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Ready to Learn Providence Finds New Home at Roger Williams University

Program that works with early-childhood educators and parents to close achievement gap will become part of RWU’s School of Continuing Studies

Roger Williams University welcomes its new partner Ready to Learn Providence, a state-funded program that aims to close the achievement gap for low-income students by working with family members and early-childhood educators. Pictured here, Victoria Botelho, R2LP lead teacher, works with a student in a preK classroom.

February 27, 2017 | Edward Fitzpatrick

BRISTOL, R.I. – Ready to Learn Providence, a program that aims to close the achievement gap for low-income students by working with family members and early-childhood educators, has found a new home at Roger Williams University.

Ready to Learn Providence, which had been part of The Providence Plan, has trained more than 3,500 center- and home-based educators working in some of Providence’s most distressed neighborhoods, in addition to Pawtucket, Central Falls and other parts of the state. The goal is to improve the education and health of children ages 8 and younger by working with the adults who play crucial roles in their lives – family members, early childhood educators and medical practitioners. Professional development courses have included Mind in the Making, The Incredible Years and, most recently, Providence Talks.
As it moves to RWU, Ready to Learn Providence will be fully supported by grants from the Rhode Island Department of Education and the Department of Human Services. The program will continue to operate from its offices at 945 Westminster St., but it will become part of the RWU School of Continuing Studies, based at the university’s Providence campus, 1 Empire Street.

RWU President Donald J. Farish said, “I am delighted that Roger Williams University has been able to construct an arrangement that will allow the wonderful programs of Ready to Learn to continue serving families and communities with increasing need to have their children well-prepared to enter K-12 education, and to work on grade level. Our new partnership with Ready to Learn is just the most recent example of how RWU carries out its mission to ‘strengthen society’ and ‘to build the university the world needs now.’

Richard Spies, chair of The Providence Plan board, said, “We are extremely proud of the work that Leslie Gell and her colleagues at Ready to Learn have done with The Providence Plan over the years. The new partnership with the RWU School of Continuing Studies has the potential to take the program to an even higher level of achievement and of service to the community. We are excited about the possibilities for this critically important program and are very pleased that RWU and the School of Continuing Studies share those hopes and aspirations.”

Jamie Scurry, dean of the RWU School of Continuing Studies, said, “I am thrilled that Ready to Learn has found a new home at RWU. The alignment between Ready to Learn’s work with early learning professionals and families and SCS’s growing work in early learning allow for great synergies. I have long admired the work of Leslie Gell, her team and Ready to Learn. To have this opportunity to work together around a shared ethos and commitment to families and communities is sensational. I am looking forward to all new and exciting possibilities.”

Leslie Gell, director of Ready to Learn Providence, said, “Ready to Learn Providence is thrilled to begin our next chapter as a part of the School of Continuing Studies at Roger Williams University. We will continue to serve the early care and education community with the same passion and commitment that we have for the past 14 years, now with RWU as a partner in the work. We are excited about both continuing many of our current projects and about creating new opportunities.”

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