one of our databases that needs updating, please contact [crpedatabase@uw.edu](mailto:crpedatabase@uw.edu).**