



# ESEA FLEXIBILITY

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## Renewal Form

## Rhode Island



July 2, 2015, 2015

OMB Number: 1810-0581

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 16 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to retain the benefits of ESEA flexibility, offered to State educational agencies under section 9401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, and voluntary. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20210-4537 or email [ICDocketMgr@ed.gov](mailto:ICDocketMgr@ed.gov) and reference the OMB Control Number 1810-0581. Note: Please do not return the completed ESEA Flexibility Renewal Request Form to this address.

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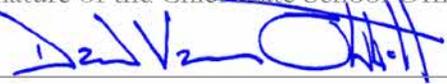
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LABEL	LIST OF ATTACHMENTS
1	Notice to LEAs
2	Comments on request received from LEAs (if applicable)
3	Notice and information provided to the public regarding the request
4	Evidence that the State has formally adopted college- and career-ready content standards consistent with the State's standards adoption process
5	Memorandum of understanding or letter from a State network of institutions of higher education (IHEs) certifying that meeting the State's standards corresponds to being college- and career-ready without the need for remedial coursework at the postsecondary level (if applicable)
6	<i>Not applicable</i>
7	<i>Not applicable</i>
8	<i>Not applicable</i>
9	<i>Not applicable</i>
10	A copy of the guidelines that the SEA has developed and adopted for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems (if applicable)
11	Evidence that the SEA has adopted all of the guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems



Legal Name of Requester: David V. Abbott	Requester's Mailing Address: Rhode Island Department of Elementary & Secondary Education 255 Westminster Street Providence, Rhode Island 02903
State Contact for the ESEA Flexibility Request	
Name: David V. Abbott	
Position and Office: Acting Commissioner Commissioner's Office	
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Chief State School Officer (Printed Name): David V. Abbott	Telephone: 401-222-8703
Signature of the Chief State School Officer: X 	Date: July 2, 2015
The State, through its authorized representative, agrees to meet all principles of the ESEA Flexibility.	

## WAIVERS

By submitting this updated ESEA flexibility request, the SEA renews its request for flexibility through waivers of the nine ESEA requirements listed below and their associated regulatory, administrative, and reporting requirements, as well as any optional waivers the SEA has chosen to request under ESEA flexibility, by checking each of the boxes below. The provisions below represent the general areas of flexibility requested.

- 1. The requirements in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(E)-(H) that prescribe how an SEA must establish annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for determining adequate yearly progress (AYP) to ensure that all students meet or exceed the State's proficient level of academic achievement on the State's assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics no later than the end of the 2013–2014 school year. The SEA requests this waiver to develop new ambitious but achievable AMOs in reading/language arts and mathematics in order to provide meaningful goals that are used to guide support and improvement efforts for the State, LEAs, schools, and student subgroups.
- 2. The requirements in ESEA section 1116(b) for an LEA to identify for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, as appropriate, a Title I school that fails, for two consecutive years or more, to make AYP, and for a school so identified and its LEA to take certain improvement actions. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA and its Title I schools need not comply with these requirements.
- 3. The requirements in ESEA section 1116(c) for an SEA to identify for improvement or corrective action, as appropriate, an LEA that, for two consecutive years or more, fails to make AYP, and for an LEA so identified and its SEA to take certain improvement actions. The SEA requests this waiver so that it need not comply with these requirements with respect to its LEAs.
- 4. The requirements in ESEA sections 6213(b) and 6224(e) that limit participation in, and use of funds under the Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) and Rural and Low-Income School (RLIS) programs based on whether an LEA has made AYP and is complying with the requirements in ESEA section 1116. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA that receives SRSA or RLIS funds may use those funds for any authorized purpose regardless of whether the LEA makes AYP.
- 5. The requirement in ESEA section 1114(a)(1) that a school have a poverty percentage of 40 percent or more in order to operate a school-wide program. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA may implement interventions consistent with the turnaround principles or interventions that are based on the needs of the students in the school and designed to enhance the entire educational program in a school in any of its priority and focus schools that meet the definitions of “priority schools” and “focus schools,” respectively, set forth in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*, as appropriate, even if those schools do not have a poverty percentage of 40 percent or more.
- 6. The requirement in ESEA section 1003(a) for an SEA to distribute funds reserved under that section only to LEAs with schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. The SEA requests this waiver so that it may allocate section 1003(a) funds to its LEAs in order to serve any of the State's priority and focus schools that meet the definitions of “priority schools” and “focus schools,” respectively, set forth in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*.

7. The provision in ESEA section 1117(c)(2)(A) that authorizes an SEA to reserve Title I, Part A funds to reward a Title I school that (1) significantly closed the achievement gap between subgroups in the school; or (2) has exceeded AYP for two or more consecutive years. The SEA requests this waiver so that it may use funds reserved under ESEA section 1117(c)(2)(A) for any of the State's reward schools that meet the definition of "reward schools" set forth in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*.

8. The requirements in ESEA section 2141(a), (b), and (c) for an LEA and SEA to comply with certain requirements for improvement plans regarding highly qualified teachers. The SEA requests this waiver to allow the SEA and its LEAs to focus on developing and implementing more meaningful evaluation and support systems.

9. The limitations in ESEA section 6123 that limit the amount of funds an SEA or LEA may transfer from certain ESEA programs to other ESEA programs. The SEA requests this waiver so that it and its LEAs may transfer up to 100 percent of the funds it receives under the authorized programs among those programs and into Title I, Part A.

Optional Flexibilities:

If an SEA chooses to request waivers of any of the following requirements, it should check the corresponding box(es) below:

10. The requirements in ESEA sections 4201(b)(1)(A) and 4204(b)(2)(A) that restrict the activities provided by a community learning center under the Twenty-First Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program to activities provided only during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session (*i.e.*, before and after school or during summer recess). The SEA requests this waiver so that 21st CCLC funds may be used to support expanded learning time during the school day in addition to activities during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session.

11. The requirements in ESEA sections 1116(a)(1)(A)-(B) and 1116(c)(1)(A) that require LEAs and SEAs to make determinations of adequate yearly progress (AYP) for schools and LEAs, respectively. The SEA requests this waiver because continuing to determine whether an LEA and its schools make AYP is inconsistent with the SEA's State-developed differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system included in its ESEA flexibility request. The SEA and its LEAs must report on their report cards performance against the AMOs for all subgroups identified in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v), and use performance against the AMOs to support continuous improvement in Title I schools.

12. The requirements in ESEA section 1113(a)(3)-(4) and (c)(1) that require an LEA to serve eligible schools under Title I in rank order of poverty and to allocate Title I, Part A funds based on that rank ordering. The SEA requests this waiver in order to permit its LEAs to serve a Title I-eligible high school with a graduation rate below 60 percent that the SEA has identified as a priority school even if that school does not otherwise rank sufficiently high to be served under ESEA section 1113.

13. The requirement in ESEA section 1003(a) for an SEA to distribute funds reserved under that

section only to LEAs with schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. The SEA requests this waiver in addition to waiver #6 so that, when it has remaining section 1003(a) funds after ensuring that all priority and focus schools have sufficient funds to carry out interventions, it may allocate section 1003(a) funds to its LEAs to provide interventions and supports for low-achieving students in other Title I schools when one or more subgroups miss either AMOs or graduation rate targets or both over a number of years.

If the SEA is requesting waiver #13, the SEA must demonstrate in its renewal request that it has a process to ensure, on an annual basis, that all of its priority and focus schools will have sufficient funding to implement their required interventions prior to distributing ESEA section 1003(a) funds to other Title I schools.

14. The requirements in ESEA sections 1111(b)(1)(B) and 1111(b)(3)(C)(i) that, respectively, require the SEA to apply the same academic content and academic achievement standards to all public schools and public school children in the State and to administer the same academic assessments to measure the achievement of all students. The SEA requests this waiver so that it is not required to double test a student who is not yet enrolled in high school but who takes advanced, high school level, mathematics coursework. The SEA would assess such a student with the corresponding advanced, high school level assessment in place of the mathematics assessment the SEA would otherwise administer to the student for the grade in which the student is enrolled. For Federal accountability purposes, the SEA will use the results of the advanced, high school level, mathematics assessment in the year in which the assessment is administered and will administer one or more additional advanced, high school level, mathematics assessments to such students in high school, consistent with the State's mathematics content standards, and use the results in high school accountability determinations.

If the SEA is requesting waiver #14, the SEA must demonstrate in its renewal request how it will ensure that every student in the State has the opportunity to be prepared for and take courses at an advanced level prior to high school.

## ASSURANCES

By submitting this request, the SEA assures that:

- 1. It requests waivers of the above-referenced requirements based on its agreement to meet Principles 1 through 4 of ESEA flexibility, as described throughout the remainder of this request.
- 2. It has adopted English language proficiency (ELP) standards that correspond to the State's college- and career-ready standards, consistent with the requirement in ESEA section 3113(b)(2), and that reflect the academic language skills necessary to access and meet the State's college- and career-ready standards. (Principle 1)
- 3. It will administer no later than the 2014–2015 school year alternate assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards or alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities that are consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(a)(2) and are aligned with the State's college- and career-ready standards. (Principle 1)
- 4. It will develop and administer ELP assessments aligned with the State's ELP standards, consistent with the requirements in ESEA sections 1111(b)(7), 3113(b)(2), and 3122(a)(3)(A)(ii) no later than the 2015–2016 school year. (Principle 1)
- 5. It will report annually to the public on college-going and college credit-accumulation rates for all students and subgroups of students in each LEA and each public high school in the State. (Principle 1)
- 6. If the SEA includes student achievement on assessments in addition to reading/language arts and mathematics in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system and uses achievement on those assessments to identify priority and focus schools, it has technical documentation, which can be made available to the Department upon request, demonstrating that the assessments are administered statewide; include all students, including by providing appropriate accommodations for English Learners and students with disabilities, as well as alternate assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards or alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(a)(2); and are valid and reliable for use in the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system. (Principle 2)
- 7. It will annually make public its lists of reward schools, priority schools, and focus schools prior to the start of the school year as well as publicly recognize its reward schools, and will update its lists of priority and focus schools at least every three years. (Principle 2)

**If the SEA is not submitting with its renewal request its updated list of priority and focus schools, based on the most recent available data, for implementation beginning in the 2015–2016 school year, it must also assure that:**

- 8. It will provide to the Department, no later than January 31, 2016, an updated list of priority and focus schools, identified based on school year 2014–2015 data, for implementation beginning in the 2016–2017 school year.

- 9. It will evaluate and, based on that evaluation, revise its own administrative requirements to reduce duplication and unnecessary burden on LEAs and schools. (Principle 4)
- 10. It has consulted with its Committee of Practitioners regarding the information set forth in its ESEA flexibility request.
- 11. Prior to submitting this request, it provided all LEAs with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment on the request and has attached a copy of that notice (Attachment 1) as well as copies of any comments it received from LEAs. (Attachment 2)
- 12. Prior to submitting this request, it provided notice and information regarding the request to the public in the manner in which the SEA customarily provides such notice and information to the public (*e.g.*, by publishing a notice in the newspaper; by posting information on its website) and has attached a copy of, or link to, that notice. (Attachment 3)
- 13. It will provide to the Department, in a timely manner, all required reports, data, and evidence regarding its progress in implementing the plans contained throughout its ESEA flexibility request, and will ensure that all such reports, data, and evidence are accurate, reliable, and complete or, if it is aware of issues related to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of its reports, data, or evidence, it will disclose those issues.
- 14. It will report annually on its State report card and will ensure that its LEAs annually report on their local report cards, for the “all students” group, each subgroup described in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II), and for any combined subgroup (as applicable): information on student achievement at each proficiency level; data comparing actual achievement levels to the State’s annual measurable objectives; the percentage of students not tested; performance on the other academic indicator for elementary and middle schools; and graduation rates for high schools. In addition, it will annually report, and will ensure that its LEAs annually report, all other information and data required by ESEA section 1111(h)(1)(C) and 1111(h)(2)(B), respectively. It will ensure that all reporting is consistent with *State and Local Report Cards Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as Amended Non-Regulatory Guidance* (February 8, 2013).

**Principle 3 Assurances**

Each SEA must select the appropriate option and, in doing so, assures that:

Option A	Option B	Option C
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 15.a. The SEA is on track to fully implementing Principle 3, including incorporation of student growth based on State assessments into educator ratings for teachers of tested grades and subjects and principals.</p>	<p>If an SEA that is administering new State assessments during the 2014–2015 school year is requesting one additional year to incorporate student growth based on these assessments, it will:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 15.b.i. Continue to ensure that its LEAs implement teacher and principal evaluation systems using multiple measures, and that the SEA or its LEAs will calculate student growth data based on State assessments administered during the 2014–2015 school year for all teachers of tested grades and subjects and principals; and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 15.b.ii. Ensure that each teacher of a tested grade and subject and all principals will receive their student growth data based on State assessments administered during the 2014–2015 school year.</p>	<p>If the SEA is requesting modifications to its teacher and principal evaluation and support system guidelines or implementation timeline other than those described in Option B, which require additional flexibility from the guidance in the document titled <i>ESEA Flexibility</i> as well as the documents related to the additional flexibility offered by the Assistant Secretary in a letter dated August 2, 2013, it will:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 15.c. Provide a narrative response in its redlined ESEA flexibility request as described in Section II of the ESEA flexibility renewal guidance.</p>

## Consultation

An SEA must meaningfully engage and solicit input from diverse stakeholders and communities in the development of its request. To demonstrate that an SEA has done so, the SEA must provide an assurance that it has consulted with the State's Committee of Practitioners regarding the information set forth in the request and provide the following:

1. A description of how the SEA meaningfully engaged and solicited input on its request from teachers and their representatives.

Rhode Island Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist maintains a strong commitment to engaging stakeholders in the development and implementation of policies and initiatives. In keeping with that commitment, the R.I. Department of Education has engaged in and solicited input from the education field since the initial approval of the Rhode Island ESEA Flexibility Request in 2012 and throughout the preparation of this application for renewal of the Request.

### **Principle 1 – College- and Career-Ready Expectations, and Principle 2 – Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support**

#### **Accountability**

When the U.S. Department of Education approved the Rhode Island ESEA Flexibility Request on May 23, 2012, the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) implemented a new system of school recognition, accountability, and support. RIDE described the new system this way:

RIDE will classify schools based on:

- **Proficiency:** How many students have attained proficiency or better?
- **Distinction:** How many students have attained distinction?
- **Gap-closing:** Is the school serving all students, including those with disabilities and English Learners?
- **Progress:** Is the school approaching its 2017 targets?
- **Growth (K-8):** Are all students making progress?
- **Improvement (high schools):** Is the school improving annually?
- **Graduation (high schools):** Are all students ready for success?

After classifying schools using these measures, RIDE will identify schools in need of support and intervention and will diagnose the needs of each identified school. Each school that RIDE identifies will develop a multi-year intervention plan, which RIDE will monitor. The plans will include numerous reform strategies – in the areas of leadership, support, infrastructure, and content – that will be targeted to address the specific needs of each identified school.

RIDE will also use the classification system to commend schools that have attained high achievement levels or that are making dramatic progress.

As Rhode Island has transitioned toward college- and career-ready standards (the Common Core State Standards) and toward high-quality assessments aligned with these standards to measure student growth (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, PARCC), we have faced the need to redesign some component elements of our system for school accountability and support. In particular, this need arose because of the transition from the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) to PARCC assessments in the current (2014-15) school year. Based on feedback Commissioner Gist received from numerous practitioner groups, in particular from her monthly meetings with the executive committee of the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association, Commissioner Gist decided to use this transition opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue about assessment and school accountability.

To meaningfully engage educators and to receive feedback and advice from educators regarding the use of state assessments for recognition, accountability, and support, last year (2014) Commissioner Gist convened a group of practitioners, consisting of 5 school superintendents, 1 head of a charter public school, an assistant superintendent, an assessment director, and a high-school principal. The group convened for four two-hour sessions:

**Meeting 1- February 24, 2014, 2 – 4 p.m.**

*Understanding the Landscape*

The first meeting will present the focus group with an overview of the opportunities and limitations of the ESEA submission and the accountability cycles that are affected in order to ensure that the group fully understood the current metrics used to classify schools and how each is impacted by the PARCC transition. We will also explain the feedback that we receive where there are connections between the metrics and other systems.

**Meeting 2- March 10, 2014, 3 – 5 p.m.**

*Presenting Current Thinking on Changes and Adjustments*

We will use focus-group members understand the recommendations deeply, raise questions, and offer and alternative recommendations.

**Meeting 3- March 24, 2014, 2 – 4 p.m.**

*Finalizing the Accountability System Adjustments*

The third meeting will be dedicated to finalizing the adjustments that were presented and discussed during the second meeting so that the application and workbook can be updated.

#### **Meeting 4- April 3, 2014, 2 – 4 p.m.**

*Accountability: Future State*

The final meeting will present the materials changes that RIDE planned to incorporate into the ESEA waiver extension request to the group, discuss how and why the decisions were made, and to confirm their agreement with the approach. We will also use this final meeting to begin a discussing how we would like to shape the next generation of accountability systems.

We are attaching to this request some of the materials we presented to the members of the focus group over the course of the four meetings.

See Attachment 12:

Consultation – Rhode Island’s ESEA Waiver (PowerPoint)

Rhode Island ESEA waiver (PowerPoint)

Field Memo 4-11-14 (Item 1)

Field Memo 4-18-14 (Item 3)

Field Memo 4-25-14 (Item 2)

Field Memo Alert 4-29-14

As a result of the meetings of these practitioners, Commissioner Gist accepted several recommendations for changes to the Rhode Island system for school classifications and accountability. For further review and input, Commissioner Gist and Deputy Commissioner Abbott scheduled two webinars to present these proposals to all educators and to members of the general public. Commissioner Gist invited participation in these webinars in her weekly communications to superintendents and to the education field:

As I noted to you in last week’s Field Memo, we are in the process of developing our application for renewal of our ESEA Flexibility Request, which allowed us to implement our current system of school accountability in 2012. In renewing our request, we intend to leave the accountability system largely unchanged, but we do have to make some changes because of our transition next year from NECAP to PARCC assessments. We continue to seek input on our renewal application, and to that end we have scheduled two webinars for people in the education field and for the general public as well.

Tuesday, April 29, 2014, from 4:30-5:30 p.m.: [RSVP online](#)

Wednesday, April 30, 2014, from 4:30-5:30 p.m.: [RSVP online](#)

(The content will be the same for both, so those interesting in participating need to RSVP for only one.)

I invite you and others on your team to participate in either webinar, and please feel free to share this invitation with others in your community.

RIDE also posted these [announcements](#) on the RIDE website.

In November 2014, to further review, refine, and improve the Rhode Island system of school recognition, accountability, and support, Commissioner Gist convened a working group of educators, Accountability 3.0, under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner David V. Abbott. The purpose of the group was to “create the blueprint for our next-generation accountability system that will be based on the new PARCC assessments.” Commissioner Gist’s stated goal was to ensure that the redesign process would be “more iterative, with a broad range of participants.” **\*Consult – Acc 3-0 initial letter 11-24-14**

The working group convened on November 25, 2014, with 15 invited participants, including superintendents, a leader of a public charter school, 2 members of school committees, 2 principals, two representatives of the statewide teachers’ unions, a former Rhode Island Teacher of the Year, representatives of the State Special Education Advisory Committee and the State English Language Learners Advisory Committee, and a representative of postsecondary education. Although not all members attended all meetings, sign-in sheets show that typical meetings included 10 or more participants, often with follow-ups by email. **\*Consult Acc 3-0 members**

At its initial meeting, the working group discussed two white papers regarding the proposed examination of the Rhode Island accountability system. The group also adopted a sequence and timeline, extending through the submission of this flexibility request and through establishing PARCC baselines and cut scores in the summer of 2015. **\*Consult Acc 3-0 work plan 12-17-14**

Over a course of twice-monthly meetings, the working group developed guiding principles and began its analysis of metrics in the current accountability system (December 2014). In January, the group began developing the specific changes to the accountability system that we include in this flexibility request, for example:

- Absolute proficiency: discussed changing this measure to reflect credit for improvement even below the level of proficiency, through an indexing system;
- Gap closing: Major changes here, no longer looking at subgroups but rather at the bottom 25 percent of performers within a given school; this group is compared against the statewide performance;
- Growth metric (K-8): instead of looking at the median student in a school, this metric will analyze the share of a student population with growth scores below 35 SGP;
- And other topics. **\*Consult Acc 3-0 workgroup 1-20-15**

The working group continued to discuss these topics and others and to revise and refine its proposals, in preparation for submission of this request for flexibility under ESEA.

In February 2015, the working group prepared its list of the “characteristics of excellent schools,” which the group agreed could be used to inform decisions made regarding school improvement and transformation. **\*Consult Acc 3-0 exc schools** The group

also reviewed a PowerPoint presentation regarding proposed metric changes to the system of recognition, accountability, and support. Following this meeting, RIDE prepared a first draft of Principle 2 of this flexibility request for review by the members of the working group.

A PowerPoint summarizing recommendations and agreements made to date was further refined, revised, and discussed at the meeting of March 9, 2015, **\*Consult Acc 3-0 3-9-15** in preparation for full inclusion of the working-group recommendations in Principle 2 of this request for flexibility under ESEA. RIDE presented a final version of the report in a webinar for superintendents and other interested school leaders on March 27, 2015. **\*Consult PPT 3-25-15**

## **Support**

As described in this request, RIDE meets at least quarterly with leaders of each Focus and Priority school to develop, implement, and monitor plans for school transformation.

At the conclusion of each quarterly monitoring, RIDE formally and informally collects information from the monitored Focus and Priority schools and their districts. This feedback comes in the form of process debriefs, surveys, and focus groups facilitated by third parties. The information gathered during this process not only informed decisions made regarding the monitoring process as it appears in this request, but also more broadly informed decisions regarding many of the improvements proposed throughout the request.

In order to get more detailed feedback from leaders in school districts with Focus and Priority schools on the support RIDE provides to schools in the process of transformation, RIDE contracted with the U.S. Education Delivery Institute to run a focus group among school leaders. (The U.S. Department of Education Reform Support Network supported this process.) The meeting of the focus group took place on December 4, 2014. The participating superintendents or their designees provided reactions and suggestions regarding support they were receiving from the RIDE Office of Transformation. The discussion led to some specific recommendations, particularly regarding the timelines and the criteria for exit from Focus and Priority status. This feedback helped guide some of the refinements RIDE has made in this request for flexibility regarding support for Focus and Priority schools in transformation. Superintendents or their designees from *all* LEAs with Focus or Priority schools attended the meeting of the focus group, with the exception of one single-school LEA, which received by email the questions presented to the group. **\*Consult – District Superintendent Focus Group 12-17-14**

## **Principle 3 – Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership**

Since the initial approval of the Rhode Island ESEA Flexibility Request on May 23, 2012, the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) has been meaningfully engaged with educators in Rhode Island to ensure that LEAs are implementing evaluation and



support systems that meet the standards that the Rhode Island Board of Education has approved. Here is a summary of the highlights of our outreach and consultation efforts regarding educator evaluations:

**State-wide Surveys:** Twice a year, at mid-year and at the end of the school year, we have administered statewide surveys designed to collect feedback on the implementation of the evaluation systems for teachers, support professionals, building administrators, and central office administrators. Approximately 4,260 teachers, 1,360 support professionals, 300 building administrators, and 125 central office administrators completed the most recent mid-year survey.

**Superintendent Regional Meetings:** The RIDE educator-evaluation team facilitates annual regional meetings for superintendents. These meetings serve as an opportunity for RIDE and teams of superintendents to discuss the evaluation work in smaller group settings and to review the evaluation data. The most recent round of regional meetings was conducted in the late summer and early fall of 2013.

**Student Learning Objective (SLO) Regional Meetings:** In the fall of 2012, the RIDE evaluation team hosted 2 SLO Peer Review and Support Sessions for educators across the state. SLOs are the most heavily weighted element in our evaluation system. These meetings provided an opportunity for teachers and administrators to bring their SLOs and experience to a RIDE-facilitated workshop that allowed teachers and administrators to hone their ability to review SLOs, determine if the three main criteria were approvable or needed revision, and to craft feedback. RIDE recorded a webinar of this session for use by districts in supporting the SLO process.

**Educator Workgroups:** RIDE has convened two distinct educator workgroups: special educators (during the 2012-13 school year), and support professionals (ongoing). One focus area for these groups is the use of student learning measures in evaluation. The participants review current policies and samples, provide feedback, develop and critique new samples in order to improve the process for these educators. There is also a group of teachers of the arts who meet regularly with members of the evaluation team. These arts educators received a grant to develop a strong SLO process for arts educators and have collaborated closely with RIDE staff. RIDE also convened four support professionals' focus groups during February 2014.

**Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS) Focus Groups:** In the spring of 2013, RIDE convened through focus groups to collect feedback and recommendations. 15 educators, representing 12 LEAs participated in the EPSS focus groups. The feedback from these focus groups had a significant impact on the changes and improvements made to the system prior to the current school year.

**Educator Quality Mailbox:** The evaluation team monitors e-mails that are sent in from educators throughout the state. We provide direct responses to everyone who emails a question or comment regarding educator evaluations.

**Network Meetings:** RIDE facilitates monthly meeting with assistant superintendents, curriculum directors, and leaders of charter public schools. Educator evaluation is a consistent topic at these meetings.

**Presentations for professional groups:** Members of the evaluation team have attended a variety of meetings and conferences for professional associations. (e.g., Rhode Island Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Rhode Island Association of School Principals, Rhode Island School Counselors Association, Association of Rhode Island Administrators of Special Education, Rhode Island Art Educators, Rhode Island Music Educators, Rhode Island School Superintendents Association).

**Commissioner Gist's meetings with teachers during school visits:** Commissioner Gist regularly visits schools across Rhode Island, and on each visit she schedules an afterschool meeting with teachers. At virtually every one of these meetings, educator evaluations was a dominant topic or the dominant topic of concern. Commissioner Gist uses these meetings to get direct input from educators and to respond to questions, concerns, and inquiries about the educator-evaluation system in Rhode Island.

On May 17, 2013, Commissioner Gist [announced](#) that after meeting with the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association and the Rhode Island Association of School Principals, RIDE agreed to implement a "differentiated evaluations" system for all LEAs using the Rhode Island Model of evaluations. After further discussions with union leaders from the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals (RIFTHP), on August 9, 2013, Commissioner Gist announced that the six "innovation districts," all of which are RIFTHP districts, would also be able to employ the differentiated evaluation system. The differentiated evaluation system is a response to concerns from educators about the time demands regarding the number of classroom observations of practices; under the differentiated system, teachers with evaluations of effective or highly effective could undergo fewer observations.

On August 23, 2013, Commissioner Gist announced another significant revision to the evaluation system, subject to review by the U.S. Department of Education:

...[B]ased on feedback that I have received from teachers, principals, and superintendents regarding the implementation of educator evaluations, we have determined that it is in the best interest of our schools, our principals, our teachers, and our students to modify the way we will use the Growth Model as a component of educator evaluations.

At this time, we have decided not to use the Growth Model as an element in determining the summative evaluation ratings for the purposes of personnel decisions for teachers and principals.

The Growth Model data that we now have available, however, will provide a critical piece of information that teachers and school and district leaders will use to improve teaching and learning. For example, teachers and school and district leaders will use data from the Growth Model for development of professional learning plans, for professional development, and to develop a deeper understanding of student growth and of professional practices. ...

In future years, we will use the Growth Model as a factor in determining summative evaluation ratings.

See Attachment 12:  
Field Memo 5-17-13 (Item 1)  
Field Memo 3-14-14 (Item 3)

2. A description of how the SEA meaningfully engaged and solicited input on its request from other diverse communities, such as students, parents, community-based organizations, civil rights organizations, organizations representing students with disabilities and English Learners, business organizations, and Indian tribes.

Rhode Island Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist maintains a strong commitment to engaging stakeholders in the development and implementation of policies and initiatives. In keeping with that commitment, the R.I. Department of Education has engaged in and solicited input from diverse communities since the initial approval of the Rhode Island ESEA Flexibility Request in 2012 and throughout the preparation of this application for renewal of the Request.

### **Principle 1 – College- and Career-Ready Expectations**

In order to ensure the successful transition to our new set of college- and career-ready expectations, the Common Core State Standards, the R.I. Department of Education recognized the importance of meaningfully engaging and seeking input from students, parents, community-based organizations, and other constituencies. To that end, the R.I. Department of Education sought educators who would volunteer to serve as “Common Core Ambassadors,” leading forums on the Common Core State Standards in LEAs and other public settings across the state. The 18 educators selected as Common Core Ambassadors represented a broad constituency of the education field in Rhode Island, including a superintendent, assistant superintendents, principals, reading specialists, mathematics teachers, reading and literacy specialists, a director of special education, an ESL director, and others. Thanks to a generous grant from the GE Foundation, RIDE was able to pay each ambassador a \$4,000 stipend for their work (though some declined to accept the stipend).



The primary function of the ambassadors was to lead community forums, at which they explained to the public at large the importance of setting high expectations for our students and the fundamental facts about the Common Core State Standards. The ambassadors led a total of 29 Common Core forums. Most of these forums were arranged in partnership with local school districts; one forum was in partnership with the East Providence Special Education Parents Advisory Network. One forum, for our most remote, island-based community, was held as a webinar.

Along with our traditional communications strategies – including weekly updates to the field, as well as use of social media (including a dedicated Facebook page for the Rhode Island Common Core initiative), Rhode Island has received and continues to receive feedback, commentary, and inquiries from the education field and from the general public regarding transition to the Common Core. Because Rhode Island has fully transitioned to the Common Core, the feedback and commentary has not led to any significant change since the initial approval of the Rhode Island ESEA Flexibility Request (May 2012) in our use of college- and career-ready expectations, but the public outreach has enable us to engage a many Rhode Islanders from a wide range of constituencies in an ongoing conversation about this topic.

See Attachment 13:  
Common Core Grant – RI.  
March Draft Minutes

## **Principle 2 - Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support**

Last year, RIDE sent to all media a notice inviting the media and the public at large to participate in either of two RIDE webinars on ESEA Flexibility Request renewal application:

### **RIDE schedules webinars on proposed changes to classification system**

The R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) is completing the process of developing an application for renewal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Request, under which, in 2012, the U.S. Department of Education allowed RIDE to implement the current system of school [classifications](#) and accountability.

As a part of our regularly scheduled meeting cycles with districts that have identified Priority or Focus schools, RIDE consulted with superintendents and chief transformation officers about our ESEA Flexibility Request renewal application, particularly on topics affecting identified schools. Specifically, we consulted with East Providence, Providence, Central Falls, and Pawtucket. RIDE also developed a PowerPoint (attached) on our renewal application and presented it at a public meeting of Rhode Island Board of Education.

In meetings with the ELL Advisory Committee and Rhode Island Special Education Advisory Committee (RISEAC) over the past two years, RIDE has asked both groups if they had questions or concerns about request for flexibility and the request for renewal

of the ESEA waiver, and there were no questions or comments. RIDE informed both groups that RIDE would be happy to schedule a separate briefing for each group if the leadership of each committee felt it would be necessary, upon review of the red-lined version the requests. Below is a schedule of the meetings with these advisory committees at which RIDE discussed the ESEA Flexibility Request:

## **RISEAC**

February 3, 2014 . RISEAC Leadership Team. Announcement of ESEA Flexibility Request renewal application.

February 27, 2014 . RISEAC full committee. Announcement of ESEA Flexibility Request renewal application. (See attached RISEAC Director Rept.)

March 20, 2014. RISEAC full committee. Presentations on Common Core State Standards and PARCC assessments. (See March Draft Minutes.)

Meeting of March 19, 2015 See attachment: **\*Consult RISEAC PPT 3-19-15]]**

## **ELL Advisory**

February 6, 2014. ELL Advisory Committee Leadership Team. . Announcement of ESEA Flexibility Request renewal application.

February 27, 2014. ELL Advisory Committee full committee. Announcement of ESEA Flexibility Request renewal application and presentation on Common Core State Standards Implications for English learners.

See Attachment 13:

February RISEAC Director Report

ESEA classifications – webinar – advisory

ESEA Flex Request Renewal (webinar PowerPoint)

RIDE sought additional feedback on its accountability process from a network of new school leaders trained through the Academy of Transformative Leadership. These leaders provided valuable school-level perspectives and experiences with the accountability system in the context of transformative leadership.

## **Subsequent Consultation Since Initial Renewal Submission**

Subsequent to our initial submission of our request for renewal of ESEA flexibility, RIDE has provided additional notice and information to the public and has provided notice and opportunity to comment to all LEAs.

On May 4, 2015, RIDE posted a complete copy of the renewal request on the RIDE website and notified all superintendents and other heads of LEAs through group email on this same date. This notification of opportunity to comment included these messages and links, which we have repeated in numerous subsequent communications:

We have posted on our website a PowerPoint on these proposed revisions to our accountability system:

<http://ride.ri.gov/InformationAccountability/Accountability.aspx> (see under “New: RI Accountability Revisions”)

We have posted our complete flexibility-renewal request here:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Information-and-Accountability-User-Friendly-Data/Accountability/ESEA %20Flexibility Renewal Red-Lined Final 03312015.pdf>

Comments and feedback from you and from your team are welcome; please use this email address: [ESEA.flex@ride.ri.gov](mailto:ESEA.flex@ride.ri.gov).

Also on May 4, we sent this information, notification of opportunity to comment, and associated links through our Constant Contact list serv to all “friends of education,” some 3,700 Rhode Islanders who have signed up to receive regular communications and notifications from RIDE.

Also on May 4, RIDE sent this information, notification of opportunity to comment and associated links in the form of a news release, under the headline “RIDE seeks comment on proposed changes to accountability system,” to all Rhode Island media (approximately 80 media outlets and individual education writers). We posted this news release on the RIDE website on May 4. We had this news release translated into Spanish and distributed the translation to all Spanish-language media in Rhode Island on May 5, and we posted this Spanish-language version of the news release on our website on May 5.

RIDE scheduled webinars, to provide further information and opportunity to comment, for May 18 and May 19. RIDE provided notification of these webinars to all superintendents and other heads of LEAs via the Commissioner’s weekly Field Memo, her usual method of communication with heads of LEAs, on May 8. (As is our practice, we published this Field Memo on the RIDE website on the following Tuesday, May 12.) Also on May 8, we notified all “friends of education” of these webinars, via our Constant Contact list serv, reaching 3,700 Rhode Islanders. On May 13, we sent direct messages of notification of these webinars to the heads of the following stakeholder groups:

- RI Parent Teacher Association
- RI ASCD
- RI Manufacturers Assoc.
- Providence Youth Student Movement
- RI-CAN
- Narragansett Chamber of Commerce
- N. Central RI Chamber of Commerce
- New Urban Arts
- South Kingstown Chamber of Commerce
- RI KIDS COUNT

Charlestown Chamber of Commerce  
RIASBO  
Jewish Alliance  
RI NAACP  
Newport Chamber of Commerce  
RIASP  
Northern RI Chamber of Commerce  
Jamestown Chamber of Commerce  
SkillsUSA RI  
Young Voices  
Central RI Chamber of Commerce  
Greater Prov. Chamber of Commerce  
Progreso Latino  
North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce  
Educators in Action  
Prov After School Alliance  
Youth in Action  
Prov Children and Youth Council  
RI Council of Churches  
RIPIN  
East Greenwich Chamber of Commerce  
Cranston Chamber of Commerce  
Inspiring Minds  
RIASC  
College Crusade RI  
RIMLE  
Prov Student Union  
East Prov Chamber of Commerce  
East Bay Chamber of Commerce  
Urban League of RI  
RI AFT  
NEA RI  
Latino Policy Institute

RIDE conducted the webinars as scheduled.

On May 27, in an additional effort to engage key stakeholder groups regarding our renewal request, specifically to remind them that the PowerPoint and complete request are posted on our website and that we are still accepting comment through our dedicated email address, RIDE directly emailed the heads of the following stakeholder groups:

**Students**

Young Voices, Karen Feldman, exec dir, (b)(6)  
Providence Student Union, Zack Mazera, exec dir,  
[zack@providencestudentunion.org](mailto:zack@providencestudentunion.org)

## Parents

Rhode Island PTA. Amie Galipeau, President [president@rhodeislandpta.org](mailto:president@rhodeislandpta.org)  
Rhode Island PIN, Stephen Brunero, exec dir, [brunero@ripin.org](mailto:brunero@ripin.org)

## Community-based organizations

Rhode Island Kids Count – Elizabeth Burke Bryant , [ebb@rikidscount.org](mailto:ebb@rikidscount.org)  
Family Service of Rhode Island – Margaret Holland McDuff .  
[mhmcduff@familyservice.org](mailto:mhmcduff@familyservice.org)

## Civil Rights Organizations

RI NAACP, Providence Branch, Jim Vincent, president , (b)(6)  
Progreso Latino, Mario Bueno, exec dir, [mbueno@progresolatino.org](mailto:mbueno@progresolatino.org)

## Business Organizations

Rhode Island Manufacturers Association, Bill McCourt, exec dir.,  
[billm@mfgri.com](mailto:billm@mfgri.com)  
Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce, Laurie White, pres.,  
[lwhite@provchamber.com](mailto:lwhite@provchamber.com)

Subsequent to our submission of our initial request for renewal of ESEA flexibility, RIDE has received to date only eight responses to our dedicated email address, [ESEA.flex@ride.ri.gov](mailto:ESEA.flex@ride.ri.gov), although the address remains open for further feedback and comments. (RIDE received several questions during the scheduled webinars on the ESEA flexibility request, but did not receive any comments or suggestions during the webinars.) Several of the responses RIDE has received were from LEAs. Two comments from LEAs concerned our request to allow .25 points of additional credit for improving achievement levels of students facing additional learning challenges (students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students) when calculating proficiency scores. One superintendent wrote:

Since the classification system will be used to compare schools and districts in Rhode Island, it is important that all aspects of the system are credible and fair. The idea of providing "additional credit for improving achievement levels of students facing additional learning challenges" makes sense so long as identification rates of those students are within the normal range.

An example might help. Chariho's identification rate for students with disabilities is approximately 12%, slightly below the state average. We have been diligent in consistently applying federal guidelines to ensure that only those students who are truly disabled are characterized as such. District X's identification rate is 24%. As a result, the opportunity to gain credit in District X is substantially higher than in Chariho and, in fact, is more likely, as non-disabled students (without learning challenges) are likely being identified in District X. When Chariho and District X are compared, conclusions will be based upon information that is not credible.



When this issue has been raised in the past, I have been told that monitoring visits would solve this problem. Not true. Monitoring visits have been going on for years and there is still a wide disparity in identification rates. One solution would be to provide 'credit' in the classification system for those schools/districts identifying disabled students at rates close to the norm. Another solution would be to allow credit only up to the state identification rate average. This would accomplish two things: (1) it would provide an incentive to identify only those students who are truly disabled and (2) it would allow for credible school and district comparisons.

An assistant superintendent wrote:

I remain very concerned about the .25 points that will be added on to students in poverty, with disabilities and those who are learning English. This creates the unintended consequences of districts not exiting ELs from programs and qualifying more students for IEPs who may otherwise have been served through RTI. It lowers the bar for these most-in-need populations by adding on points to their scores just because of a label placed on them. It gives their teachers and school leaders an excuse to lower expectations for these students instead of working harder with them to get them to achieve rigorous standards. It seems boarder-line unethical. I was told that high incident district leaders pushed for this change to the waiver application/classification process. How sad for the students in those districts, where leaders have asked for supplemental points for their children who deserve so much more because they don't truly understand the needs of these students. This changes seems an attempt to inflate scores for accountability purposes to make things seems better than they actually are for our children.

One principal expressed concern about losing "credit" for high-school students who took algebra or geometry courses in middle school:

The new model penalizes school districts and particularly high schools when 8<sup>th</sup> graders take the algebra I or geometry PARCC at their schools. At my school, I have 1/3 of each incoming freshman not taking algebra I on our campus, those student go to algebra II or geometry directly. The result is we lose the scores of our most advance math learners. The system never recoups those students elsewhere in the matrix. Mrs. Snider did acknowledge this flaw, and admitted that RIDE was looking into some recapture through the "Post-Secondary Credential" model (yet fully developed). With good intentions, RIDE cannot recapture those students as no one can predict who in my more than 70 students will elect an AP or dual enrollment class.

Districts that have students taking algebra I prior to grade 9 are penalized and never have the opportunity to recover.

Another superintendent expressed concern about the potential effect of low participation rates on school classifications:

A school cannot achieve the status of Commended or Leading if they do not meet the 95% participation rate. This is unfair, particular when ESEA does not speak to an opt out option and RIDE gave very little guidance relative to the opt out option. Obviously, parents were allowed to opt out because neither Federal or State law/regulations has language stating that parents cannot opt out. Why should a school or school district be denied the status of Commended or Leading when the law/regulation allowed parental opt outs?

Finally, another superintendent raised concerns about our proposed method for measuring the closing of achievement gaps:

It reads like gap closing will be measured by the difference between the lowest quartile and top half of the school population. So then conceivably a school could have 100% of students C&C Ready but not get credit for gap closing based on what happens at the top end. Similarly, this would communicate that the “ideal state” is one in which every student achieves at the same level. Do I interpret this correctly? Was that the intention? Why not measure the difference between the lowest quartile and proficiency? I appreciate what you were trying to solve (Block Island shouldn't get a free ride on accountability) but wonder about this solution.

RIDE has responded to these school leaders and will consider modifications to our flexibility request that may alleviate these concerns, though it does not appear to us at this time that any of these suggestions would require significant changes in the design of our system of accountability, classifications, and support.

## Evaluation

The Department encourages an SEA that receives approval to implement the flexibility to collaborate with the Department to evaluate at least one program, practice, or strategy the SEA or its LEAs implement under principle 1, 2, or 3. Upon receipt of approval of the flexibility, an interested SEA will need to nominate for evaluation a program, practice, or strategy the SEA or its LEAs will implement under principles 1, 2, or 3. The Department will work with the SEA to determine the feasibility and design of the evaluation and, if it is determined to be feasible and appropriate, will fund and conduct the evaluation in partnership with the SEA, ensuring that the implementation of the chosen program, practice, or strategy is consistent with the evaluation design.

Check here if you are interested in collaborating with the Department in this evaluation, if your request for the flexibility is approved.

## Overview of SEA's Request for ESEA Flexibility

Provide an overview (about 500 words) of the SEA's request for the flexibility that:

1. explains the SEA's comprehensive approach to implement the waivers and principles and describes the SEA's strategy to ensure this approach is coherent within and across the principles; and
2. describes how the implementation of the waivers and principles will enhance the SEA's and its LEAs' ability to increase the quality of instruction for students and improve student achievement.

The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education strategic plan, [\*Transforming Education in Rhode Island\*](#), guides us as we work toward increasing the quality of instruction and improving student achievement in our state. Our strategic plan is based on the following theory of action:

- all students will achieve at high levels when we have an effective teacher in every classroom and an effective leader in every school; and
- our teachers and school leaders will be most effective when they receive consistent and sufficient support and work within a system of policies and resources that is based on student needs.

One of the priorities in our strategic plan is “accelerating all schools toward greatness,” which includes our system of differentiated accountability, recognition, and support. Under our current approved request for flexibility, we have successfully implemented for the past three years an accountability system that:

- focuses on closing achievement gaps;
- identifies specific shortcomings and achievements at each school, rather than classifying schools as either making progress or in need of improvement;
- enables us to provide each school with the specific support or intervention needed to improve student achievement, rather than restricting us to a rigid set of intervention options; and,
- provides schools and districts with the ability to select bold and empirically proven interventions that respond to their context and their needs.

Based on our continued work with educators in the field as well as with other friends of education across Rhode Island, as described in the Consultation section of this request, we have identified several areas for potential improvement in our accountability system. Subsequent to our receipt of 2014-15 PARCC results, RIDE plans to submit a proposal of these changes with detailed models demonstrating compliance with the requirements of ESEA flex as an amendment to our waiver.

## Principle 1: College- and Career-Ready Expectations

### 1.A Adopt College- and Career-Ready Standards

#### Option A

The State has adopted college- and career-ready standards in at least reading/language arts and mathematics that are common to a significant number of States, consistent with part (1) of the definition of college- and career-ready standards.

- Attach evidence that the State has adopted the standards, consistent with the State’s standards adoption process. (Attachment 4)

#### Option B

The State has adopted college- and career-ready standards in at least reading/language arts and mathematics that have been approved and certified by a State network of institutions of higher education (IHEs), consistent with part (2) of the definition of college- and career-ready standards.

1. Attach evidence that the State has adopted the standards, consistent with the State’s standards adoption process. (Attachment 4)
2. Attach a copy of the memorandum of understanding or letter from a State network of IHEs certifying that students who meet these standards will not need remedial coursework at the postsecondary level. (Attachment 5)

### 1.B Transition to College and Career Ready Standards

Provide the SEA’s plan to transition to and implement no later than the 2013–2014 school year college- and career-ready standards statewide in at least reading/language arts and mathematics for all students and schools and include an explanation of how this transition plan is likely to lead to all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students, gaining access to and learning content aligned with such standards. The Department encourages an SEA to include in its plan activities related to each of the italicized questions in the corresponding section of the document titled *ESEA Flexibility Review Guidance*, or to explain why one or more of those activities is not necessary to its plan.

Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide evidence corresponding to the option.

### The Common Core and the Rhode Island Theory of Action

#### Overview

For the past five years Rhode Island has been working towards its central goal of our strategic plan, [Transforming Education in Rhode Island](#), to ensure that all Rhode Island students are ready for success in college, careers, and life. Although we are in the process of development of a new strategic plan, our goal of ensuring success in college, careers, and life for all Rhode Island students remains. We have made gains towards this goal and in doing so, have learned a great deal about the role of the state agency



and our necessary partnership with school districts. Our theory of action is based on the premise that our teachers and school leaders will be most effective when they receive consistent and effective support and work within a system of policies and resources that is based on student needs. Our work transitioning to the Common Core state standards designing and implementing appropriate professional development to ensure that teachers and teacher leaders understand the Common Core and use it to inform instruction, assessment, and curriculum demonstrates our commitment. We have learned through experience that the fidelity of execution at the classroom level is the critical lever needed to actually improve instruction and to raise student achievement. Full implementation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum aligned with a comprehensive assessment system that is available to every student must be the jointly-held goal of the state and each of its Local Education Agencies. Finally, an effective instructional system requires a systematic problem-solving approach that provides student-centered, data-driven supports and interventions to identify and address gaps in student performance against the measurable expectations of the guaranteed and viable curriculum.

### ***Background***

Rhode Island was one of the first states to adopt the Common Core. We are a member of the Common Core Standards Initiative, a project directed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA). The Common Core State Standards Initiative has developed content standards in English language arts and mathematics for grades K-12 that are envisioned as a first step toward national education reform.

Our past practice in Rhode Island clearly demonstrates our solid commitment to working through multi-state consortia, including leadership roles in:

*New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP):* Rhode Island is a founding member of NECAP. NECAP is the only operational multi-state consortium that developed internationally benchmarked common content standards and an operational common assessment in the multiple grades required by NCLB. The states involved in NECAP are committed to continuing their work together with the Common Core.

*World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium:* Rhode Island is also a member of WIDA, a 35-state consortium dedicated to the design and implementation of high standards, valid and reliable assessments, and equitable educational opportunities for English Learners. As an early member of this consortium, Rhode Island was one of the first states to adopt the WIDA English-language proficiency standards for all grades and core-content areas.

We have further demonstrated our long-standing commitment to common standards through our active role in participating in and providing feedback during the development of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). We are pleased that the Common Core reflects similar expectations of rigor and some alignment with our current



state content standards, and we are pleased that the Common Core and our current state standards show the same commitment to college- and career-readiness.

### **Adopting the Common Core**

Before presenting the Common Core to the R.I. Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education (Board of Regents) for approval, the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) established a Common Core Engagement Committee, made up of representatives from the Governor's Office, the Office of Higher Education, and the Department of Labor and Training, and RIDE. The committee was convened to review the standards and to provide feedback in order to ensure their seamless adoption and transition. In addition, throughout the drafting process, RIDE engaged our state content specialists and district-level and higher-education content committees to provide feedback on the Common Core.

Upon the release of the CCSS, RIDE began a process of examining the standards to ensure that these standards maintain the high expectations that we have set for our students. Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist presented this information to the Board of Regents on June 17 and June 24, 2010. RIDE also described its detailed implementation plan to ensure that all schools are fully implementing a curriculum that is aligned with the Common Core standards prior to the first assessment based on the Common Core standards, during the 2014-15 school year.

On July 1, 2010, the Board of Regents voted unanimously to "Adopt the *Common Core State Standards*, as presented."

For evidence of this adoption, view the minutes from [Board of Regents July 1, 2010 meeting](#).

In order to establish a consistent set of standards for birth through grade twelve, Rhode Island aligned the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards with the Common Core. The Early Learning and Development Standards, adopted May 2013, articulate comprehensive educational expectations for children from birth to five years of age. As a winner of a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, Rhode Island developed high-quality professional development and assessments to support instruction in early learning.

### ***Timeline for Transition to the Common Core***

The transition to curriculum and instruction that is fully aligned with the Common Core State Standards occurred over several years, with the expectation of full implementation in the 2013-14 school year.

Beginning with our July 2010 adoption of the Common Core, Rhode Island initiated the awareness phase of its transition to the CCSS. In this phase, RIDE began outreach on the standards and began developing and sharing resources to build statewide

awareness and understanding of the standards. During the period spanning 2011-2013, the state embarked upon aggressive transition. This transition period involved all LEAS and included a RTT-funded “Study of the Standards”. The transition period also included statewide professional development, assessment and instructional support systems, professional development and resources to districts in order to support educators across the state in their transition to the Common Core.

The strategy for transition to the Common Core included:

- training (professional development) for educators (teachers and school leaders);
- development of instructional materials and curriculum;
- provision of student supports; and
- a detailed [timeline](#) to support LEA planning.

### **Comparing the Common Core with Previous Standards**

#### ***Overview***

Rhode Island’s previous standards (Grade Level Expectations and Grade Span Expectations, or GLEs and GSEs) for mathematics, reading, and written/oral communication are comparable in scope, sequencing, and rigor to Common Core. The Common Core includes rigorous expectations, robust content, and relevant, real-world skills. Due to our decade-long experience designing and administering large-scale assessments through multi-state consortia, Rhode Island was positioned to work with other states on collaborative curriculum and assessment initiatives, such as the PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) and the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) alternate assessment for students with severe disabilities.

After Rhode Island adopted the Common Core, RIDE further studied the alignment between the two sets of standards – the previous standards (GLEs and GSEs) and the Common Core. RIDE quickly learned that structural differences between the two sets of standards would make a crosswalk document complex and not likely to be useful. Our analyses determined that there was not a direct standard-to-standard link between the GLEs/GSEs and the Common Core. Rather, component elements of the GLEs/GSEs mapped fairly precisely to component elements of the Common Core standards. RIDE accordingly developed resources that identified the structure and focus of the Common Core, and RIDE identified the major shifts from the GLEs and GSEs to the Common Core. These resources underscored our belief that educators must study the standards and develop a guaranteed and viable curriculum aligned with the Common Core. We understood that full transition to instruction and assessment aligned with the Common Core is a process that can be managed only by well-informed and fully supported teachers and administrators. To that end, RIDE developed and distributed comparative overviews of our current state standards in [ELA](#) and [Math](#) and the Common Core.

## ***Adapting current assessments to the Common Core***

Upon adoption of the Common Core, the four NECAP states conducted a comparison of the GLEs/GSEs and the CCSS. This comparison included analysis by the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment and the content specialists from the NECAP states, in collaboration with the NECAP assessment contractor, of the two sets of standards. The collective goal of the NECAP states was to create a transition strategy that would be fair to educators and students and that would maintain the quality of the information that the tests provide. The assessment specialists and content specialists from the NECAP states, as well as the NECAP assessment contractors and the NECAP Technical Advisory Committee, reviewed the resulting plan for transitioning from NECAP to CCSS.

Over the course of the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years, districts across the four NECAP states transitioned to the Common Core State Standards. Although the pace and sequencing of changes to curriculum and instruction varied across districts and schools within and across the NECAP states, all four states expected districts and schools to be prepared to fully implement the Common Core State Standards during the 2013-14 school year.

During the transition period, the NECAP reading, writing, and mathematics tests continued to be administered in the fall of 2012 and 2013 and remained aligned with the previous standards (GLEs and GSEs).

The highlights of the transition plan stipulated:

- there were *no* changes to the GLEs/GSEs assessed on the NECAP reading, mathematics, and writing tests in the fall of 2012;
- there were *no* changes to the GLEs/GSEs assessed on the NECAP reading and writing tests in the fall of 2013;
- there were *some* changes to the GLEs assessed on the NECAP mathematics tests in the fall of 2013; and
- there were no changes to the GSEs assessed on the Grade 11 NECAP mathematics tests in the fall of 2013.

In addition, RIDE developed a transition plan that outlined all planned changes to the NECAP state assessment during the transition to the Common Core.

## **Transition to the Common Core**

### ***Overview***

The Rhode Island plan to support the implementation of the Common Core Standards builds on a strong foundation established through regulation and practice. [The Rhode Island Basic Education Program](#) (BEP) regulations set forth the basic level of academic and support programs required in each Local Education Agency (LEA). The BEP requires that all LEAs implement a guaranteed and viable curriculum with an aligned



comprehensive assessment system that includes formative, interim, and summative evaluations of all students in each core content area. In addition, the BEP requires that LEAs use a problem-solving approach to provide student-centered, data-driven supports and interventions that build upon the foundation of the guaranteed and viable curriculum. This approach must be comprehensive and systematic, and it must provide students with a full continuum of universal, targeted, and intensive supports that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, research-based, and designed to respond to student needs. The assessment and instructional support systems, professional development and resources that we built and continue to provide to districts are designed to support educators across the state in their transition to the Common Core.

The Rhode Island transition plan for the implementation of high-quality standards targeted professional development and resources for educators at differing levels of intensity. Our plan also matched professional development and resources with LEA need and capacity. RIDE contracted with The Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin (The Dana Center) to ensure that LEAs were able to develop and deliver curriculum aligned with the Common Core standards. RIDE also worked with the WIDA and NECAP Consortiums and with the Rhode Island Response to Intervention Initiative to provide district leaders, principals, and teachers with professional development that helped educators to use state and local assessment data to inform decisions regarding curriculum and instruction. This work both informed and supported our transition to the Common Core and PARCC assessments. We designed each component of the Rhode Island transition plan to implement standards so that all elements of the plan worked together to drive changes in the daily instructional cycle in every classroom in Rhode Island.

To achieve this goal, RIDE began by conducting broad outreach to build awareness and support for the Common Core. Following this outreach, we developed resources and professional-development opportunities to build LEA capacity in four target areas:

1. supporting all educators as they work to understand the standards;
2. providing intensive support for curriculum alignment and resource development in targeted LEAs;
3. building a comprehensive assessment system; and
4. providing access to and professional development in the use of data to drive instructional decision-making.

The Common Core standards will drive greater student achievement only to the degree that all teachers and principals understand the standards and have aligned curriculum, instructional strategies, and resources to teach our students effectively. RIDE made resources and systems of support available to all LEAs through Rhode Island's Instructional Support System (ISS). The ISS provides schools and teachers access to units of study, instructional resources, and state and local assessment data to support instruction. The first of three phases of ISS roll-out was completed June 2014. Through



the integration of these supports, educators will deliver high-quality; differentiated, data-driven instruction aligned with the Common Core standards.

Rhode Island's strategy for transition to the Common Core called for developing teachers' capacity to deliver high-quality, differentiated, data-driven instruction aligned with standards and for giving teachers the tools they need to do so. Tools like the ISS enable all educators to provide student-centered, data-driven supports and interventions to meet the needs of students with disabilities, English Learners, and low-achieving students. Rhode Island's training was developed with a complementary ethic, focusing on supporting principals and other leaders' ability to set the culture for the school; create the necessary context for effective teaching; and accrue a deep understanding of the importance of the Common Core standards in guiding school-reform efforts.

To further support Rhode Island educators, RIDE developed [timelines](#) and other resources on transition to the Common Core in Rhode Island.

## ***Awareness***

### **Outreach on the Common Core**

Our first step in transitioning to the Common Core was to engage in broad outreach to stakeholders in order to build awareness of and support for the adoption of the CCSS. In addition to informal and formal presentations on the CCSS, RIDE developed informational materials targeted to various stakeholder groups, including teachers, administrators, members of the higher-education community, families, and community members. We distributed these materials through various list-serves, and we posted the materials on the RIDE website.

Following the Board of Regents' adoption of the Common Core standards, RIDE sent copies of the standards to all LEAs in the state and posted the Common Core State Standards on our website for the public to access. We created implementation documents that illustrate the similarities and differences between the current standards and Common Core standards. We developed a detailed transition plan, including a timeline and strategies for implementing curriculum and for ensuring instructional alignment with the Common Core. This timeline also provides details on the transition to the new PARCC assessments and the incremental introduction of PARCC-based accountability.

Upon completion of the timeline and implementation documents, RIDE sent these materials to every LEA in Rhode Island. RIDE staff members conducted regional meetings to orient educators to the changes and to the additions that the Common Core will bring about. These regional meetings also provided educators with opportunities to discuss implications and needs, which helped to ensure fidelity of implementation throughout the transition to the Common Core. During these meetings and continuously thereafter, RIDE has been developing and distributing content-specific training materials with a focus on ELA and Math. The focus of these materials has progressively



supported educator’s deeper understanding of the standards.

To further support the CCSS transition, we secured a GE grant to help parents and the communities understand what the CCSS mean for our students and our classrooms. Through this grant, the 2013-2014 school year included extensive outreach to help promote increased understanding of the CCSS. Communication materials and CCSS videos were developed and shared at outreach events throughout the state. Over thirty events were conducted in RI school districts and for educational organizations. Most importantly, a group of thirty experienced Rhode Island educators served as “Common Core Ambassadors”, hosting events throughout Rhode Island communities to provide information on the CCSS.

During the 2014-2015 school year, we continued to support educators, parents and community members during the transition through partnering with school districts and organizations to host outreach events on the PARCC assessments. Communication materials developed by RIDE and materials developed by the PARCC states are being shared with districts and at the outreach events throughout the state. In addition, sessions are being hosted specifically for educators to provide them with information about the design and development of the PARCC assessment.

### ***Supports for educators in the understanding the Common Core***

RIDE implemented a process to ensure that all educators have the tools and training necessary to engage in an ongoing study of the standards. This process helped educators understand the Common Core Standards deeply enough to effectively align lessons, assessments, and resources with the Common Core. RIDE offered the *Study of Standards* training, developed in partnership with The Dana Center of the University of Texas at Austin, to educators across the state and directly training more than 6,000 educators. The *Study of the Standards* training taught educators a process of continuous study of the standards in their schools and provided the tools necessary to study the standards.

The *Study of the Standards* instructed and guided educators regarding:

- how to use a provided set of tools in order to ensure that their LEA has in place curriculum that is aligned with the standards; and
- how to integrate the standards effectively into their daily instruction.

We conducted separate sessions on Mathematics and English Language Arts in order to enable participants to experience the purpose, intent, depth, and clarity of the standards. These trainings were designed to engage educators in examining the coherence and alignment of the standards both vertically (across grade levels) and horizontally (between subjects within a grade), and the training sessions therefore include educators in kindergarten through grade 12. The training emphasized the



process for integrating the standards into a teacher’s instruction and assessment plan. Educators can apply tools and processes that they learn in these training sessions to any content at any grade level.

Our goal was to ensure that as many teachers, school-based administrators, and higher-education faculty members within teacher-preparation programs attend the sessions as possible. LEAs identified appropriate educators in their schools to participate in trainings, including general-education classroom teachers, teachers of English Learners and of students with disabilities, and school and district leaders. More than 6,000 educators in Rhode Island participated in a *Study of the Standards* session. This figure includes approximately 5,800 teachers or instructional leaders, 200 principals or assistant principals, and 45 central-office administrators representing LEAs. In order to demonstrate the alignment between the components of the Common Core and the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) standards, we held additional sessions for ESL teachers and other general educators who teach English Learners.

RIDE did not train every educator in each LEA directly, but we developed resources and protocols that were shared with other educators in Rhode Island schools. In addition, we developed other tools to facilitate a deep understanding of the standards. As RIDE developed these resource materials, we made the resources available to all educators through the RIDE website. These resources included guidance on how to use the tools with teams of grade-level educators that include general-education teachers, teachers of English Learners, and teachers of students with disabilities. For example, the Instructional Alignment Chart is a tool included in the *Study of the Standards* training (as well as in the intensive curriculum alignment). The protocol that we developed for this tool engages teams in discussing grade-level standards and identifying the standard that addresses the same topic in the prior and subsequent grades. The protocol also discusses the changes that should occur in instruction from grade to grade so that each member of the team better understands what he or she is expected to teach in each grade level. After the members of the team clearly understand what they should teach at each grade level, the team engages in discussions regarding the implications for the various levels of instruction and assessment. Using these tools, educators discuss the diverse instructional needs of their student population, including students with disabilities and English Learners. Educators also learn how to integrate the WIDA ELP standards into instruction and assessment.

To ensure that new teachers and principals are well-versed in the Common Core, RIDE invited higher-education teachers and leaders to *Study of the Standards* sessions. Participation in these trainings enabled educators in teacher and principal preparation programs to use the same language and concepts that we used to train educators and school leaders currently working in our K-12 system. We met regularly with staff members from the R.I. Office of Higher Education and with two content specialists in teacher-preparation programs to receive their input as we transitioned to the Common Core and PARCC. We continue to invite our partners in higher education to participate in training sessions and in other opportunities for professional development.



Thirty-five higher-education faculty members, many of whom are in teacher-placement or teacher-preparation programs for incoming teachers and principals, have participated in our Study of Standards sessions to learn how to prepare our incoming teachers and school leaders on transition to the Common Core.

As a next step in supporting educators in developing a deep understanding of the CCSS, RIDE identified key areas of transition and knowledge of CCSS and created modules available online for all districts. Modules were also available for full day workshop sessions. Over 2,500 teacher leaders and administrators attended these sessions to provide additional professional development support in their schools and districts. These modules provided opportunities for educators to dive deeply into the big shifts of the ELA CCSS such as text complexity, academic vocabulary, text-dependent questions, writing an argument, and challenging content in mathematics including Fractions and Functions. These professional development sessions and modules on Common Core ELA and Mathematics topics are being converted into interactive e-learning modules to expand and increase use.

Rhode Island is using the Math Science Partnership Grants (Title IIA) to support in-depth study of Math and Science practices through summer intensive workshops with schools in 8 districts. The content from that in-depth work is now being developed into online professional development modules to support all Rhode Island educators. Rhode Island's current Math Science Partnership Grant is a partnership between Providence, our largest district and district with 21 schools identified as priority or focus, and Roger Williams University. This project involves focused work with grade 3-5 educators in deepening content knowledge and instruction practice through intensive summer workshops focused and regular coaching support throughout the 2015-2016 school year. These modules will be available fall 2015.

Finally RIDE has developed a Close Reading Institute, which is engaging school teams comprised of general educators, special educators, and teachers of English Language Learners in the development of lessons designed to teach students close reading skills. Consultants are providing the teams with feedback to refine lesson plans to ensure the lesson addresses all aspects of close reading and includes supports for struggling readers and English Language Learners. RIDE also continues to keep the Transition to the Common Core website with information and links to Common Core resources for educators.

### ***Instructional materials, Curriculum, and the Common Core***

In addition to training teachers and principals in all Rhode Island LEAs in the CCSS, RIDE provided intensive alignment training in a subset of targeted LEAs. The intent of this intensive training was to build capacity within select LEAs and to help teams of educators develop high-quality curriculum resources that RIDE has now provided to educators in all LEAs.



In 2008, RIDE entered a partnership with The Dana Center to engage LEAs in aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment with one another and with the standards in mathematics and science. When Rhode Island won a Race to the Top grant in 2010, we expanded our plans for curriculum-development work with the Dana Center. The Dana Center has a key partner in implementing our vision of having coherent and aligned curriculum for all students in all subject areas. In addition to building capacity in our LEAs, this partnership has produced substantive model curricula in mathematics, science, English language arts (ELA), and social studies, which have been made available through our instructional-improvement system so that all LEAs can use and adapt the curricula. The developed curriculum included:

- three curricula models in English Language Arts;
- six curricula models in Mathematics;
- four curricula models in Science;
- and one curriculum model in Social Studies.

We made mathematics and science our priorities because mathematics and science are the areas where our data have shown the greatest need for stronger, better-aligned curricula.

The curriculum-development process included two strands of work: curriculum writing and leadership development. Through this curriculum-development process, teams of approximately 10 teachers per grade level came together over two years, as the writing team, to build a standards-aligned scope and sequence that will become the scope and sequence for the LEA. Teacher teams included content-area teachers as well as teachers of English Learners and teachers of students with disabilities. The teachers on each team “unpacked” the standards, examining the vertical alignment within subjects and the horizontal alignment between standards in different subjects. Through this process, the teams identified opportunities to teach concepts and skills from one set of standards (such as writing or mathematics) in other subjects across the curriculum. The teams then constructed the scope, content, and sequence of the curriculum, addressing the need for differentiated instruction and specific language-acquisition skill development as part of the scope-and-sequence design.

During the second year of the process, the team worked from the scope and sequence to create units of study—the planned, written, and taught curriculum. Because of the process involved in the creation of these documents, the units of study are closely aligned with the standards and there is tremendous teacher buy-in. The final step in this work was a process called the Professional Teaching Model (PTM). The PTM is an eight-step process that expands upon the collaborative discussions, using the Instructional Alignment Chart, a tool that the teams used during Study of the Standards and the early sessions of the intensive curriculum-alignment work. The PTM promoted dialogue about content and pedagogy, common language and collaboration among educators in addition to increased student achievement and program coherence. Through this process, educators studied the standards, determined the criteria for



student demonstration of the standards, and planned common lessons. This planning included developing appropriate accommodations or strategies for diverse learning needs, implementing the lessons, and analyzing and revising lessons based on student results.

LEA leaders, principals, and lead teachers participated in five leadership sessions to study the standards and to identify the structures that needed to be in place to support implementing the Common Core standards in their schools or in their curriculum. In the leadership sessions, these educators also studied the assessments that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. The leadership teams began by examining current student outcomes—both overall and for specific populations of students—to identify and focus attention on populations of students whom our schools may not be serving well, such as English Learners or low-income students. The teams identified achievement gaps and specific areas in need of improvement, and the teams set three-year goals for raising student achievement in specified areas.

The teams participated in a simulation of leading change within the LEA in order to help the school leaders prepare for obstacles they may encounter. To ensure full understanding, the leadership teams engaged in the same detailed work of examining the standards in which teams teachers engaged. We trained leadership teams to use a “walk-through” protocol to collect data that they can use to identify areas of alignment and opportunities for improvement. Finally, we trained the teams on how to use the data that they collect in these walk-throughs in order to engage in conversations with teachers regarding aligned curriculum, instructional practices, and assessment. The output of this work was a common set of vocabulary, tools, and structures for leaders to use in support of teacher implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

RIDE remains committed to ensuring that all Rhode Island educators have the curriculum, tools, and understanding necessary to provide a rich classroom experience that is aligned to the CCSS and appropriate for all learners. Twenty districts have participated in CCSS mathematics curriculum development and three LEAs have participated in CCSS English Language Arts development. In addition, RIDE issued three rounds of \$20,000 or less per district CCSS Mini-Grants to further support LEA transition to the CCSS. A condition of the grant was that products from the mini-grant must be made available statewide. Fifteen grants were awarded to 36 LEAs working in partnership on key curriculum and instruction areas aligned to the CCSS.

This work has resulted in substantial changes in practices in Rhode Island. Today, more districts are collaborating to develop and revise curriculum. The collaboration on curriculum development across districts has led to collaboration on writing common assessments aligned to curriculum, and joint professional development to design units of study and identify curriculum resources. Further, post-interviews on intensive curriculum alignment development with district educators indicate that they are better consumers of educational resources including textbooks, supplemental materials or online resources. Furthermore, more districts report that they select resources based on their curriculum and standards rather than define curriculum by the resource or program

used. In the development of curriculum design, districts indicate a belief that educators must have a priority role in curriculum writing and that writing a standards-based curriculum is effective professional development. Integrating curriculum writing and professional development is now viewed as a key feature in applying for any grants that focus on Common Core State Standards.

Prior to this curriculum development work, the alignment of curriculum to standards was very uneven across LEAs. Many districts did not have a guaranteed and viable curriculum in the major content areas. Today, districts that did not have ELA, Mathematics, Science or Social Studies curriculum are now implementing K-12 vertically articulated programs. The common practice of timely revisions of curriculum was seldom done within Rhode Island. Today, districts are creating long-term curriculum revision plans that include continuing collaborative inter-district relationships and teacher teams.

### ***Building a Comprehensive Assessment System***

Rhode Island is committed to developing a comprehensive assessment system aligned with the Common Core standards that will provide data to inform curriculum and instructional decisions at the state, LEA, and school levels. This system is a critical component of the Rhode Island Strategic Plan, *Transforming Education in Rhode Island* (RIDE Strategic Plan). The Rhode Island Basic Education Program regulations (BEP) require each LEA to develop a comprehensive assessment system that measures student performance and that includes formative, interim, and summative evaluations in each core content area.

The Rhode Island Criteria and Guidance for a Comprehensive Assessment System document defines a comprehensive assessment system as a coordinated plan for monitoring the academic achievement of students from prekindergarten through grade 12. The goals of the comprehensive assessment system are:

1. to increase student learning by producing actionable data;
2. to evaluate the effectiveness of programs; and
3. to ensure that all students are making progress toward achieving learning goals.

A comprehensive assessment system must be appropriate for the student population, and the comprehensive assessment system must address the assessment needs of all students, including students with disabilities, culturally and linguistically diverse students, and students in early-childhood programs. RIDE conducted monthly webinars to support LEAs as they develop comprehensive assessment systems. We recorded these webinars and posted them on our website. These webinars focused on a variety of topics, including reliability and validity, cultural and linguistic demands of assessments, and how a comprehensive assessment system supports other initiatives (e.g., RTI, educator evaluation, and performance-based graduation requirements). To ensure that LEAs were well informed about the development and long-term role the comprehensive assessment system, RIDE developed and published an overview and



resource materials, the Rhode Island Criteria and Guidance for a Comprehensive Assessment System.

During the 2014-2015 school year we initiated the Assessment Project, which is designed to examine assessment practices in the state. The goals of the project are:

1. Learn from the source, nature, and volume of testing from a sample of districts;
2. Learn how much testing is duplicative in nature and/or measuring redundant knowledge and skills;
3. Understand the extent to which data from assessments is driving instruction, curriculum revisions, and professional development; and
4. Understand the status and quality are of locally-developed assessments.

Our next steps will help participating districts understand how well the data from these assessments are being used to support instruction. As part of this work, we are examining the content coverage of their assessments and calibrating the scoring of student work on local assessments.

We are also working within RIDE to examine the cross-office explicit and implicit assessment expectations that we communicate to districts. To that end we are:

1. Identifying opportunities to coordinate efforts to ensure that separate assessments are not being implemented for each initiative.
2. Working with the National Center on Education Outcomes (NCEO) to examine RIDEs various initiatives requiring the use of local assessments, their necessity, and their use. NCEO will be interviewing RIDE staff regarding the current requirements across the agency. We will then share that information with and discuss our requirements with national experts who will provide recommendations to RIDE.
3. With NCEO, RIDE will also conduct a district-based study in the Spring 2015 to learn more about the perspective of key stakeholders such as teachers, administrators, parents, students. The purpose of this study is to better understand the strengths and challenges of the current assessment system from the perspective of districts.

Finally, RIDE continues to build local assessment literacy by working with assistant superintendents and curriculum directors so that they can align their district testing strategies to Rhode Island's Comprehensive Assessment System guidance.

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/Assessment/ComprehensiveAssessmentSystem\(CAS\).aspx](http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/Assessment/ComprehensiveAssessmentSystem(CAS).aspx)



To directly affect the day-to-day learning cycle in the classroom, we developed online formative assessment modules to teach every educator in Rhode Island how to use tools and processes to effectively design and utilize formative assessment practices. These practices are connected and embedded in the curriculum in order to accurately measure student learning. This training built upon the curriculum work that the LEAs have completed.

Further, these web-based modules are now of the Rhode Island Instructional Support System (ISS). With access to high-quality training on formative assessment, all teachers will have the skills to:

1. embed assessment within the learning activity;
2. directly link it to the current unit of instruction; and
3. use the information gathered to inform instructional “next steps.”

The online modules include direct instruction, testimony from RI educators, video models of practice, assessments of learning, required readings, and extension activities. The formative assessment online course design includes case reviews, vignettes of classroom formative assessment practices, classroom videos, student and teacher interviews, and examples of lesson plans and formative assessment classroom tools from Rhode Island teachers. Topics addressed by the modules include:

- general assessment literacy;
- an overview of the formative assessment process;
- learning progressions;
- learning goals and criteria for success;
- eliciting evidence and providing descriptive feedback;
- self- and peer-assessment, creating a collaborative classroom culture; and
- integration of formative assessment at the building level.

The online course supported professional development at the school and district level. The professional development was designed to allow participants to go through the modules at their own pace, according to their schedule. To capture video of Rhode Island educators engaged in learning the process of formative assessment, RIDE conducted a pilot for this project.

Although implementation of the modules has varied, almost every LEA has implemented the modules. Some LEAs had educators participate in communities of practice, wherein a group of educators completed the modules independently and met on a regular basis to discuss the modules and share implementation strategies. Other LEAs had a small group of educators complete the modules and those educators incorporated the content into in person professional development for educators. In some cases, LEAs included the formative assessment modules as part of the professional



development goals for educator evaluation. Finally, in some LEAs educators completed the modules independently.

This professional development has resulted in increased formative assessment knowledge and practices within Rhode Island. Over 70 percent of participants reported having further implemented formative assessment strategies in their teaching practice and have new data collection since completing the formative assessment training strategies. The vast majority of educators who completed the modules know how to use formative data, understand learning progressions, and how to use them to inform instruction and report that they have begun incorporating elements of formative assessment into unit and lesson planning. Educators are more transparent about learning goals for students; use learning goals with students; use formative data to regroup students for instruction, re-teach, and increase or decrease the pace of instruction; and have increased the descriptive feedback that give to students.

RIDE continues to support implementation of formative assessment practices by continuing to provide access to the formative assessment modules and integrating the concepts into other areas of work including our Math/Science Partnership Grant work.

RIDE has provided all LEAs in the state with high-quality interim assessments to support monitoring students' progress toward annual learning goals. These assessments are available through the Instructional Support System, and teachers can administer these assessments online as well as through the paper-and-pencil format. These interim assessments use enhanced online accommodations that we developed to meet Accessible Portable Item Profile (APIP) standards. These standards ensure access for all learners, specifically students with disabilities, English Learners, and low-achieving students. Many LEAs in Rhode Island requested that the state provide such interim assessments to enhance the development of the comprehensive assessment systems that LEAs have developed. High-quality interim assessments, which are valid measures of progress toward annual goals, are difficult for an LEA to create in-house and are expensive for a small LEA to purchase.

The interim-assessment system is made up of two components: fixed-form assessments in English language arts and mathematics in grades 3 through 11 and a test-building engine with a comprehensive item bank. The test-building engine enables educators to build high-quality assessments in English language arts, Mathematics, science, and social studies. Items include selected response, evidence-based selected response, short answer, constructed response, and performance tasks. The item bank currently includes a total of 8,121 test questions in four content areas including 2968 items in mathematics, 798 in Science aligned Next Generation Science Standards, 2704 items in English Language Arts, and 1651 in Social Studies. We envision the test-building engine being able to serve two purposes for LEAs. First, teacher teams can work together to build assessments aligned with the LEA curriculum that could be used as end-of-unit assessments implemented in every school. Second, individual educators can develop assessments to assess specific skills on a more frequent basis. The Interim Assessment platform allows educators to assign, administer, and score both the



teacher-created and state-created fixed form assessments. The LEAs that have accessed the tools reported gaining a greater understanding of the CCSS through the item content and item types available in the Interim Assessment System. Further, LEAs also reported benefitting from the calibration activities surrounding the scoring of constructed responses.

Finally, Rhode Island is participating in several national consortia, which are implementing common summative assessments. Rhode Island is a governing member in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium, a member of the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) consortium, and a member of the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium. Rhode Island has taken an active role in each consortium to ensure that the assessments are rigorous, of high quality, and valid and reliable measurements of the student population the assessment is designed to assess.

PARCC has created a common assessment system to assess students in kindergarten through high school. The assessments will determine whether students are college- and career-ready or on track. The PARCC summative assessment will have two components, Performance Based Assessments (PBA) and End of Year Assessments (EOY). The PBA in ELA/literacy will involve analyzing literature and a narrative writing task. Students will read texts and write several pieces to demonstrate they can read and understand sufficiently complex texts independently; write effectively when using and analyzing sources; and build and communicate knowledge by integrating, comparing and synthesizing ideas. In math, students will be asked to solve problems involving the key knowledge and skills for their grade level, express mathematical reasoning and construct a mathematical argument, and apply concepts to solve model real-world problems. The End-of-year assessments (EOY) in ELA/literacy and Math will require students will demonstrate their acquired skills and knowledge by answering computer-based, machine-scorable questions. The PBA and EOY will be combined with the performance-based assessment to produce a student's summative assessment score.

RIDE has been working with LEA's to ensure all schools are ready to administer the first operational assessment in 2015. More than 1 million students in nearly 16,000 schools participated in the spring 2014 PARCC field test across the fourteen participating states and the District of Columbia. Almost all Rhode Island LEAs participated in the PARCC field test during the 2013-2014 school year. Feedback was collected through a student and test administrator survey, as well as school visits, and was used to inform improvements in administrative procedures. In addition, RIDE gathered feedback from district and school level personal to inform how we, as an agency, would support the LEAs in during our first operational year. In addition to the online modules, manuals, and tutorials developed by PARCC, RIDE has provided a day and half training to district and school level educators to support test administration. We have also worked closely with district data managers and technology directors to assist in registering students for the assessment and ensuring the schools have the technology to support test administration. RIDE will continue to support districts and monitor implementation throughout both PBA and EOY test administration windows.



PARCC is also developing several optional assessments that schools can use to provide instructionally useful feedback to teachers and students but that do not contribute to a student's summative-assessment score. These assessments include a diagnostic assessment, speaking and listening assessment, K-2 formative tasks, and performance based modules. The Diagnostic will provide an early indicator of student knowledge and skills in grades 2-8 and support progress monitoring. The Performance Based Modules will be performance tasks for grades 3-11. The K-2 formative tasks will be embedded in classroom instruction. Finally, the speaking and listening assessment will be a K-12 assessment utilizing performance-based activities to capture information on student learning strengths and needs in speaking and listening during classroom discussions and when engaged in formal presentations. All assessments are expected to be computer-delivered or include a computer based data collection tool.

The NCSC developed a comprehensive system that addresses the curriculum, instruction, and assessment needs of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The NCSC developed a summative assessment in English language arts and Mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and 11. The NCSC designed this summative assessment to support valid inferences about student achievement on the assessed domains. The NCSC will use technology to deliver assessments with appropriate accommodations, to score, and to report on the assessments. In addition, the NCSC has developed curriculum and instruction tools, and the NCSC established state-level communities of practice. These resources support educators as they design and implement appropriate instruction that addresses content and skill expectations aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). These resources also help prepare students with the most significant cognitive disabilities for postsecondary life. Rhode Island participated in the NCSC comprehensive approach to field testing. This field testing approach built upon on evidence-centered design (ECD) item development process. This field test produced research studies, including an analysis of student interaction studies using the test administration platform and items. Action research was designed to understand accessibility options for students with the most complex needs, survey research documented what was working and what needed improvement for both the platform and items, as well as a two-phase large-scale pilot test. Pilot 1, the first phase of a two-part pilot, was conducted last spring and resulted in item statistics for entire item bank, and later, item data review and revisions. This fall, Pilot 2 was completed with the purpose of refining test forms prior to the operational test in spring 2015. As with the PARCC preparation, RIDE has been working closely with school and district educators to support a smooth administration this spring. RIDE will be providing in-person teacher administration training as well as using webinars, online modules, and manuals to support implementation.

Rhode Island is a member of the World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium. WIDA is a consortium of 35 states and the District of Columbia dedicated to the design and implementation of high standards and equitable educational opportunities for English Learners (ELs). As a member of the WIDA Consortium, Rhode Island uses the ACCESS for ELs to annually measure the English-language proficiency



of English Learners across the state. The ACCESS for ELs is aligned with the WIDA Summative English Language Proficiency Standards which the U.S. Department of Education has accepted as a valid and reliable assessment of English proficiency. WIDA has received an Enhanced Assessment Grant to build a new, comprehensive and balanced technology-based assessment system for English Learners. This assessment system will be anchored in the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards, which are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. The new WIDA assessment system will benefit from rigorous ongoing research, and the assessment system will have the support of comprehensive professional development and outreach. The system will include a summative test, an on-demand diagnostic (screener) test, classroom benchmark assessments, and formative-assessment resources. This new assessment, ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 will replace the paper-based version of ACCESS for ELLs with a computer-based, summative assessment of the developing social and academic English language proficiency of English language learners in Grades 1 through 12 in 2015-16.

### **Providing access to and professional development in the use of data to drive instructional decision-making**

Our theory of action emphasizes that effective teachers and effective leaders must have the support of comprehensive student-centered data collection and analysis systems. To that end, one of our most important state roles is to support LEA efforts to improve student academic achievement by giving them the data and tools necessary to track students' progress relative to the standards and helping LEAs to use this information to inform instruction. To achieve this goal, RIDE is building an Instructional Support System (ISS) that will include a curriculum-and-assessment module, Response to Intervention module, and online professional-development modules. For example, ESL professionals will be able to add appropriate instructional strategies to lessons in any content area that general education teachers from their district, and even from other districts, can access – thereby building capacity for supporting appropriate instruction for English Learners in all content areas.

The planned solution, the Instructional Support System, will provide educators with access to a variety of tools and capabilities equivalent to the system that Rhode Island described in the its original Race to the Top application, including:

1. Easy-to-navigate data dashboards that provide educators, principals, and district administrators with “point and click” access to reports, key performance indicators, and drill-down data [Phase I];
2. Ability to analyze the longitudinal picture of each student’s performance from the point of entry into system through graduation [Phase I];
3. Access to the interim assessment item bank via RIDEMap, as well as the ability to generate and print tests, collect data with ease, and view results immediately [Phase II];

4. Access to a robust set of teacher resources, including model lesson plans, units of study developed by curriculum cohorts, and annotated student work aligned with standards as a model of proficient work across grade levels [Phase III]; and
5. Ability to compare student performance relative to the state's expectations, based on an array of assessment tools, and to access and use all data collected on a student, including attendance, discipline, and state summative test scores [Phase I (basic) and Phase III (dynamic)].

RIDE has implemented all three phases of work and is continuing to expand the functionality of the Instructional Support System. New functionality will include a professional development platform, an early warning system, and a school diagnostic screening tool. The professional development platform includes a collaborative workspace for online courses as well as a rating system to evaluate online professional development. The early warning system will be developed for all educators grades 6-12 to access individual and aggregate level data on student EWS indicators (i.e., attendance, discipline, years over age, state assessment math and reading scores, and on track percentage) aligned to national best practice and Rhode Island specific data points. The school diagnostic screening tool will be used to evaluate and monitor schools on key performance indicators over time. This new functionality will be implemented spring 2015.

Highly effective teachers and leaders are at the heart of our theory of action. Therefore, RIDE will be providing high-quality, targeted professional development on data-driven instruction to advance student achievement. This training built upon the Response to Intervention training aimed at improving achievement for at-risk students that has been occurring in the state since 2005. The Rhode Island Response to Intervention Initiative provided district leaders, principals, and teachers with professional development in using state and local assessment data to inform decisions regarding curriculum and instruction.

RIDE designed and delivered the "Using Data Professional Development Series", which was made up of four different components of professional development, each one differentiated based on specific LEA needs. A school leadership team made up of the principal and three educators from every school in Rhode Island participated in this training. Before delivering the professional development, our vendor assessed the needs of each LEA, assigned each cohort to a specific level of training, and tailored the professional development based on the results. Through this training, principals and other school leaders learned how to use assessment data to track student progress, to provide support to students not making progress, and to ensure that our schools use effective practices for diverse learners.

In cohorts of no more than 25 educators, teams from each school and district representatives join together in a year-long, tiered professional development series designed to teach educators how to collaboratively analyze relevant student data to inform educational decisions and increase student achievement outcomes. In addition to meeting in cohorts, educators were also provided a data coach that visited each



individual school up to three times throughout the school year to provide on-site, tailored support in using data.

The state completed training for 1226 educators from 289 schools during the 2012-13 and 2013-2014 school years. All feedback gained in the 2012-2013 school year was used to refine and tailor the professional development series for 2013-2014 and individual meetings with LEA district leaders (when requested) were held to ensure that the series met the individual district needs. As a result of the Using Data professional development a common language and process for using data across Rhode Island schools has been established. Data collected through the sessions and site visits demonstrates that schools made progress in their implementation of data use techniques and conversations. Over 85% of educators reported that the Data Use PD Series helped their schools build a transparent data culture and improve data practices. The Data Use PD helped teachers see the connections between data collection and data use to drive decisions and instruction. Although the training series has been completed, educators continue to have access to the training materials and RIDE has integrated the cycle of inquiry into other areas of work including training on the Instructional Support System.

Under the IDEA, Rhode Island is currently developing a new performance indicator in the State Performance Plan, which is focused on Results Driven Accountability (RDA). A major investment of this area of work is the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) initiative funded by the United States Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs under the State Personnel Development Grant. The Rhode Island Multi-Tiered Systems of Support initiative is a training and technical assistance opportunity that will provide training and systems development in schools for the implementation of an integrated model of supporting academic (Response to Intervention) and behavioral (Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports) interventions, strategies and practices. Schools are identified through an application process with priority awarded to schools in the intervention status of priority, focus or warning. Schools are enrolled as a cohort and commit to three years of intensive training and in-school coaching in the behaviors and practices of the MTSS model which results in a self-sustainable integrated RTI/PBIS framework for providing evidence-based and data-based decision making procedures to enhance universal, targeted and intensive intervention.

The RI MTSS project is in its second year of implementation with 12 schools identified as priority, focus, or warning are enrolled in the first two cohorts. The goals of the project in participating schools are to:

- Improve student outcomes
- Enhance program quality in reading, math and behavior (developing fidelity of implementation)
- Demonstrate a minimum of 20% improvement for student outcomes in reading, math and behavior

- Develop a continuum of supports and technical assistance for district implementation
- Create a common vision that aligns the beliefs and practices necessary to support the needs of all students
- Develop consensus and commitment for the implementation of MTSS and creating efficiencies around resources, priorities, and integration of services
- Establish ongoing feedback loops to support a model of continuous improvement through data- based decision making related to MTSS implementation.

## **Support for Students and the Common Core**

### ***English Learners and Students with Disabilities***

Our approach to ensuring that students with disabilities, English Learners, and students who are low-achieving reach college and career readiness is inherent in our strategic-plan goal of closing achievement gaps and in our regulatory requirement for a tiered instructional system built on the foundation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum. The Rhode Island Basic Education Program Regulations (BEP) require each LEA to implement a set of coherent, organized instructional strategies designed to ensure positive improvements in student learning. LEAs must base these strategies on current research, and LEAs must adjust these strategies according to student progress-monitoring and to assessment data. The organized strategies must include specific interventions for students who are not meeting proficiency standards or who are at risk of non-promotion or of dropping out of school. Additionally, each LEA must provide a full continuum of universal, targeted, and intensive supports that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, research-based, and designed to respond to student needs in compliance with the specific requirements for support services.

Our transition to the Common Core included providing professional development, resources, and systems that include specific connections to address the needs of students with disabilities, English Learners, and students who are low achieving. The first step toward meeting the needs of all learners is a core instructional program that is designed to include all learners. We know that some students will need supports beyond the core instructional program; therefore RIDE will develop supports for educators to identify and implement the instructional accommodation necessary for students with disabilities and English Learners to be successful in college and in careers. RIDE is committed to addressing the needs of all students through its professional development and resource development. As such RIDE encourages the participation of all educators in content-based professional development. We feel it is critical that special educators, teachers of English Learners, and general education teachers work together to design curriculum, instruction, and assessments for students. We believe that through this strong collaboration educators will learn from one another and students will receive rigorous-but-accessible instruction.



As a member of the National Center and State Collaborative, we developed resources to support educators to design and implement appropriate instruction that addresses content and skill expectations aligned to the Common Core for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Curriculum resource guides for focus content within Mathematics and ELA provide information on instruction within the general education setting, differentiation through Universal Design for Learning, and teaching and applying skills in meaningful content areas. Online professional development modules help special educators gain an understanding of the prioritized academic content within learning progressions that describe a curricular sequence for how students develop understanding in each content area over time. Finally, formative and interim tools have been developed as part of comprehensive curriculum, instruction, and assessment resources that can be used by educators throughout the school year to monitor student progress. These resources are available on the [NCSC website](#) and [NCSC WIKI](#).

To ensure that English Learners will have the opportunity to achieve to college- and career-ready standards, RIDE continues to work with the WIDA Consortium to ensure alignment of the English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards. The WIDA consortium conducted an alignment study with the current WIDA standards and the Common Core. According to the executive summary of that study, adequate linking across all grade clusters exists between the WIDA English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards Model Performance Indicators (MPIs) and the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts (Reading, Writing, and Speaking and Listening) and Mathematics.

Rhode Island is one of three states that have partnered with the Center for Applied Linguistics at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research and with representatives from various institutions of higher education in the initial development of the next generation of WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS). A large proportion of this work is the alignment of the ELPS with the Common Core State Standards to ensure a seamless and comprehensive common-standards framework for English Learners. Rhode Island (and the other 21 WIDA Consortium member states) will adopt this next generation of WIDA standards this spring, when final versions are ready. WIDA will offer a combination of printed guidance and training materials, computer-based trainings, and in-person training for LEAs.

RIDE also provides training and resources to teachers to use the WIDA ELPS in conjunction with content standards. These resources and training opportunities will help educators meet the academic and language needs of English Learners at all proficiency levels. This added step of training and related materials will reinforce the need to develop both social and academic language skills for this population of students. The training and resources are targeted to both ESL professionals and all general-education professionals. This broad-based training reinforces our philosophy that the education of English Learners is the responsibility of all teachers, and the training also helps to build capacity, making the philosophy a reality in all classrooms. Training topics include an overview of the WIDA ELDS, working collaboratively to instruct and assess using the



ELDS, differentiation, lesson planning, formative assessment, and data analysis.

Rhode Island is working with the PARCC consortium to analyze and implement the learning and accommodation factors necessary to ensure that students with disabilities become ready for success in college and careers. Rhode Island is a member of the Accessibility, Accommodations, and Fairness Operational Working Group, which is drafting the PARCC accommodations policy. Computer-based testing under the PARCC assessments will provide a variety of ways of implementing universal design, and PARCC will use online accommodations to provide for increased access for students with disabilities. RIDE provided training for Curriculum Directors and Special Education Directors, as well as offered a webinar to all educators on the PARCC Accessibility and Accommodations policies for the PARCC field test. In preparing for the first operational administration we provided training to school and district educators on a process for identifying and evaluating appropriate accessibility features and accommodations for students. RIDE provided this training early in the school year to provide time for schools and districts to understand the PARCC accessibility and accommodations policy, gain experience with the online tools, practice them with their students, and discuss them with families. In addition, we provided webinars and other resources to support appropriate identification of supports for all learners.

In addition, RIDE offered focused sessions of Study of the Standards, English Language Arts Text Complexity, Writing an Argument, and Mathematics Fractions for educators working with students with disabilities. It is important that the work with the PARCC consortium inform our training and our supports for assisting LEAs in identifying appropriate the learning and accommodation factors necessary to ensure that students with disabilities will have the opportunity to achieve to the college- and career-ready standards.

### **Migration to CCSS for English Learners in Rhode Island**

In May 2013, RIDE conducted a survey of ELL Directors and Teachers to obtain an understanding of readiness for implementation on Common Core State Standards with English Language Learners (ELL or English Learners). RIDE staff partnered with the State ELL Advisory Committee and the ELL Directors to review the results of the survey. The results of the survey (attached) pointed toward a substantial need for professional development in (a) a comprehensive study of the standards and (b) training on the critical access skills for assisting English Learners in accessing and demonstrating proficiency in the CCSS.

On September 26 and 27, 2013, RIDE hosted a two-day workshop for EL district level leaders. Day one focused on a review of the RIDE Study of the Standards. From informal surveys at the event, only 40% of the participants had participated in a deep study of the standards. The review also provided the EL leaders the opportunity to examine the standards in great detail with other EL administrators and teachers; an experience many had not enjoyed in previous training on the CCSS. Day two focused on the access skills that would be necessary for ELs to understand and demonstrate

proficiency on the CCSS. This portion of the program focused on text complexity and instructional strategies and tools for overcoming barriers for the English Learner.

RIDE has continued to expand its work on the migration of CCSS for English Learners through a partnership curriculum project (description attached) with the Northeast Comprehensive Center staff including Kevin Perks, Program and Research Associate, WestEd, with Marla Perez-Selles, and Nancy Gerzon, of the Northeast Comprehensive Center. The purpose of the work is to develop a group of resources that districts across Rhode Island can use to integrate standards and strategies for supporting English Learners into existing content curricula.

### **Migration of CCSS for Students with Disabilities in Rhode Island**

Similar to the developments for the CCSS for ELLs, RIDE conducted a survey for Special Education Directors and teachers over the summer of 2013. Over 400 responses were received and processed. The results were reviewed with the State Special Education Advisory Committee and the Special Education Directors. RIDE held a special education directors briefing in February 2014, which included an overview of the CCSS and potential access challenges for students with disabilities. In addition, teams of directors reviewed the results of the CCSS readiness survey, discussed implementation challenges and opportunities within their districts and recommended action steps. Through this survey and subsequent discussion, RIDE discovered uneven involvement of special education administrators and teachers across the state in the implementation of CCSS and in some cases, unevenness at the district and building level. Planning for a statewide intervention has been difficult posed with the inconsistency of need across the state and the diverse needs of students with disabilities in accessing CCSS.

In response to the request from the LEAs, RIDE is revising the state recommended IEP protocols (the process by which IEP goals are developed in the RIDE IEP Guidebook) to drive users to a deeper understanding of CCSS through the IEP process. In the meantime the RIDE team will continue to offer opportunities for teachers and teams to learn from illustrations of districts implementing effective access strategies for students with disabilities through ongoing professional development opportunities.

### ***Ensuring our students are ready for college and careers***

As part of our goal of linking standards, graduation requirements, and college-entry requirements, Rhode Island is using the Common Core to support greater PK-20 alignment and integration between the Rhode Island PK-12 and higher-education systems.

The R.I. Board of Governors for Higher Education (RIBGHE) has committed to launch a study of the new exit standards for high school and to work with RIDE to use individual student scores from the Rhode Island high-school assessments to determine placement



of recent high-school graduates into initial credit-bearing courses (i.e., non-developmental courses) in English and mathematics at RIBGHE institutions (the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and the University of Rhode Island). This work is an initial step toward more significant vertical alignment between PK-12 and higher education within Rhode Island. In addition to this state effort, there are early-stage conversations taking place among the New England public colleges and universities planning to do similar work with exit standards across all of the NECAP states as well as across all five of the New England States (Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont) participating in the New England Secondary School Consortium.

RIDE continues to pursue initiatives that will ensure that our graduates are well prepared for success in college and in challenging careers. Rhode Island was honored to receive a \$75,000 grant to expand opportunities for College Board Advanced Placement (AP) courses in persistently low-achieving public high schools serving low-income students. We used the funds to support the training of teachers and teaching assistants to prepare them to teach AP courses. As a result of the combined SEA/LEA efforts in this area, statewide participation in AP courses and exams has been increasing in Rhode Island high schools.

During the 2010-11 school year, 3,102 Rhode Island public-school students took AP exams, an increase of 13.8 percent over the prior year. Students took a total of 4,956 exams, an increase of 11.3 percent. According to a report from the College Board, the range of AP course offerings varied widely across the state last year, with Classical High School (an exam-entry school in Providence) offering 19 courses, Portsmouth High School offering 16 courses, Barrington High School offering 14 courses, and North Kingstown High School offering 12 courses. At the other extreme, some high schools in Providence and in other urban communities offered only 1 or 2 AP courses.

Despite these improvements, we still see wide opportunity gaps across the state, with some schools offering 10 or more AP courses and with others, particularly in our urban districts, offering few or none. To that end, continuing to expand advanced coursework remains a statewide priority.

As the College and Career Ready Standards are implemented, we expect that more students will be able to take higher level courses earlier in their school careers. We are proposing that, beginning with the implementation of PARCC assessments in the 2014-15 school year, we allow any student enrolled in a high-school level course to take the assessment associated with this course, regardless of the grade in which they are enrolled. This provision will most often occur with the mathematics assessments, as very few students take English I or II before high school. For example, an 8<sup>th</sup>-grade student who is enrolled in high-school Algebra I would take the PARCC Algebra I end-of-course assessment instead of the PARCC 8<sup>th</sup>-grade Mathematics assessment.

Rhode Island requests Waiver 14 to this effect, so that, if a student takes a high school level course and the corresponding end-of-course (EOC) assessment prior to entering

high school, which is when these assessments would otherwise be used for federal accountability purposes, that student's score on the relevant EOC may be used for federal accountability purposes at the school in which the student is enrolled in lieu of the corresponding grade-level statewide assessment, rather than "banking" the score until the student is in high school. Further, Rhode Island wishes to be able to use EOC assessments for federal accountability purposes for those students who take high-school level assessments prior to entering high school. To this end, Rhode Island requests a waiver of ESEA Sections 1111(b)(1)(B) and 1111(b)(3)(C)(i) and the corresponding regulatory provisions so that Rhode Island can use, with respect to a student who is not yet enrolled in high school but who takes a high-school level course and the corresponding EOC assessment, the student's score on that assessment for federal accountability purposes for the grade in which the student is enrolled. In addition, Rhode Island will administer one or more additional advanced, high school level, mathematics assessments to such students during their high school years, consistent with the State's mathematics content standards, and use the results in high school accountability determinations.

The Rhode Island Department of Education assures that we will continue to:

- Report on our State Report Card the following data, for the "all students" group and each subgroup described in ESEA Section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II):
  - Information on student achievement at each proficiency level;
  - Data comparing actual achievement levels to the State's annual measurable objectives (AMOs);
  - The percentage of students not tested;
  - Data on the performance on the other academic indicators for elementary and middle schools; and,
  - Graduation rates (for high schools).
- Comply with all other reporting requirements in ESEA Section 1111 (h)(1)(C) and ensure that our LEAs continue to comply with all other reporting requirements in ESEA Section 1111 (h)(2)(B), including the requirement for both Rhode Island and its LEAs to report information on achievement at each proficiency level disaggregated by gender and migrant status.

In addition, the Rhode Island Department of Education, in conjunction with the Office of Higher Education, has established a Dual Enrollment Policy Development Committee. This committee, comprised of over a dozen representatives from K-16 and with national experts, is charged with the development a comprehensive dual enrollment policy for Rhode Island Board of Education adoption. The resulting dual enrollment policy, which will be ready for adoption by school districts for the 2015-2016 school year, will focus on dramatically expanding post-secondary readiness and attendance rates, reducing the

per pupil costs of dual enrollment credits, and streamlining the administrative management of dual enrollment.

To further ensure that Rhode Island students are prepared for college, careers, and life, Rhode Island has adopted progressive, rigorous, balanced, and widely heralded graduation requirements. Beginning in 2003, Rhode Island embarked upon a statewide secondary reform agenda that resulted in the development of an innovative performance-based component to the statewide graduation requirements. Over the past nine years, this system has undergone regular refinement. Now called *The Rhode Island Diploma System*, Rhode Island's graduation requirements reflect a clear set of policy goals:

- 1. Set a high and common standard for graduation.** The regulations set high academic standards and measure student performance through coursework and the state assessment. Students are required to complete four years of English and math and three years of science instruction. At the same time, the Diploma System requires that LEAs teach students the essential 21st-century skills – teamwork, innovation, problem-solving, and communication – and are assessed through senior projects and portfolios.
- 2. Value and recognize all aspects of student achievement equally.** Rhode Island is not a state that recognizes and values only the state assessment. Students must meet state and local requirements on all three of the graduation requirements: state assessments, coursework, and performance-based assessments. No single element is more or less important than the others.
- 3. Require intensive intervention for students and reward them for growth.** Rather than establishing a single cut score on the state assessment, Rhode Island's graduation requirements focus on promoting growth for students who are at risk for academic failure. The regulations require schools and districts to provide additional support and interventions for struggling students.
- 4. Honor students who achieve at high levels.** Students achieving at high levels are eligible to earn a Regents' commendation. All students are eligible to earn this distinction through a diploma system that rewards excellence and inspires all students to do their best work.

Newly revised graduation requirements for students in the Class of 2020 require that they will be responsible for reaching a performance level on the state assessment that corresponds to student readiness to enter community college without remediation. RIDE has been working closely with community-based organizations, school districts to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of and preparing for this change. This outreach effort has included and will continue to include brochures, frequently asked questions, and student letters in multiple languages. The strengthened role of the state assessments as part of Rhode Island's multiple measure system is designed to ensure



that *all* Rhode Island graduates are prepared for the challenges they face beyond high school.

RIDE places a strong emphasis on the role of technical education as one element of a portfolio of portable skills that will ensure student success in college, careers, and life. Beginning in May 2011, RIDE began a comprehensive redesign of the statewide system of career and technical education. This redesign began with the rewriting of the career and technical education regulations, a set of regulations that were over 20 years old. Under the new regulatory scheme, career and technical education is staged to play a prominent role secondary education in Rhode Island. The revised regulations focus on:

1. Preparing learners for postsecondary education and careers resulting in employment that provides family-sustaining wages;
2. Supporting students' postsecondary success through planning, credentialing, industry partnerships, and articulation with higher education and training programs; and,
3. Investing in high-quality, highly effective career preparation programs offered through a diverse statewide delivery system.

Under the newly designed system of career and technical education, LEAs will be required to provide all students access to rigorous technical programs of study that yield industry-recognized credentials and promote student access into post-secondary education and training programs. The redesign of the system, coupled with the prospect of increased state funding, will help Rhode Island meet our goal of serving 30% of students in technical education programs.

In addition to the expansion of high quality, industry-specific career and technical education programs, RIDE is leading a multi-agency, statewide effort to adopt a work-readiness credential. When formalized, this credential will be earned concurrently with a diploma and will focus on providing students with direct instruction on workplace skills. RIDE, along with the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, the Governor's Workforce Board, and the local Chambers of Commerce have joined forces to ensure that the credential is useful, recognized, and connected to rigorous and meaningful instruction and career-readiness training for secondary school students.

During the 2012-2014 period, RIDE expanded CTE offerings and focused upon improving program quality. This included the redesign of CTE accountability and establishment of new data collections designed to answer the following questions:

1. How many students that start rigorous CTE programs persist and complete the program?
2. How many students enrolled in rigorous CTE programs earn (a) industry-recognized credentials, and/or (b) post-secondary credits, and/or (c) advanced standing in post-secondary education and training programs?

3. How many students enrolled in rigorous CTE programs graduate from high school?
4. What is the fiscal efficiency of Rhode Island CTE programs?
5. How many students that complete rigorous CTE programs enroll and persist in post-secondary education or training programs?

The metrics associated with each of these questions are now collected at the level of individual programs, enabling RIDE to incorporate student-level results into both a state-run program approval process and to establish a system of performance-based funding.

**1.C High-Quality Assessments that Measure Student Growth**

<b>Option A</b>	<b>Option B</b>	<b>Option C</b>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The SEA is participating in one of the two State consortia that received a grant under the Race to the Top Assessment competition.</p> <p>1. Attach the State’s Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) under that competition. (Attachment 6)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> The SEA is not participating in either one of the two State consortia that received a grant under the Race to the Top Assessment competition, and has not yet developed or administered statewide aligned, high-quality assessments that measure student growth in reading/language arts and in mathematics in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school in all LEAs.</p> <p>1. Provide the SEA’s plan to develop and administer annually, beginning no later than the 2014–2015 school year, statewide aligned, high-quality assessments that measure student growth in reading/language arts and in mathematics in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school in all LEAs, as well as set academic achievement standards</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> The SEA has developed and begun annually administering statewide aligned, high-quality assessments that measure student growth in reading/language arts and in mathematics in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school in all LEAs.</p> <p>i. Attach evidence that the SEA has submitted these assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review or attach a timeline of when the SEA will submit the assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review. (Attachment 7)</p>



	for those assessments.	
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**Principle 2: Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support**

*2A Develop and Implement a System of Recognition, Accountability, and Support*

2.A.i Provide a description of the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system that includes all the components listed in Principle 2, the SEA’s plan for implementation of the differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system no later than the 2012–2013 school year, and an explanation of how the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system is designed to improve student achievement and school performance, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students.

Rhode Island intends to propose several changes to its accountability system and metrics beginning with PARCC data using the 2015-16 school year. These changes cannot be proposed at this time because 2014-15 PARCC data are not yet available to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of ESEA Flexibility. As soon as PARCC data is available, Rhode Island will put forth an amendment request with evidence demonstrating compliance with ESEA requirements using 2014-15 data. Rhode Island’s current proposed amendment can be found here:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Rhode\\_Island's\\_Proposed\\_Accountability\\_System.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Rhode_Island's_Proposed_Accountability_System.pdf)

The following is from the approved 2014-15 ESEA Flex Extension Request:

Rhode Island’s current accountability system was designed to comply with the No Child Left Behind Act, and it has served to highlight and expose achievement gaps at all grade levels and among all subgroups in our state. We have learned that schools identified for improvement through this system have very different profiles of performance. Moreover, schools in our suburban school districts centers are held to many fewer targets than their urban counterparts. This phenomenon has allowed many at-risk students in low-incidence populations to go unnoticed in our current system. Rhode Island wants to take advantage of this waiver opportunity to design and implement a system that exposes heretofore hidden gaps in achievement between



schools' overall performance and the achievement levels of their at-risk student populations. This perspective, coupled with the experience gained over ten years of NCLB accountability for schools and districts greatly shaped our proposed design in this waiver request. We know that schools identified under our current system are not equal in terms of the magnitude of their gaps, the degrees of under-achievement, or the progress that they are making. We believe it is essential to implement a system that is more nuanced and sophisticated in order to account for these differences so that we can be certain that the focus and priority schools are, in fact, the most persistently lowest performing in our state. We also are committed to providing more tailored data to schools to differentiate among the majority of schools that fall between our lowest and highest achieving. With these goals in mind, Rhode Island's proposed accountability system includes the following features:

1. Analyzing state testing data in reading and mathematics from different perspectives in order to consider absolute performance, growth, gaps, and achievement at the highest levels of performance.
2. Acknowledging that schools make progress toward targets at different paces that may not completely align to the annual targets set for them. In addition to determining whether targets are met each year, the model determines the amount of progress schools make toward their 2017 goals.
3. Featuring graduation rates prominently within all high schools.

The accountability system proposed and accepted under the 2012 waiver process has been implemented for three consecutive years to date. Much was learned about our Composite Index Score (CIS) as well as our response to schools that were identified as Priority, Focus, or Warning status. This application seeks to extend the system with some adjustments to accommodate Rhode Island's transition to the Partnership for Assessing Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the National Centers and State Collaborative Alternate Assessment (NCSC) in the 2014-15 school year. We will make some minor but necessary adjustments to the process for elementary, middle and highschools. A more complete explanation of modifications follows in the following sections.

Since the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002, Rhode Island has preserved the core values of its state accountability system while designing modifications to meet the requirements of the act. Our current accountability system holds all schools in Rhode Island to identical criteria for achieving adequate yearly progress (AYP). We also define improvement for all schools in a rigidly consistent manner. We incorporated the provisions of the NCLB accountability guidelines regarding AYP into the Rhode Island accountability system in order to achieve compliance. Prior to the waiver, we used an indexing of proficiency to make AYP determinations in order to classify schools. We established baselines for every school and LEA based on assessment data combined over three consecutive years.

For parents and the public, NCLB produced three significant benefits:

1. NCLB both forced and helped states to build robust data systems to support increased accountability requirements in ways that helped schools and districts get the data they need to improve outcomes for students.
2. NCLB shone a much-needed light on previously under-served populations, such as low-income children, whose test scores can be masked when looking at overall school performance.
3. “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP) gave the public a sense of whether individual schools were making progress in their efforts to improve curriculum, the quality of their teaching, school climate, and parent engagement, to cite some examples.

Conversely, NCLB created a series of inequities that actually served to impede meaningful reforms in under-performing schools. The rigid nature of single, statewide AYP measures based solely on the percent of students scoring “proficient” or better made it difficult to gauge whether student achievement was improving in schools with low test scores. Fairly large “*n*” sizes and uneven distribution of at-risk populations meant that some schools faced up to four times as many targets as others. Overly prescribed interventions and limitations that drove the use of funding often led to improvement efforts that had little effect. The inability of our NCLB accountability system to measure normative achievement gaps, or to measure the size of criterion-based gaps, made prescribing appropriate reforms difficult. Over time, NCLB requirements unintentionally became barriers to state and local implementation of differentiated supports, interventions, and rewards for our schools and LEAs.

### **Developing a State System System and Plan to Improve Achievement, Close Gaps, Improve Instruction**

**Rhode Island has proposed a differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system to be implemented immediately using its Fall 2011 state assessment results.**

RIDE is embracing the opportunity that this flexibility request provides to redesign our accountability framework in a manner designed to ensure that all schools get the differentiated supports they need and deserve, as prescribed in state statute, articulated in our strategic plan (2009), and memorialized in the Rhode Island Basic Education Program regulations, which became effective on July 1, 2010. These policies and structures provide our state with a roadmap for systemic, sustained improvement that, when coordinated with flexibility regarding NCLB requirements and supported with Race to the Top-funded systems, will elevate our schools and LEAs to unprecedented achievement levels.

Since her arrival in 2009, Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's passion for excellence in education and her commitment to reform has transformed RIDE and every facet of the education system in the state. In her first year as commissioner, she visited every school district and met with parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders, and policy-makers across the state. The outcome of this was the completion and adoption of our strategic plan, *Transforming Education in Rhode Island*. The strategic plan outlines our five-year plan for improving outcomes for all students. The five priorities, which align with this request for flexibility, are:

1. Ensure Educator Excellence;
2. Accelerate All Schools Toward Greatness;
3. Establish World-Class Standards and Assessments;
4. Develop User-Friendly Data Systems; and
5. Invest Our Resources Wisely.

Incorporated in our strategic plan are the tenets of the Basic Education Program. The Basic Education Program (BEP) is a set of regulations that the Board of Regents promulgated pursuant to its delegated, statutory authority to determine standards for the Rhode Island public-education system in order to ensure the maintenance of local appropriation to support high quality education offerings for all students as required by the BEP. The purpose of the BEP is to ensure that every public-school student has equal access to a high quality, rigorous, and equitable array of educational opportunities, expressed as a guaranteed and viable curriculum, from PK-12. In order to effectuate meaningful implementation of improved instructional practice, as articulated in the BEP, RIDE must fulfill the following functions.

- establishing clear expectations for systems, educators, and students;
- providing systems with the capacity and resources to enable LEAs to meet state expectations;
- ensuring quality assurance and quality control of LEA efforts through an effective system of indicators, data collection, analysis, and public reporting; and,
- leveraging innovative partnerships to ensure fidelity of implementation and to overcome barriers to improvement.

One of the more salient aspects of our experience working with under-performing schools is the need to clarify the distinct roles that the SEA and local district leadership play. Limiting the RIDE role to the four functions listed above was a direct effort to reduce conflicting messages coming into a school and to clarify appropriate roles and responsibilities in order to help promote execution of core strategies with fidelity.

Accordingly, the BEP assigns a very different set of functions to the local education agency (LEA). The BEP, completely revised for 2010 so as to be based on output and outcome measures, is organized around seven LEA functions. These seven functions are research-based categories of LEA functioning that lead to student success. [See Appendix B for more information on the seven functions.] Each LEA is required to fulfill

the requirements of the seven core functions in order to ensure that all of its schools are providing an adequate education to every student:

- a) *Lead the Focus on Learning and Achievement:* The LEA shall provide on-site direction that continuously guides site-based leadership; identify expectations and accountability for implementation of proven practices; and address barriers to implementation of identified educational goals.
- b) *Recruit, Support, and Retain Highly Effective Staff:* The LEA shall recruit, identify, mentor, support, and retain effective staff; build the capacity of staff to meet organizational expectations; and provide job-embedded professional development based on student need.
- c) *Guide the Implementation of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment:* The LEA shall provide access to rigorous, guaranteed, and viable curricula for all students; ensure differentiated instructional strategies, materials, and assessments; and build systems that provide opportunities for common planning and assessment.
- d) *Use Information for Planning and Accountability:* The LEA shall develop and implement proficiency-based comprehensive assessment systems; distribute results of measured school progress and student performance; and maintain responsive and accessible information systems.
- e) *Engage Families and the Community:* The LEA shall implement effective family and community communication systems; engage families and the community to promote positive student achievement and behavior; and provide adult and alternative learning opportunities integrated with community needs.
- f) *Foster Safe and Supportive Environments for Students and Staff:* The LEA shall address the physical, social, and emotional needs of all students; ensure safe school facilities and learning environments; and require that every student has at least one adult accountable for his or her learning.
- g) *Ensure Equity and Adequacy of Fiscal and Human Resources:* The LEA shall identify and provide requisite resources to meet student needs; allocate fiscal and human resources based on student need; and overcome barriers to effective resource allocation at the school level.

Describing the relative functions of the SEA and LEA carries with it an enormous benefit beyond its conceptual construct. The focus on functionality lends itself to an examination of how well an LEA needs to be performing in order to achieve a desired or requisite level of efficacy. RIDE literature often repeats the adage that the most important aspect of data-driven decision-making is the **decision** itself. Our unrelenting emphasis on critical decisions has allowed us to focus on the relevance of the data we collect. Data must be relevant to the decisions that need to be made. Improving the level of functioning within the systems that make up a school or LEA requires a series of well-informed decisions. Too often, resources, including human resources, are distributed through the education system without regard to improving core functional



capacities. The BEP provides a framework within which we can make decisions against a backdrop of clear expectations coupled with consistent performance measures.

Through this waiver design and submission, RIDE has made a series of commitments that are predicated on a profound belief in the value of an unflinching and valid measurement and accountability system and upon bold, data-driven reform at district and school levels. RIDE is committed to re-inventing its system of measuring school performance in order to build a differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system that actually informs the decisions that administrators and teachers need to make to improve teaching and learning. RIDE is committed to maximizing the knowledge and insight that can be mined from student performance data in order to facilitate meaningful decision-making and in turn, improve student outcomes. Finally, RIDE is committed to the development of a system that uncovers Rhode Island's most acute performance problems and most inspiring successes with equal, unflinching rigor. Rhode Island's waiver application contains both surprising and, in places, controversial design decisions. But in every instance, those design decisions can be traced back these commitments and a profound philosophical investment in the power of data, classification, and differentiated accountability and intervention.

Rhode Island educators need more accurate information about exactly where student outcomes have been, over time – not just the percentage of students achieving proficiency. We are determined to shine the brightest and most focused possible light on achievement gaps among disaggregated groups of students. We need a sharp focus on low-incidence populations and we also want greater consistency in the number of targets schools face. Our commitment to multiple measures demands both single-year static measures and measures that reveal trends over time. As this aspect of our system became more complex, we made the decision to limit our school-classification system to the multiple measures available to us from the use of student-performance data. In turn, this allowed us much greater flexibility to turn to a wider range of qualitative and quantitative measures to guide the sequencing and intensity of support and interventions.

This flexibility request provides Rhode Island with a unique opportunity to bring new levels of accuracy and equity to the manner in which we measure school performance. When we developed our first generation *NCLB* accountability structure, RIDE looked at several factors before deciding on an *n* size of 45 for purposes of holding schools responsible for disaggregated student populations. We felt it was important at the time to minimize Type I and Type II errors given that schools would be identified for sanctions if they failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in any of their targets. This condition is no longer applicable in our current plan. Schools that fail to meet their annual targets do not necessarily have to be identified for improvement. We would also like to use the same *n* size for our other systems and reporting within the state. A value of 20 provides a more than adequate level of validity and reliability for accountability decisions. Just as important, lowering our *n* size furthers our policy goal of accurately identifying where significant achievement gaps exist, even in relatively low-incidence student populations.

As more fully explained below, Rhode Island is also proposing the use of “consolidated subgroups” to bring a more inclusive approach to measuring student performance at the school level. Our preliminary runs reveal that our suburban schools will generally be required to meet additional AMO’s, whereas our urban schools will generally face fewer, consolidated AMO’s. Of course, our reporting system will still break performance down into the disaggregations that comprise each consolidated subgroup, so as to ensure a completely accurate and unflinching picture of student performance. Further, any school that misses an AMO for three consecutive years will automatically be placed in the Warning Classification.

**The Rhode Island plan will improve student achievement and school performance, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction.**

RIDE proposes a multi-tiered accountability system that will not only more accurately identify improving schools, but will also ensure that all Rhode Island students are measured against the highest-performing students in the state. There are seven components to our proposed accountability system. The overarching goal is to ensure that schools can no longer mask underperformance of students who face special challenges. The accountability system under the ESEA waiver emphasized schools that succeeded in elevating a large proportion of their students to our highest proficiency level, *proficient with distinction*. A parallel metric will be established for schools using the highest proficiency level on the PARCC tests. This will be set at “Level 5,” and a label has not yet been determined. Only by drawing attention to our lowest and highest performers can we hope to diagnose and properly treat our struggling schools while leveraging the best thinking of those schools that have consistently and successfully prepared students for success in college, careers, and life.

The components of RIDE’s proposed accountability system are as follows. There are some noted differences for schools as the accountability system will respond to differences in the PARCC assessment as these schools establish baselines using the 2014-2015 PARCC results:

1. Improve the absolute proficiency of all students in all schools in reading and mathematics (minority, free/reduced-price lunch, English Learners, students with disabilities);
2. Reduce the percent of students not proficient in mathematics and reading in half by 2016-17 in all schools and LEAs (All Students). This metric will not be used in 2014-2015 as the PARCC assessment will establish baselines on which annual targets will be established ;
3. Set individualized school-specific and district-specific level Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for all schools in reading and mathematics for the all student groups and for all subgroups and programs (minority, free/reduced-price lunch, English Learners, students with disabilities).. Schools will have AMOs established in the 2014-15 school year using the PARCC assessment results;
4. Recognize schools that exceed proficiency standards in reading and mathematics (All Students)

5. Improve growth in reading and mathematics in all elementary and middle schools (All Students, minority, free/reduced-price lunch, English Learners, students with disabilities);
6. Reduce the percent of students not graduating by half by 2016-17, using 4-year, 5-year, and 6-year cohort graduation calculations and set graduation-rate Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) (All Students); and
7. Increasing high-school scaled-score growth on the NECAP mathematics and reading assessments will not be used in 2014-2015 as this year's results will provide baseline data from which we can measure growth in future years.

It is important to note that, in all instances, our proposed accountability system is in alignment with – or more rigorous than – the targets that we articulated in the Rhode Island Race to the Top goals.

The following parameters remain essentially unchanged in this proposed accountability system, excepting for a few temporary modifications necessitated by the transition to PARCC assessments:

- The definition of public school for accountability purposes is the same definition as public school for general purposes in Rhode Island: “A publicly funded school, operated by a local city or town school committee or school board, or operated by the State through a Board of Trustees, or a public charter school established pursuant to Chapter 77 of Title 16 of the General Laws, or a school program operated by the Department for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF).”
- Our existing state assessment program is implemented statewide and legislatively mandated through The Paul W. Crowley Student Investment Initiative. (RIGL 16-7.1) We administer assessments annually, assessing students in grades 3 through 8 plus grade 11 in reading and mathematics and assessing writing in grades 5, 8, and 11 using the NECAP assessments. The NECAP assessments in both reading and mathematics report student results in the following categories for all schools: Proficient with Distinction (4), Proficient (3), Partially Proficient (2), and Substantially Below Proficient (1). Rhode Island will transition to the PARCC tests in the 2014-15 school year and administer the PARCC Literacy tests to students in grades 3-10 and the PARCC Mathematics tests to students in grades 3-8 with students in high school taking the PARCC test aligned to their math course (i.e. Algebra I or Geometry.)
  - [InfoWorks Live!](#) (formerly, *Information Works*) is Rhode Island's state report card. In the current (2011-12) school year, InfoWorks will continue to include assessment data, teacher-quality information, disaggregations, and survey data on students, teachers, parents, and administrators.
  - All students in Rhode Island public schools are tested according to statewide policy. Students may participate with or without accommodations, and students with disabilities who qualify (less than 1 percent of the student population) may take the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment. Rhode Island includes these results in its accountability system. Students who have been in the state prior to

the October 1 enrollment count of the prior year are included in the accountability system. Students who arrive in an LEA or school after the October 1 enrollment count of the prior year are included in the state assessment reports but excluded from the accountability system. ~~Our proposal does request a waiver from including newly arrived ELs (less than one academic year) from the fall mathematics assessment in the same way they are excluded from the reading assessments as allowed under NCLB. Most students who are new to the country begin schools in September and have very little time to become oriented to their new academic performance before beginning NECAP testing on October 1<sup>st</sup>.~~

- Rhode Island will continue to report disaggregated data by ESEA subgroups for all schools.
- We apply consistently statewide the criterion for defining what constitutes a “full academic year.” The full academic year is set at the October 1 enrollment-count date (which is the date designated in state law to calculate state aid to districts). For NECAP tests that students take in October, we assign scores to the location of each student at the end of the prior school year. The full academic year is then defined as being enrolled in the same school (or LEA) from October 1 to the end of that prior school year. Students who have been continuously enrolled are counted. Students who have not been continuously enrolled at the school but have remained in the LEA (in another school) are counted in the LEA AYP. A student who is not in the school or LEA for a continuous entire school year will not be counted for school level or LEA accountability but will be reported in the state results.
- The state assessment system draws from a department-wide demographic system in which each student has a centrally recorded racial category, IEP status, English Learner status, and free or reduced-price lunch status. This system enables RIDE to determine the proficiency levels of each student subgroup. We have an individual-student identifier system, which makes possible a calculation of subgroup participation rates and has improved the accuracy of disaggregated data. RIDE will continue to calculate the proficiency levels and participation rates of disaggregated subgroups within each school and LEA.
- We review LEAs at three levels (elementary, middle, high school) and subject LEAs to the same AMO requirements as schools.
- The U.S. Department of Education has approved the Rhode Island assessment system. The vendors for these assessments have produced technical studies, which demonstrate validity, reliability and psychometric integrity of the assessments. The assessments were aligned with our content standards. RIDE will subject the new PARCC to the same technical rigor as we have done with current assessments.

Over the course of the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years, LEAs across the four NECAP states will be transitioning to the Common Core State Standards. Although the pace and sequencing of changes to curriculum and instruction will vary across LEAs and schools within and across the NECAP states, all four states expect LEAs and schools to be prepared to fully implement the Common Core State Standards during the 2013-14 school year. During the transition period, we will continue to administer the NECAP reading, writing, and mathematics assessments in the fall of 2012 and 2013, and these assessments will remain aligned with our current standards (GLEs and GSEs).

## **Student Achievement**

### **Developing a consistent and logical approach to our accountability design**

The manner in which Rhode Island's proposed accountability system differs from the current accountability system and how it will better ensure success for all Rhode Island students is set forth in this section. One of the most limiting aspects of NCLB is the manner in which targets, school performance and interventions are conflated into a "one size fits all" model. The flexibility waiver allows states to separate the setting and attainment of AMO's from the measurement of school performance. It further allows states to establish a truly diagnostic approach to determining school-specific supports and interventions that reflect both more accurate measures of school performance and other critical readiness factors that impact improvement efforts. Rhode Island's plan is specifically designed to maximize these critical areas of flexibility in order to accelerate improvement in our lowest performing schools.

Rhode Island's Strategic Plan includes a set of goals for all districts, schools, and subgroups in the state: to reduce the proficiency gap by half by 2017, thus reducing by half the proportion of students who are not college and career ready. Rhode Island proposes to establish Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for each school in the state using this methodology. Meeting this goal will require all schools and districts to accelerate progress for all students, particularly those who are furthest behind. Through the hard work and dedication of their teachers and students, many Rhode Island schools and districts have demonstrated substantial progress in addressing their proficiency gaps. To measure progress toward that goal and classify schools in an accountability and assistance level, we are proposing to create a Composite Index Score, (CIS), which combines a set of metrics that include our current best indicators of progress towards college-and career readiness: progress on gap-closing as measured by our state assessments in reading and mathematics.

AMO targets will be differentiated for each district, school, and subgroup depending on its starting point in the baseline year, 2010–11, with the goal in each case to cut in half the proportion of students who are not on track to college and career readiness (performing at least at the Proficient level). As a result, districts, schools, and subgroups that are furthest behind are expected to make the strongest gains and thus close achievement gaps. AMO targets will be reestablished for elementary, middle, and high schools in 2014-15 based on baseline data from PARCC testing.

Rhode Island will issue and report Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) determinations by establishing school specific AMOs for students in the aggregate, low-income students, students with disabilities, English Learners, and the state's major racial and ethnic subgroups. Elementary, middle, and high schools will use 2014-15 PARCC assessments to establish baseline data from which school specific AMOs will be set. Annual district and school reports will be available on our web site and included in our *InfoWorks!* report cards for each school and district. Schools that persistently fail to attain AMOs will be placed into one of RIDEs three lowest accountability levels (Warning, Priority or Focus). In addition, RIDE will continue to report out the Attendance Rates for our K-8 schools on our school and district report cards, although Attendance will no longer be used for accountability purposes. For the 2014-15 accountability process we will hold constant those schools previously identified as Priority and Focus schools.

Using these school-specific AMOs as a baseline, Rhode Island's accountability system is based on an index comprised of seven metrics. Each metric divides the range of scores into five levels of performance. These five levels will allow us to distinguish among the span of performance within in each metric so that we can, properly identify schools at the extreme margins and to make the scoring system more differentiated in the middle. Each of Rhode Island's schools and districts will have an index score ranging from 20 to 100 points. The scores will be earned within each of seven components. When each of the 7 weighted components are added together, the result is the schools' and districts' score is out of 100.

Table 2 below provides a summary of the seven components and the weights assigned to each measure or metric. The individual scores from each subcomponent will be added together to arrive at a total score for each school. We will then rank the schools by this total score (20-100) in order to begin the identification process for priority, focus, and commended schools. Beyond these seven metrics, the classifications will factor in an individual subgroup that missed an AMO for three consecutive years, any significant gaps in performance, and participation rates in reading and mathematics, at the district, school, state, and subgroup levels.

<b>Table 2: ESEA Flexibility Design Weights</b>			
<b>Measure</b>	<b>Components</b>	<b>Elementary / Middle Schools</b>	<b>High Schools</b>
Absolute Percent Proficient	All Students Minority + Poverty IEP + ELL	34	34
Progress To 2017 Target	All Students		

Consolidated Subgroup Performance Gaps Against Performance Reference Group	Minority+Poverty	34	34
	IEP+ELL		
Percent of Tested students in Distinction Level	All Students	6	6
Growth	All Students	26	0
	Minority+Poverty		
	IEP+ELL		
HS Graduation Rates	All Students		26
HS Scaled Score Change	All Students		
TOTAL		100	100

The composite index score (CIS) provides sufficient data to place schools and districts into one of three levels so that RIDE can provide differentiated recognition, accountability, and supports. RIDE will calculate new index scores using the 2014-2015 PARCC data but it will not assign labels beyond those that are federally required, (i.e. Commended, Focus, and Priority). The levels are:

1. Commended Schools
2. Focus Schools
3. Priority Schools

Cut points within each category were assigned within the following framework:

1. The highest levels of performance reflect current achievement data in each category. They outline achievable yet aspirational goals for each school.
2. The lowest levels of performance also reflect the current unacceptably low data we have in each category.
3. The middle ranges attempt to differentiate among the ranges of school performance based on the most recent data sets we have for schools.

Our current accountability system allows many schools – particularly in our suburbs - to mask the poor performance of our most vulnerable students; those with disabilities and English Learners. This phenomenon occurs because many of our schools do not meet the minimum *n* size of 45 for each subgroup. Concurrently, many of our urban schools report small performance gaps because overall performance is so low at the school level. To account for these two issues, we propose to collapse all reported subgroups into three subgroups and to lower the *n* size to twenty students for component analysis. To ensure that gaps are not due to poor overall performance, we also introduce a Performance Reference Group (PRG) for each LEA, which includes the highest performers. Identifying and addressing achievement gaps of Rhode Island's most vulnerable students are at the heart of our Strategic Plan as well as our accountability design.

The three consolidated groups used in the CIS and justification for each are described below.

**Performance Reference Group (PRG):** The PRG is made of students who are not economically disadvantaged, not in English Learner (EL) programs and not receiving Individualized Education Program (IEP) Services. This is the highest performing group of students in our state and the group against which all other groups will be compared. The PRG is also the yardstick by which we measure performance gaps within the CIS. A PRG will be set for each LEA for reading and mathematics at the elementary, middle, and, high school levels. The decision was made to implement a consistent approach that would apply to all schools statewide by developing an LEA level comparison rather than a school level comparison because many schools did not have a sufficient population size (i.e.  $n = 20$ ) to calculate subgroup specific gaps.

**Consolidated Program Subgroup:** This subgroup includes English Learners (ELs) including former English Learners that are being monitored and students with disabilities and those students that have been exited from services (including students who take the alternate assessment). The decision was made to consolidate both programs after exploring other options to ensure that as many students as possible were informing the accountability data for each school and district. Initial analysis was conducted separately for each program. This analysis revealed that many schools and students would not be included in the accountability system because of the minimum  $n$  requirement of 45. We then reduced the  $n$  size to 20 and found that, while it improved our ability to include more schools and students, it was not at a level that captured a sufficient number of Rhode Island's students. Most notably only 29% of schools would be held accountable for the performance of students receiving EL services. This was an improvement but still far too low. By combining two groups into one larger subgroup, the data demonstrates that we are able to hold 81% of schools accountable for the performance of these students. We are confident we will highlight and respond to gaps in student achievement that have been previously overlooked. In nearly eighty-one percent of all Rhode Island schools, there are less than 20 English Learner students. Under the current system, these schools would not be held accountable because of the small  $n$  size. The table below shows that the consolidated subgroup increases the number of schools included in accountability from 54 to 227 for the ELL subgroup and from 211 to 227 for the IEP subgroup.

School Included in Accountability Determination	# of Schools	% of Schools
IEP Subgroup	211	78.36
ELL Subgroup	54	19.14
Consolidated ELL and IEP Program Subgroup	227	80.49

In addition to including more schools in the accountability system, we examined the reasonableness of combining the two program groups into one subgroup. The Pearson correlation coefficient measures the correlation or strength of relationship between two

variables; in this case performance. As is indicated below, there is a very strong relationship between the individual program subgroups and the consolidated subgroups. We are confident that the consolidated program subgroup is a valid proxy for the individual program groups. Further, we plan to conduct a separate analysis of individual subgroup's performance to identify subgroups that are not meeting their AMOs. This will identify any instances in which the consolidated subgroup masks the performance of subgroups.

<b>Pearson Correlation Coefficient</b>	Math	Reading
IEP Subgroup Proficiency Consolidated Program Subgroup Proficiency	0.923**	0.928**
ELL Subgroup Proficiency Consolidated Program Subgroup Proficiency	0.605**	0.607**

*\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level using a two-tailed Pearson Correlation Coefficient*

**Consolidated Minority and Economically Disadvantaged Subgroup:**

This consolidated subgroup includes all federal racial minorities as prescribed by the National Forum on Education Statistics (Minority) plus Free and Reduced-price Lunch students (FRL). As with the Consolidated Program Subgroup, combining these groups ensures that these students will be accounted for in low incidence schools. As the table below shows, consolidating Minority and Free/Reduced Lunch students results in the inclusion of 269 of the 282 schools.

<b>School Included in Accountability Determinations</b>	<b># of Schools</b>	<b>% of Schools</b>
Black Subgroup	75	27
Hispanic Subgroup	121	54
Economically Disadvantaged Subgroup	248	88
Consolidated Minority and Economically Disadvantaged Subgroup	269	95

There is a strong correlation in student achievement between poverty and racial/ethnic minorities and we are confident that this further supports the consolidation of these groups.

<b>Pearson Correlation Coefficient</b>	Math	Reading
Black Subgroup Proficiency Consolidated Minority and Economically Disadvantaged Subgroup Proficiency	0.74**	0.63**
Hispanic Subgroup Proficiency Consolidated Minority and Economically Disadvantaged Subgroup Proficiency	0.83**	0.8**
Free/ Reduced Lunch Subgroup Proficiency Consolidated Minority and Economically	0.97**	0.96**

Disadvantaged Subgroup Proficiency		
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**\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level using a two-tailed Pearson Correlation Coefficient**

Table 4 below shows selected subgroup performance in our state assessments over the past three years. Apart from the Asian subgroup, each of the other subgroups included in the consolidated subgroups have similar performance. The Asian subgroup performs at a significantly higher level, but their populations are too small to make any difference in the consolidated subgroup performance. Moreover, Asian students in our urban communities have similar performance results as their Black and Hispanic peers, further supporting the case to include Asians in the Consolidated Minority and Economically Disadvantaged subgroup.

Although the policy and psychometric rationale behind the combination English learners and students with IEPs is both defensible and sound, RIDE is acutely aware of the challenging and problematic optics of the combination. The waiver development period included hours of intense internal and external debate that eventually turned on a small set of powerful questions.

*“Is RIDE’s commitment to creating an accurate and sensitive measurement system that truly maximizes school district responsibility for traditionally underserved students matched with the institutional courage to put forth the design that best meets this goal?”*

*“Can RIDE develop and put forth an application that acknowledges and meaningfully responds to the legitimate historical, perceptual, and educational concerns that are raised through the consolidation of students with IEPs and Els within a single subpopulation?”*

*“Can RIDE engage in earnest, honest dialogue with our local advocacy community and demonstrate that the consolidated subpopulation, though disquieting on its face, will help ensure that all Rhode Island schools are held accountable for our low-incidence, traditionally-underserved subpopulations?”*

When, and only when, it was clear that the answer to each of these difficult questions was “yes” did RIDE submit this waiver application for federal consideration.

Student Groups	Reading						Mathematics					
	'09 % Prof.	'10 % Prof	'10 SE	'11 % Prof	'11 SE	Difference 10-11	'09 % Prof	'10 % Prof	'10 SE	'11 % Prof	'11 SE	Difference 10-11
<b>State Average</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>.17</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>.16</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>.18</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>.18</b>	<b>+1</b>
<b>Am. Indian</b>	55	56	2.17	57	2.26	+1	38	35	2.08	39	2.22	+4
<b>Asian</b>	75	75	.94	76	.94	+1	62	62	1.04	64	1.05	+2
<b>Black</b>	54	54	.67	57	.65	+2	31	33	.63	35	.62	+2
<b>Hispanic</b>	51	52	.41	53	.40	+2	31	35	.39	36	.38	+1

Student Groups	Reading						Mathematics					
	2009 % Prof.	'10 % Prof	2010 SE	'11 % Prof	'11 SE	Difference 2010-2011	'09 % Prof	'10 % Prof	'10 SE	'11 % Prof	'11 SE	Difference 2010-2011
FRL	55	56	.28	59	.27	+2	37	39	.27	41	.27	+2
IEP	29	29	.43	30	.45	+1	19	19	.37	18	.37	-1
LEP	24	24	.79	25	.70	0 (<0.5)	16	17	.65	16	.57	-1
<b>State Average</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>.17</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>.16</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>.18</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>.18</b>	<b>+1</b>
Am. Indian	55	56	2.17	57	2.26	+1	38	35	2.08	39	2.22	+4
Asian	75	75	.94	76	.94	+1	62	62	1.04	64	1.05	+2
Black	54	54	.67	57	.65	+2	31	33	.63	35	.62	+2
Hispanic	51	52	.41	53	.40	+2	31	35	.39	36	.38	+1
FRL	55	56	.28	59	.27	+2	37	39	.27	41	.27	+2
IEP	29	29	.43	30	.45	+1	19	19	.37	18	.37	-1
LEP	24	24	.79	25	.70	0 (<0.5)	16	17	.65	16	.57	-1

**Statewide group performance on NECAP Reading and Mathematics assessments.<sup>1</sup>**

### How We Measure School Performance Rhode Island's Proposed Accountability System

**Absolute Proficiency:** How many students have attained proficiency or better?

*This measure indicates the percent of students in each school who have attained a level of proficient or better on the state assessments in mathematics and reading.*

Rhode Island's proposed system acknowledges that high academic achievement for all students is the primary goal of our educational enterprise. As such, it continues to play a significant role in our revised ESEA flexibility waiver proposal. It will carry a weight of thirty-four percent (34%) for elementary, middle, and high schools. The state will administer the PARCC to students in grades 3-10 in, reading, and writing and Algebra I and Geometry and Integrated Mathematics I/II will be administered to students who are enrolled in the aligned course. The expectation is that all students will reach proficiency. Students who are proficient "demonstrate minor gaps in the prerequisite knowledge and skills needed to participate and perform successfully in instructional activities aligned with the grade level/ grade span expectations at the current grade level."

The PARCC assessments' scale scores and five levels of proficiency levels will be established in the summer 2015. Approximately one percent of Rhode Island students participate in the Alternate Assessment, our assessment for students with disabilities.

<sup>1</sup>With the exception of Standard Errors (SE), all numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Results from these two assessments are combined to determine the absolute percent proficient metric. Our assessments achievement levels are outlined in the table below.

<b>Table 3: Performance Levels on NECAP Assessment</b>	
<b>Level</b>	<b>Description</b>
Level 4	<b>Proficient with Distinction</b> Students performing at this level demonstrate the prerequisite knowledge and skills needed to participate and excel in instructional activities aligned with Grade level and grade span expectations. These students are on track to succeed in post-secondary endeavors.
Level 3	<b>Proficient</b> Students performing at this level demonstrate minor gaps in the knowledge and skills needed to participate and perform successfully in instructional activities aligned with the grade span and grade level expectations. It is likely that any gaps in the prerequisite knowledge and skills demonstrated by these students can be addressed by the classroom teacher during the course of quality classroom instruction.
Level 2	<b>Partially Proficient</b> Students performing at this level demonstrate gaps in the knowledge and skills needed to participate and perform successfully in instructional activities aligned with the grade 9-10 GSEs. Additional instructional support may be necessary for these students to perform successfully in courses aligned with grade expectations.
Level 1	<b>Substantially Below Proficient</b> Students performing at this level demonstrate extensive and significant gaps in the prerequisite knowledge and skills needed to participate and perform successfully in grade appropriate instructional activities. Additional instruction and support is necessary for these students to meet the proficiency standards.

RIDE will calculate the Absolute Percent Proficient metric by determining the percentage of students at or above proficiency for each school and LEA in the state for three groups of students. The Absolute Percent Proficient metric will be computed for all students, students who are in racial or ethnic minority subgroups along with student receiving free or reduced lunch, and for student who receive either IEP or ELL services. These percentages are used to assign points to each school based on derived cut points.

Reading performance is consistent across all school levels. As such, one set of cut scores was appropriate and relevant to all schools. A goal of ninety percent or higher in reading for all schools is ambitious yet attainable. Schools with fewer than 45% of their students proficient in reading represent the lowest levels of achievement in our state and demonstrate need for intensive support and intervention. Conversely, there has been a wide variation of math performance across school levels. As a result of these variations, there are three sets of cut scores for elementary, middle and high school levels. While the cut points are not normalized, they were selected to take into account historical performance.

The percent of students who are proficient for each of these groups are independently calculated in reading and then in mathematics. Using their mean scores, these groups are then assigned points from 1 to 5 based on the cut points described in the table below. For the Absolute Proficiency Measure, there are 6 of these values, three for each of the groups from reading and three for each of the groups from mathematics. The average of these six values, which vary from 1 to 5 is then calculated. If the average score is 5, it will translate to all the 30 points for this measure. The equation below is used to assign Absolute Proficiency Measure points in each school. RIDE will review the PARCC assessment data to determine whether new cut points will need to be established based on the results of students.

$$\text{Points Assigned to Absolute Proficiency Measure} = (\text{Average Score} * 30)/5$$

### **Absolute Proficiency Metric Cut Scores**

		1. Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points	5 Points
<b>Absolute Percent Proficient for All Students and for All Subgroups</b>	Reading	< 45	≥ 45,< 60	≥ 60,< 80	≥ 80,< 90	≥ 90
	Elementary Math	< 35	≥ 35,< 50	≥ 50,< 70	≥ 70,< 90	≥ 90
	Middle Math	< 30	≥30,< 50	≥ 50,< 70	≥ 70,< 85	≥ 85
	HS Math	< 10	≥ 10,< 30	≥ 30,< 45	≥ 45,< 70	≥ 70

**Progress:** To what degree is the school approaching its 2017 targets?

*This measure monitors whether each school as a whole is progressing at a pace that will position them to meet its 2017 targets for proficiency levels in mathematics and reading. This measure is not being used in 2014-15. The PARCC assessments will establish baselines for elementary, middle, and high schools.*

Our current accountability system establishes Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) for each subgroup, school, and LEA that is identical within each level of schooling and subject area. Each school and LEA must meet a state target that is based on the 100-percent proficiency goals that No Child Left Behind set for 2014. As such, schools are evaluated in a binary manner as either meeting or not meeting an annual target. In

practice some schools miss targets by a small margin while others have made little or no progress at all. Our proposed system addresses this issue by prioritizing schools that have missed gaps by wider margins. We do this by monitoring the percentage of progress each school is making toward its 2017 targets.

RIDE will establish individualized targets for schools and LEAs that will reduce by 50 percent each school’s gap to 100-percent proficiency by 2016-17. In order to perform this calculation, RIDE will use 2010-11 data as a baseline. This metric is measured as follows:

- 1) Define Gap as the difference in performance between the 2010-11 baseline year and the 2016-17 target.
- 2) Define Progress as the difference between current year performance and the baseline year of 2010-11.
- 3) Calculate the metric as  $100 \times \text{Progress} / \text{Gap}$

Each year, schools will be placed into one of five levels. Cut points for the highest level are selected to ensure that schools are on track to meet their 2016-17 targets. The lowest cut point signifies schools that are least likely to meet their 2016-17 targets and will capture schools that lose ground. The intermediate cut points are set to differentiate across the range of progress schools are making towards their 2016-17 targets. The reading and math points (1-5) are averaged to calculate a school score. This component constitutes 10 percent of the weighted accountability system across all 3 levels (EMH).

**Progress Metric Cut Scores**

		1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points	5 Points
<b>Progress to 2017 Target</b>	Reading	< -3	$\geq -3, < 0$	$\geq 0, < 8$	$\geq 8, < 16$	$\geq 16$
	Math					

**Gap-closing:** Is the school serving all students, including those with disabilities and English Learners?

*This measure indicates whether all student groups in each school are closing achievement gaps. For each school, this measure compares the scores of a high-performing group of students (students who are not economically disadvantaged y, do not have disabilities, and do not receive EL services.) against the performance of two other student groups: (1) minority students plus students who are economically disadvantaged and (2) students with disabilities plus English Learners.*

Our current accountability system allows many schools – particularly in our suburbs - to mask the poor performance of our most vulnerable students; those with disabilities and English Learners. This phenomenon occurs because many of our schools are unable to meet the minimum *n* size of 45 for each subgroup. Concurrently, many of our urban schools report small performance gaps because overall performance is so low at the

school level. To account for these two issues, we propose to collapse all reported subgroups into three subgroups and to lower the *n* size to twenty students. To ensure that gaps are not due to poor overall performance, we also introduce a Performance Reference Group (PRG) for each LEA, which includes the highest performers in the school district. A PRG will be set for each LEA for reading and mathematics at the elementary, middle, and, high school levels. When there are too few students to calculate a PRG or if there is an insignificant gap between the LEA level PRG and its subgroups, a statewide PRG will be used. Identifying and addressing achievement gaps of Rhode Island’s most vulnerable students are at the heart of our Strategic Plan as well as our accountability design.

To arrive at the score for the Gap-Closing metric, we will subtract the Consolidated Minority/ Economically Disadvantaged Subgroup and the Consolidated Program Subgroup from the Performance Reference Group (PRG) for both reading and mathematics. In this instance, reading and mathematics will each receive a score, which translates to 4 scores overall (2 for the Consolidated Program Group gap and 2 for Consolidated Minority/Poverty Group gap). We will then rank the four scores and assign each school a score between 1 and 5. To receive 5 points, a school must have exceptionally small gaps for students. There are a handful of these schools and they represent proof points, and for all other schools in our state this will remain a reach. A score of 1 represents extraordinarily large gaps that reflect the reality of our current data. The identified cut points allow us to differentiate among levels of performance regarding achievement gaps.

$$\text{Points Assigned to Subgroup Gap Measures} = (\text{Average Score} * 30)/5$$

This component is heavily weighted at 30% within our overall model because RIDE recognizes that overall performance is simply not good enough. Each and every student must be counted – and this can only happen when gaps are addressed at every level and for each and every underserved student. By consolidating these groups rather than considering each student demographic and programmatic group individually, we are able to hold all but thirteen schools accountable for subgroup proficiency gaps – a clear sign to schools that all students matter. RIDE will analyze PARCC assessment data to determine whether new cut points need to be established for elementary middle, and high schools.

### **Proficiency Gap Metric Cut Scores**

		1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points	5 Points
<b>Consolidated Subgroup Gaps against Performance Reference Group</b>	Minority /Poverty math	≥ 35	≥ 30,< 35	≥ 20,< 30	≥ 10,< 20	< 10
	Minority /Poverty reading					
	Program math	≥ 65	≥ 50,< 65	≥ 30,< 50	≥ 15,< 30	< 15



	Program reading					
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\* When any sub score is not available because n is less than twenty, the average score excludes that sub score.

**Distinction:** How many students have attained distinction?

*This measure indicates the percent of students in each school who have attained a level of distinction on the state assessments in mathematics and reading.*

RIDE’s theory of action articulates that when schools and educators are supported, all students will achieve at high levels. Current data makes clear that we are not supporting students’ progress to the highest levels of achievement as indicated on NECAP results. Currently sixteen percent (16%) and twenty-one percent (21%) of students have achievement levels in the *Proficient with Distinction* category in math and reading, respectively. By examining and rewarding schools that are elevating a large percentage of students to the highest standards, Rhode Island can learn from and recognize publicly those schools that believe good simply isn’t good enough.

All other accountability measures proposed in this waiver sum proficient and proficient with distinction in calculation determinations. RIDE wants to recognize and commend schools that not only ensure students are proficient, but expect them to achieve at the highest levels. This metric is designed to incentivize high expectations for our students. We determine this metric by dividing Level 4 students (Proficient with Distinction) into the total number of students tested, for reading and mathematics individually. We will then rank the scores and assign each school a score between 1 and 5. This measure accounts for 5 percent of the accountability system across all levels (EMH). The identified cut points below were developed to reflect our current rates of proficient with distinction for both math (16%) and reading (21%). RIDE will analyze PARCC assessment data to determine whether new cut points need to be established for this metric.

**Proficient with Distinction Metric Cut Scores**

		1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points	5 Points
<b>Percent of Tested students in Distinction Level</b>	Reading	< 5	≥ 5, < 15	≥ 15, < 30	≥ 30, < 40	≥ 40
	Math	< 5	≥ 5, < 15	≥ 15, < 25	≥ 25, < 35	≥ 35

**Growth** (Elementary, Middle): Are all students making progress?

*This measure indicates whether, on average, students in each elementary and middle school are making sufficient annual growth based on their scores on state assessments in mathematics and reading. This measure examines the scores at the student level in*

*each school and compares each student's scores over consecutive years. This measure evaluates growth for three groups of students: (1) all students, (2) minority students plus students living in poverty, and (3) students with disabilities plus English Learners. (Note: We cannot use this measure for high schools because students take the state assessments during only one year in high school.)*

Schools' absolute performance in 2010-11 is wide-ranging. The absolute performance is important but not the only lens we will use to determine schools needing urgent attention. Our proposed accountability system will factor in a growth metric that acknowledges schools that demonstrate strong growth even though they may not reach their absolute proficiency targets. Simultaneously, we will highlight schools that are stagnant despite high performance. Rhode Island will use the Student Growth Percentile (SGP) methodology developed by Damian Bettebenner.<sup>2</sup> This methodology was selected because it accounts for each student's prior academic history. As such each student's growth is compared to his or her academic peers.

For this measure student level percentile records in reading and in mathematics have been combined to increase the number of records available for determining median percentiles for each of the three groups (All students, Minority/Poverty and Program) that make up the components. A median percentile score is determined for each of these groups. Points from 1 to 5 are then assigned to each of these groups based on their median percentile scores and the cut point described in the table below. The mean or average of these three numbers which vary from 1 to 5 is then calculated. If the average score is 5, it will translate to all the 25 points for this measure. An average score of 1 will translate to 5 of the 25 points assigned to this measure. The equation below is used to assign Student Growth Percentile Measure points to each school. The average score is multiplied by 25 (the weight of the measure). Then, that amount is divided by 5 (the maximum number of points for the measure).

$$\text{Points Assigned to Student Growth Percentile Measure} = (\text{Average Score} * 25)/5$$

Each student's reading and math SGPs are combined to calculate a school's total growth metric. By doing so, student subgroup populations are large enough to calculate the median SGP for each school. An SGP is calculated for all students, the Consolidated Program Subgroup, and the Consolidated Minority/Poverty Subgroup. We assign a score of one to five, based on RIDE-developed cut scores, for the 3 median scores. We calculate this component for elementary and middle schools only, and it accounts for 25 percent of the weighted accountability system. RIDE will analyze growth scores derived from NECAP and PARCC data to determine whether new cut points need to be established.

		1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points	5 Points
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<sup>2</sup> Bettebenner, D. W. (2009). Norm- and criterion-referenced student growth. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 28(4):42-51.

<b>Growth</b>	All students	< 35	≥ 35, < 45	≥ 45, < 55	≥ 55, < 65	≥ 65
	Minority / Poverty Subgroup					
	Program Subgroup					

\* When any sub score is not available because n is less than twenty, the average score excludes that sub score.

**Graduation** (high schools): Are all students ready for success?

*This measure indicates for high schools the 4-year, 5-year, and 6-year graduation rates, taking into account transfers into and out of the school.*

When NCLB was first introduced, we established a statewide baseline measure for the high-school graduation rate. The procedure for defining the baseline paralleled the procedure for defining the baseline for the academic measures. Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, RIDE adopted the NGA adjusted cohort formula based on the tracking of individual students. We established a new state baseline from which we defined a Graduation Rate Annual Target growth trajectory.

As of last year, RIDE revised its accountability notebook to include a five-year graduation rate. The higher of a four-year adjusted cohort rate or a combined four- and five-year rate, weighted at 60 percent and 40 percent, respectively is used for accountability. RIDE proposes in this request to add a six-year graduation rate. This 6-year rate is important as more Rhode Island high schools retain and graduate our most vulnerable students. The introduction of a six year rate will require an adjustment to our combined weighting. We propose a composite score of 50% of a four year adjusted cohort rate and 25% of both the five year and six year graduation rates. A school's graduation rate for the purposes of this model is the higher of the four year and composite graduation rates.

The graduation score consists of two components: one measures absolute rate, while the other considers growth toward a 100-percent graduation rate expressed as an Annual Target:

- a. Graduation Rate  
To calculate the graduation rate, RIDE uses the 2010-11 4-, 5-, and 6-year cohort graduation rates. The highest of the 4-year cohort graduation rate and the composite of the 4-, 5-, and 6-year cohort graduation rates (weighted .50, .25 and .25 respectively) is used to compute the graduation rate measure.
- b. Graduation Rate Annual Targets

Using the 2010-11 cohort graduation rate as a baseline, the formula, Annual Target = 100-(2010-11 graduation rate)/2 is the gap that each school must close by 2016-

17. That gap is divided by 6 to arrive at each school's individual Annual Target . We will assign each school a score from one to five according to the cut scores below. This component accounts for 20 percent of the weighted accountability system, at the high-school level only.

	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points	5 Points
<b>HS Graduation Rates</b>	< 65	≥ 65 < 75	≥ 75 < 85	≥85 < 90	≥ 90

*\* To encourage schools to make extreme efforts to graduate students, schools whose graduation rates are higher than their Annual Target or schools that have a graduation rate higher than the state average may receive one additional point.*

Calculating schools total points for the graduation rates measure is a several step process. First, the composite and 4-year graduation rates are calculated. Using the higher of the two graduation rates a school is assigned points (1-5) based on the table above. Then an additional point may be added if the school met their graduation rate annual target. A school could receive up to 6 points. Finally the weighted points are calculated using the formula below. The total points are multiplied by 20 (the weight of the measure). Then, that amount is divided by 6 (the maximum number of points for the measure).

$$\text{Points Assigned to Graduation Rate Measure} = (\text{Total points} * 20)/6.$$

**Improvement** (high schools): Are students improving annually?

*This measure indicates for high schools whether the grade-11 scores on state assessments in mathematics and reading are improving each year.*

*High-school scale-score change:*

Because our state assessment is only administered once at the high-school level (in 11<sup>th</sup> grade), a growth score is not available. As a proxy, RIDE proposes using the change in average scale scores at the 11<sup>th</sup> grade to measure annual improvement. To calculate this measure, RIDE will subtract the 2011-12 mean scaled score from the 2010-11 mean scaled scores for both mathematics and reading. We will assign points (one to five) based on the cut scores in the table below. This measure will constitute five percent of the weighted accountability system, at the high-school level only. *This measure is not being used in 2014-15. The PARCC assessments will establish baselines.*

<b>HS Scaled Score Change</b>	Reading	< -3	≥ -3 < -1	≥ -1 < 1	≥ 1 < 3	≥ 3
	Math					

## ASSIGNING SCHOOLS TO ACCOUNTABILITY LEVELS

Rhode Island's proposed accountability system will place schools into one of its six levels in rank order from the highest to lowest CIS. Two levels, Typical Schools and Warning Schools will be informed by additional data. Each level is briefly introduced in section and connected to a comprehensive diagnostic and intervention system in subsequent sections of this application. Our methodology fairly and accurately identifies and ranks schools while adhering to all ESEA waiver requirements. Most notably, this unified federal and state accountability model places primacy on three critical questions about each of its schools.

1. Is student achievement in reading and mathematics unacceptably low?
2. Are there intolerable gaps in student performance?
3. Is there little or no academic progress in improving student achievement or increasing graduation rates?

Schools that answer yes to all three questions emerge as Rhode Island's priority and focus schools. We believe that it is the combination of these factors that require the most urgent action, resources, and attention at the state and district levels.

A school's total composite score is the sum of the seven weighted metrics described in Table 2: ESEA Flexibility Design Weights. Figure 1 below presents the distribution of schools across each of Rhode Island's six levels of performance according to their Composite Index Score (CIS) as plotted by their total CIS out of one hundred possible points. [See Appendix A for a rank-ordered list of all Rhode Island schools with details on point accumulation for each component of the CIS.] Warning Schools are schools with index scores below 50 and are not identified as priority or focus. In addition, any school that fails to meet the 95% participation rate or that have individual metrics that are at low levels in one of the following -- absolute proficiency, gaps, growth, or graduation rates -- are placed into the Warning Level regardless of the CIS, subject to the cut scores set forth below:

1. An Absolute Proficiency Metric of less than or equal to 10; or
2. A Gap Score Metric of 15 or less; or
3. A Growth Score Metric of 7.5 or less; or
4. A combined Graduation and High School Scaled Score Change of 10 or less or
5. Fail to attain any AMO for two consecutive years

RIDE is especially concerned about participation rates for reasons of both accuracy and equity. Outside of the composite index score based on the components listed herein, each school will be responsible for testing at least 95% of its eligible students at each grade level. Failure to hit this target in a single year will result in a "Warning" classification, regardless of scores in the component measures. RIDE is considerably more concerned with schools that have continuing difficulty to meet the Participation target. For that reason, schools that fail to meet the Participation target for two consecutive years will be automatically assigned a "Focus" classification. Schools that fail Participation for three consecutive years will be assigned a "Priority" classification,

again, regardless of other school-level performance measures. A one-year anomaly in this area may be understandable; multiple years of missing Participation rate targets will be considered unacceptable.

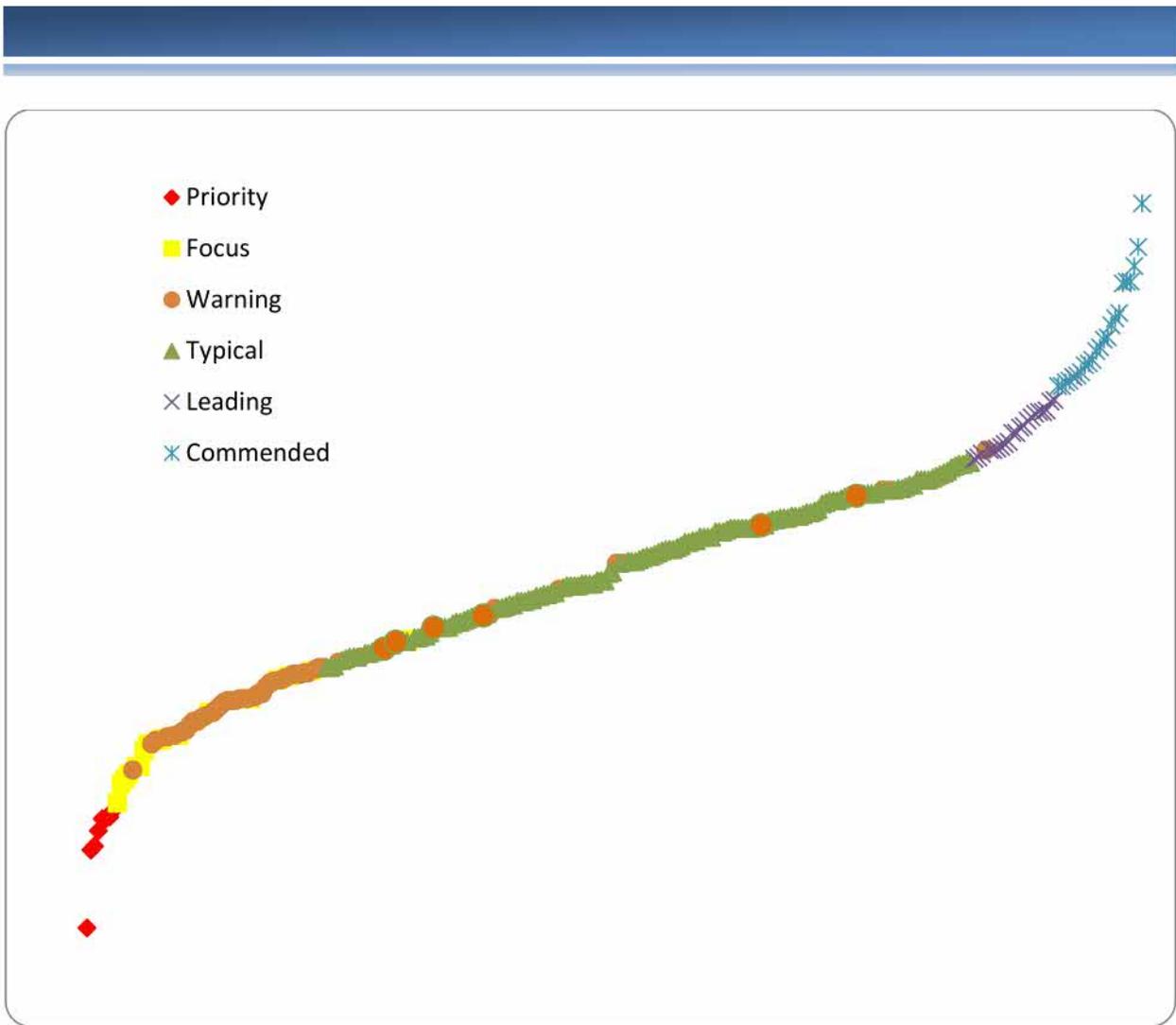
RIDE will identify and classify 45 schools as Warning Schools in the current year.

During the 2012, 2013, and 2014 academic years, RIDE identified a full set of warning schools based upon the above-described criteria. During the period covered under this waiver extension— the 2014-2015 school year, RIDE will suspend the practice of labeling warning schools. This suspension of warning labeling is the result of extensive consultation with practitioners and stakeholders. During this consultation, both formal and informal, there was agreement that it was both appropriate and reasonable to dedicate the 2014-2015 school year to a rigorous and transparent review of the emerging PARCC data, to develop a collective understanding of the results, and to use those results to resume labeling beyond the 2014-2015 school year.

The combined powers of the utilization of the CIS plus the additional criteria enable RIDE to accurately identify schools that have either *widespread* low levels of performance and growth and large achievement gaps or *isolated but serious* problems in the areas of overall achievement, low growth, or low graduation rates. The resultant distribution highlights the ability of RIDE’s proposed system to differentiate among the breadth of performance across all Rhode Island schools. The range is from 25 to 94.5. Further, the levels are designed to create ambitious yet attainable targets for schools.

Figure 1 provides compelling visual support for the accuracy and sensitivity of Rhode Island’s proposed system of measuring school performance. It is virtually impossible for a school that is underserving its students to escape notice. We are extremely confident that this comprehensive approach to measuring school performance will provide an accurate picture of student achievement from a number of different perspectives. Of course, knowing that a school is struggling, and where, is still a far cry from knowing exactly what needs to be addressed to remedy the situation.

**Figure 1: Rhode Island School Classification by CIS**



### Individualizing Supports and Interventions

The Rhode Island system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support creates incentives and support to close achievement gaps for all subgroups. An effective accountability system requires information from multiple sources to inform analysis of the many aspects of education systems. Internal accountability for continuous improvement requires an understanding of the complex and overlapping operations at work in schools and school systems. The Basic Education Program is explicit about LEA responsibilities in this regard: “Each LEA shall develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate an accountability system, using information from multiple sources, to inform analysis of the many aspects of the education system. Relevant data shall consist of a combination of contextual and demographic information, measures of student learning, curriculum and instruction strategies and practices, and perceptual or evaluative data.”

It is counterintuitive that we expect students to have an individualized learning plan, individualized educational program, personal and academic portfolios, transition plans, and personal literacy plans while we have not sufficiently helped schools and LEAs develop individualized plans based on *their* specific needs. Our recent experiences with

Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools (PLAs) have taught us that concentrated effort on diagnosis, though time-consuming, can have meaningful and lasting results. Even were diagnoses to be perfect, there needs to be a systematic way to monitor frequently and gauge when supports and interventions fail to meet anticipated objectives. NCLB provided little funding for this monitoring, but our Office of Transformation, recognizing this gap in capacity, has re-tooled its staffing to ensure that monitoring and evaluation are ongoing functions of RIDE.

RIDE proposes to build off of these lessons learned to put in place a transparent, predictable, and sustainable system of differentiated accountability, support and interventions, supports and rewards. The accountability system will:

1. Include the processes and written plans for a comprehensive assessment system and for systemic problem solving;
2. Specify policies, procedures, and strategies for public reporting that comply with state and federal reporting requirements and that ensure broadly accessible and timely dissemination of information;
3. Establish procedures by which an LEA can conduct a thorough self-study of the LEA functions and capacities for continuous improvement, using criteria that the Commissioner of Education establishes; and,
4. Include development of a plan that demonstrates how the LEA will use self-study findings to inform allocation of resources, strategic planning, and differentiated supports to schools.

The revised Basic Education Program (BEP) consists of a set of measurable expectations for the seven functions described above. Meta-analysis of national critiques of school and LEA improvement efforts revealed that four *capacities* must be present in order to achieve success in any of the functions. Unfortunately, there is significantly more research that documents failed improvement efforts than successful ones. In a review of more than two-dozen studies, RIDE analysts were able to pinpoint the failure in any instance as resulting from insufficient capacity in one of four critical areas, which we labeled the “four capacities”:

1. Leadership;
2. Content/Program;
3. Personnel Supports; and
4. Infrastructure.

In order to achieve results, each LEA “Function” (see matrix below) must be supported in all four capacity areas. We can then map and apply consistently across the state the performance measures for each capacity in each functional area. The summary below provides additional information about the 28 performance areas.

# LEA Functions



For the first time, Rhode Island has a system of measures that we can use to pinpoint gaps in performance by the adults in the education system, as well as gaps in the support structures designed to improve student performance. Tracking student performance can give us an accurate picture of how well a school or LEA is performing. It takes other sources of data to inform where and why the education system is not improving....

Each of the 28 “boxes” in the performance matrix represents a function and capacity that schools and LEAs must fulfill if they are to prepare all students for college, challenging careers, and life. Because each box in the matrix is measurable, each school and LEA can determine where they are struggling or excelling in a certain capacity or function. We developed our Surveyworks data, including student, parent, teacher, and administrator perception data, to be in alignment with the seven functions. We have mapped our Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA) to the functions as well. In short, RIDE is committed to opening the black box, and, in doing so, to differentiating the underlying reasons for school and LEA performance in unprecedented ways.

The performance matrix will be invaluable for schools because, for the first time, systems will be able to examine all of their data in relation to one another. Currently, one can make judgments regarding suspension rates and percentage of students who report they have been bullied. But one cannot necessarily place a value judgment on dollars tied to in-school suspension initiatives and bullying programs. With this matrix, schools can analyze results in conjunction with the resources attached to those outcomes. In this way, RIDE can systematically: a) help schools target limited funding in meaningful ways; b) compare their results with peer schools to determine whether they could reallocate resources based on best practice; and, c) study return-on-investment for programs at individual schools and initiatives statewide. Finally, the BEP is the tool that LEAs can leverage when negotiating their budgets with school boards and town

councils. It is clear to many districts already that the BEP performance measures are a way to protect school programs from massive budget cuts in a time when cities and towns are slashing budgets daily.

The performance matrix will give each school a score for each of the 28 boxes (which can then be aggregated up to an LEA matrix). For priority schools, RIDE will work with the schools and LEAs to examine the matrix and determine their greatest weaknesses. From a menu of moderate to invasive capacity interventions, the LEA will select those interventions that correspond to the weaknesses, as the matrix has determined. Although the LEA selects the option, RIDE must approve the interventions to ensure that the interventions that the LEA selects correspond with needs as reflected in the data. Ultimately, the measures inside each of the boxes are the outcomes the school seeks to improve in the short term in order to improve achievement outcomes for all students in the long term. It is imperative that the data in the matrix includes short-, medium-, and long-term evidence points so that schools can determine early and often whether they are moving in the right direction. Focus schools will follow the same process. The range of interventions available to focus schools would be expanded, as their needs may suggest less invasive interventions and supports.

### **English Learners and Students with Disabilities**

**The Rhode Island system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support includes interventions to improve the performance of English Learners and students with disabilities.**

All students with disabilities participate fully in the statewide assessments (sometimes with testing accommodations) or they are tested using the Alternate Assessment system if they meet the eligibility criteria. Less than 1 percent of all students are eligible to participate in the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment system. Thus, all students with disabilities are included in the state accountability system.

With a statewide student identifier system in place (2005), we can assign test results of students who have recently exited special education to this subgroup for purposes of disaggregation in determining AMO for that group. Students who receive section 504 services are not included in determining the students-with-disabilities disaggregations. The assignment of exited students to the special-needs disaggregated group is for two years. This concept is similar to the way English-Learner-exited students are handled in disaggregations. The introduction of the statewide student-identifier system ensures greater accuracy in our ability to account for all students.

Rhode Island mandates the assessment of all students including students who have limited English-language abilities. Rhode Island has adopted the definition of a Limited English Proficient student in Title IX of NCLB, Part A Definitions, Section 9101. Students who are learning English are assessed with the NECAP exams, with accommodations as needed, just like those who do not receive Limited English Proficient (LEP) services

(except that students who have been in the United States for less than one year are not assessed in reading). In addition, English Learners are assessed in English-language proficiency (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) at all grade levels - K through 12. Rhode Island developed English-language proficiency standards in partnership with WIDA. To maximize the alignment with WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards, Rhode Island adopted a new English-language proficiency assessment (ACCESS) in Spring 2006. Rhode Island has Title III AMAO targets for students on this exam. Students who receive LEP services, like all other students, take the NECAP assessments for accountability purposes. In addition to this, English Learners take the ACCESS English-language proficiency test.

### **Implementation Plan**

**Rhode Island has provided a plan that ensures the system will be implemented no later than the next school year (2012-13).**

The BEP, in concert with our Strategic Plan and our Race to the Top Scope of Work (SOW), neatly aligns our goals and expectations with the accountability principles outlined by CCSSO. Common Core standards together with the consortium PARCC assessments will ensure that performance goals are aligned with college and career readiness. Our redesigned accountability system will provide better data for RIDE to provide differentiated recognition and support. Multiple measures of student outcomes, including absolute performance, in addition to growth and gap reduction across all subgroups, will help our schools and LEAs target instructional improvements. Our revised comparison group ensures that we will have a clearer roadmap to support our students with the greatest challenges.

Improvements to our data systems, enhanced by Race to the Top and the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, will allow us to provide real-time data to our teachers and administrators and user-friendly information to parents, students, and policy-makers. We will make these same data available to researchers and others so that they can diagnose and evaluate programs and services. Our proposed differentiated recognition, accountability, and support structures will strengthen the capacity of schools and LEAs by targeting interventions, external support, training, extended learning opportunities, and professional development based on accurate, valid, and reliable data. These differentiated structures will help us keep our focus on our lowest-performing schools and on closing achievement gaps. Finally, these efforts combined will elevate our reform work to a new level by encouraging and supporting innovation, meaningful evaluation, and continuous improvement for all Rhode Island schools.

2.A.ii Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide the corresponding information, if any.
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**Option A**

- The SEA includes student achievement only on reading/language arts and mathematics assessments in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system and to identify reward, priority, and focus schools.

**Option B**

- If the SEA includes student achievement on assessments in addition to reading/language arts and mathematics in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system or to identify reward, priority, and focus schools, it must:
- a. provide the percentage of students in the “all students” group that performed at the proficient level on the State’s most recent administration of each assessment for all grades assessed; and
  - b. include an explanation of how the included assessments will be weighted in a manner that will result in holding schools accountable for ensuring all students achieve college- and career-ready standards.

**2.B Set Ambitious but Achievable Annual Measurable Objectives**

Select the method the SEA will use to set new ambitious but achievable annual measurable objectives (AMOs) in at least reading/language arts and mathematics for the State and all LEAs, schools, and subgroups that provide meaningful goals and are used to guide support and improvement efforts. If the SEA sets AMOs that differ by LEA, school, or subgroup, the AMOs for LEAs, schools, or subgroups that are further behind must require greater rates of annual progress.

**Option A**

- Set AMOs in annual equal increments toward a goal of reducing by half the percentage of students in the “all students” group and in each subgroup who are not proficient within six years. The SEA must use current proficiency rates

**Option B**

- Set AMOs that increase in annual equal increments and result in 100 percent of students achieving proficiency no later than the end of the 2019–2020 school year. The SEA must use the average statewide proficiency based on

**Option C**

- Use another method that is educationally sound and results in ambitious but achievable AMOs for all LEAs, schools, and subgroups.
- i. Provide the new AMOs and an explanation of



<p>based on assessments administered in the 2010–2011 school year as the starting point for setting its AMOs.</p> <p>i. Provide the new AMOs and an explanation of the method used to set these AMOs.</p>	<p>assessments administered in the 2010–2011 school year as the starting point for setting its AMOs.</p> <p>i. Provide the new AMOs and an explanation of the method used to set these AMOs.</p>	<p>the method used to set these AMOs.</p> <p>ii. Provide an educationally sound rationale for the pattern of academic progress reflected in the new AMOs in the text box below.</p> <p>iii. Provide a link to the State’s report card or attach a copy of the average statewide proficiency based on assessments administered in the 2010–2011 school year in reading/language arts and mathematics for the “all students” group and all subgroups. (Attachment 8)</p>
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## 2.C Reward Schools

2.C.i Describe the SEA’s methodology for identifying highest-performing and high-progress schools as reward schools . If the SEA’s methodology is not based on the definition of reward schools in *ESEA Flexibility* (but instead, e.g. based on school grades or ratings that take into account a number of factors), the SEA should also demonstrate that the list provided in Table 2 is consistent with the definition, per the Department’s “Demonstrating that an SEA’s Lists of Schools meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions” guidance.

~~RIDE will identify Reward (or “Commended”) Schools as a subset of higher performing schools classified as “Leading Schools.” Leading Schools will be schools with a Composite Index Score (CIS) between 70 and 100 unless they have the additional designation as a Commended School. Our Leading Schools cut across all grade levels and regions of the state.~~

Commended Schools in the Rhode Island System have the highest total CIS in the state, do not have any significant subgroup gaps, and have met the 95-percent targets for participation rates. Commended Schools include the top 5 percent of the Title I schools in the state. Their CIS ranges from 77.5 to 91.5 points based on the 2013-14 achievement data; once we receive 2015 PARCC assessment results, RIDE will re-

examine the CIS scores schools need to attain to earn Commended status.

The Commended Schools demonstrate a range of strong performance metrics by either demonstrating the highest overall performance without having significant achievement gaps OR by having the strongest performance or graduation gains without having any significant achievement gaps. In addition, any Commended School that is a high school must have among the highest graduation rates in the state.

Commended Schools will be identified because of their combination of strong metrics in three critical areas: overall achievement, closing gaps, or strong growth. By utilizing rank-ordered CIS ratings to identify Commended schools, Rhode Island is able to identify these schools while paying particular attention to the three aforementioned metrics. Ten (10) of the 30 2014 Commended Schools received the maximum 30 points in closing subgroup gaps, indicating that they have either closed the achievement gap or have amongst the smallest achievement gaps in Rhode Island.

Six (6) of the 30 2014 Commended Schools received 27 points or more in the absolute proficiency, making them amongst the highest achieving in Rhode Island. Sixteen (16) of the 30 2014 Commended schools have demonstrated growth at the elementary or middle level or graduation rates that earned points of 20 or higher. Taken as a group, Commended Schools serve as proof points that schools of all levels, sizes, and demographics can achieve at the highest levels while at the same time closing the achievement gap. Leading and Commended Schools account for approximately 11 percent of our schools statewide.

RIDE has recognized that under the current accountability system, in rare instances some subgroups could experience large gaps in proficiency rates. This is an area RIDE will improve when it proposes changes to its accountability system subsequent to the receipt and analysis of 2014-15 PARCC test results.

2.C.ii Provide the SEA's list of reward schools in Table 2.

The 2014 Rhode Island Commended Schools are:

- Anna M. McCabe School (Smithfield)
- Archie R. Cole Middle School (East Greenwich)
- Barrington High School
- BEACON Charter High School the Arts
- Blackstone Academy Charter School
- Chariho High School
- Charlestown Elementary School (Chariho)
- Classical High School (Providence)
- East Greenwich High School
- Exeter-West Greenwich Senior High School

Fort Barton School (Tiverton)  
Francis J. Varieur Elementary School (Pawtucket)  
Glen Hills School (Cranston)  
Hope Elementary School (Scituate)  
Jacqueline M. Walsh School for the Performing and Visual Arts (Pawtucket)  
The Learning Community charter public school  
Matunuck Elementary School (South Kingstown)  
Middletown High School  
Mt. Hope High School (Bristol Warren)  
Narragansett High School  
North Providence High School  
North Smithfield High School  
Ponaganset High School (Foster-Glocester)  
Portsmouth High School  
Rockwell School (Bristol Warren)  
Scituate High School  
Smithfield Senior High School  
Stone Hill School (Cranston)  
Westerly High School  
Wickford Middle School

2.C.iii Describe how the SEA will publicly recognize and, if possible, reward highest-performing and high-progress schools.

On December 11, 2014, Governor Lincoln D. Chafee, the R.I. Board of Education, and RIDE held a ceremony in the State Room of the Rhode Island State House to recognize and honor the Rhode Island 2014 Commended Schools. All media were invited to this event, as well as representatives from all Commended Schools and the legislators from the communities whose schools were to receive recognition. Each Commended School received a signed, framed certificate of commendation for display. Speakers at the program included Governor Chafee, Board Chair Eva-Marie Mancuso, the Chair of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, the Chair of the Senate Education Committee, and Commissioner Gist. Rhode Island will continue to publicly recognize Commended Schools through an annual ceremony of this nature.

## 2.D Priority Schools

2.D.i Describe the SEA's methodology for identifying a number of lowest-performing schools equal to at least five percent of the State's Title I schools as priority schools. If the SEA's methodology is not based on the definition of priority schools in *ESEA Flexibility* (but instead, e.g. based on school grades or ratings that take into account a number of factors), the SEA should also

demonstrate that the list provided in Table 2 is consistent with the definition, per the Department's "Demonstrating that an SEA's Lists of Schools meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions" guidance.

The system that Rhode Island developed for our initial ESEA Flexibility waiver application allowed the state to utilize more sensitive indicators than ever before to identify schools that are struggling to improve student outcomes. We will continue to use the Composite Index Score (CIS) as the primary means of identifying the state's lowest-performing schools. Please see section 2A for detailed information about the measures and cut scores associated with the CIS under our prior waiver extension. These cut scores will be reviewed, and either confirmed or revised using PARCC data when available.

At this time, Rhode Island has twelve schools that are identified as our Tier I persistently lowest achieving schools and thirteen schools that are considered to be "served" under the final requirements of School Improvement 1003(g). These schools were identified in a methodology that considered many of the metrics we included in our Priority Schools identification. All PLA Tier I and II schools that are currently being "served" under 1003(g) were classified as Priority schools under our approved 2012 ESEA Flexibility waiver.

In 2012, we identified four additional Priority Schools, which were those with the lowest Composite Index Score (CIS) that year. In 2013, three additional schools were classified as Priority Schools. In all cases, these schools were initially classified in 2012 as Focus Schools and fell to Priority status the subsequent year. In 2014, we identified one additional Priority School based on the schools CIS. We also classified three of our Priority Schools as Priority- Rising, indicating that their improvement trajectories are on track to exit in the coming years.

In total, these twenty-one Priority Schools exceed the number equal to 5% of our Title I schools and are our lowest performing schools as reflected by both the multiple measures that inform the CIS, as well as the lowest performing schools as measured by absolute proficiency in reading and mathematics. At the time of identification, these schools:

- Demonstrated extraordinarily low absolute proficiency rates in reading, (31%-47% proficient) and mathematics (2%-31% proficient);
- Demonstrated the largest gaps in student achievement in reading and mathematics, ranging from 37 to 75 percentage point gaps;
- Showed low rates of academic growth compared to schools with students of similar academic histories or low graduation rates; and,
- Missed most of their Annual Measurable Objectives by large margins.

All these circumstances contributed to their composite index scores ranging from 25 to 36.33. Today, among all Priority Schools, we see composite index scores ranging from 29.5-61.3.

All schools currently classified as Priority will remain Priority under this waiver renewal unless they have met exit criteria. Priority schools meeting the exit criteria will be re-classified according to their CIS score. Priority Schools that have shown significant progress and are eligible to meet exit criteria based on the following year’s test results will receive the additional indicator of Rising. See page 102 for detailed information on exit criteria.

As approved in our ESEA waiver extension request, RIDE will not classify new Priority Schools on the basis of the 2014-15 administration of PARCC. When results of the 2015-16 state testing year are available and the Composite Index Score is calculated based on the methodology described in section 2A, RIDE will identify any additional Priority Schools as those with the lowest CIS statewide. The Commissioner will have discretion to classify a school as Priority based on a number of factors, including resource availability and other information collected beyond the CIS. Priority Schools will account for no fewer than 5% of all Title I schools in Rhode Island.

2.D.ii Provide the SEA’s list of priority schools in Table 2.

An updated list is provided below reflecting the addition of one Priority School newly-identified in 2014. RIDE will provide a further revised list to USED in January 2016 that reflects any updates resulting from schools exiting as a result of the outcomes of the 2014-15 administration of PARCC.

Priority Schools	District	Title 1	Cohort	Model	
Cornel Young & Charlotte Woods	Providence	SWP	1	Transformation	
Central Falls High School	Central Falls	SWP	1	Transformation	Rising
W. B. Cooley & Acad International	Providence	SWP	1	Transformation	
Lillian Feinstein Elementary	Providence	SWP	1	Transformation	
Roger Williams Middle	Providence	SWP	1	Transformation	

Charles E. Shea High	Pawtucket	SWP	2	Transformation	
William E. Tolman High	Pawtucket	SWP	2	Transformation	Rising
Carl G. Lauro Elementary	Providence	SWP	2	Restart	
Dr. Jorge Alvarez High	Providence	SWP	2	Restart	
Gilbert Stuart Middle	Providence	SWP	2	Restart	
Mount Pleasant High	Providence	SWP	2	Transformation	
Pleasant View Elementary	Providence	SWP	2	Transformation	Rising
RI School for the Deaf	Rhode Island	SWP	2	Transformation	
Agnes B. Hennessey Elementary	East Providence	SWP	3	Flex	
Dr. M. H. Sullivan Elementary	Newport	SWP	3	Consolidated	
Gov. Christopher DelSesto Middle	Providence	SWP	3	Flex	
Mary E. Fogarty Elementary	Providence	SWP	3	Flex	
Robert L. Bailey IV Elementary	Providence	SWP	3	Flex	
Central High	Providence	SWP	3	Flex	
Dr. Earl F. Calcutt Middle	Central Falls	SWP	3	Flex	
Hope High	Providence	SWP	3	Flex	
Orlo Avenue Elementary	East Providence	SWP	5	Flex	

2.D.iii Describe the meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles that an LEA with priority schools will implement.

### Overall Design Goals of the Intervention System

RIDE has developed an intervention plan for all LEAs with Priority Schools that is aligned to the seven federal turnaround principles and includes specific and concrete strategies to support the needs of English Learners and students with disabilities. This approach is reflective of Rhode Island’s experiences in large-scale reform over the past ten years.

To that end, the intervention system is built on a set of design principles. First, the system is *diagnostic*. It requires that LEAs review and employ a rich set of qualitative



and quantitative data to select and implement interventions that are responsive to the strengths and weaknesses of each identified school. The SEA issues commissioner approval of selected intervention approach and strategies based upon their demonstrable connection to the strengths and weaknesses of each identified school.

Second, the system is *targeted*. It provides LEAs and schools with focused intervention options and strategies that address the unique needs of identified schools and the student populations within each school. The SEA works with LEAs to ensure that the intervention approach and strategies are feasible, ambitious, scalable, and appropriate for that particular school and district.

Third, it is *empirically based*. LEAs select from a managed list of bold and empirically-proven interventions derived from a meta-analysis of school turnaround research over the last five years.

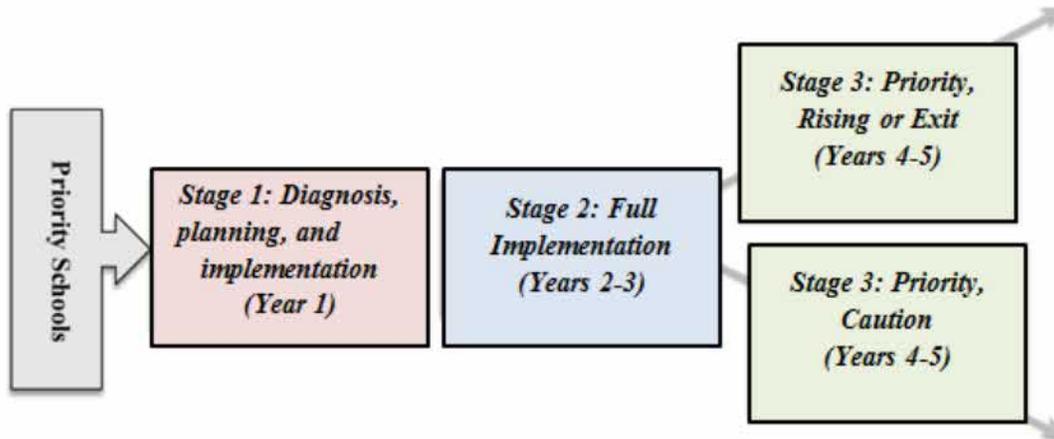
The system will be a catalyst for bold reform, ensuring that all identified schools construct a plan for rapid and bold reform that addresses systemic weaknesses, including comprehensive changes to systems of curriculum, instruction and assessment; governance; and in many cases, flexibility within the collective bargaining agreement. Finally, the intervention system will be outcomes-driven. In the early phases of intervention, it will establish clear and demanding expectations for reform plans, and parameters on the conditions and criteria that lead to success. This will be followed by regular and intensive progress monitoring by both the SEA and LEA through a carefully chosen and mutually-understood set of leading and student outcomes measures

RIDE's proposed intervention system further reflects the policy priorities that underpin the design of the accountability system, with a relentless focus on identifying and intervening in schools that demonstrate large achievement gaps between the performance of the school's most academically struggling students and its overall population, low levels of absolute achievement, low graduation rates, or high percentages of students with low growth.

### **Priority Schools: A Three-Stage Intervention System**

Priority School reform efforts will be organized into three distinct stages, enabling both the LEA and SEA to effectively target resources and monitor progress in a manner appropriate to the stage. An overview of these stages can be seen in Figure 1; the requirements and goals of each stage are described in the remainder of this section.

**Figure 2: Three Stages of Intervention System for Priority Schools**



**Stage One: Diagnosis, Intervention Planning, and Implementation (10 months from identification – School Year 1)**

Stage One provides LEAs and identified schools six months to make critical decisions about their intervention approach, develop a comprehensive plan, and establish performance targets that will be used throughout their period of identification. LEAs and schools then undertake implementation actions for the remainder of the school year. During this phase, there are several key tasks. RIDE will administer the diagnostic screen and conduct an SEA/LEA data meeting to discuss results. The LEA will select an intervention approach for RIDE approval. The LEA will develop a school reform and resourcing plan that includes establishing performance targets. RIDE will review and approve the school reform and resourcing plan. Finally, the LEA and school will conduct implementation of the plan.

Table 6 summarizes the key function of the tasks associated with *Stage One: Diagnosis and Intervention Planning* and further detail is presented below.

<b>Table 6: Stage One Tasks and Functions, by Agency</b>				
<b>Task</b>	<b>Intended Function</b>	<b>SEA</b>	<b>LEA</b>	<b>School</b>
<b>Task 1: Diagnostic Screen &amp; Data Meeting</b>	Analyze and review performance, culture, climate and student outcome data (including full disaggregation of student outcome data at subpopulation levels)	☑	☑	☑

	Document the strengths/weaknesses of priority school(s) and LEA(s) serving them	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Establish clear expectations for LEA decision-making and required connection to school performance data	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Task 2: Selection of intervention Approach</b>	LEA selection of intervention approach and associated intervention strategies		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	LEA submission of intervention approach selection, along with relevant data and rationale, to Commissioner for approval		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Task 3: Intervention Approach approval</b>	Commissioner review and approval of LEA approach, including a review to ensure that all plans meet the seven federal turnaround principles	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Hold LEAs accountable for demonstrating the connection between results of diagnostic screen and intervention approach selection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Task 4: Development of LEA school reform and resourcing plan</b>	LEA development of school reform plan		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Develop strategies for resourcing reform plan, including the use of SES and PD reserves, transferability, and other flexibility associated with waiver	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Establish (at the LEA and school level) performance targets including leading and outcome measures for each major intervention strategy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Task 5: School reform and resourcing plan approval</b>	RIDE approval of LEA school reform plan including leading and outcome measures for each major intervention strategy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Hold LEAs accountable for demonstrating connection between results of diagnostic screen, intervention approach, and the details of the school reform plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	RIDE approval of resourcing plan, including LEA utilization of reinvestment of SES and PD reserves, transferability, and other flexibility associated with waiver	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Task 6: Implementation</b>	LEA and school implement all major aspects of the school reform plan and prepare for substantial changes in the following school year.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### ***The Diagnostic Screen and Data Meeting***

After waiver approval, RIDE developed and administered a comprehensive diagnostic screen for each Priority School. This diagnostic screen demonstrated RIDE's commitment to a comprehensive and granular disaggregation and vigorous

interrogation of school level data with a focus on identifying root causes of underperformance. This diagnostic tool is improved through this proposal through an expansion to include other indicators while continuing to focus on a highly detailed review of disaggregated sub-population performance. Measures do or will include:

- (1) Detailed, disaggregated data on the student performance metrics that comprise the school's Composite Index Score and resulted in identification, including:
  - a. Number at each PARCC performance level in Mathematics and English Language Arts/Literacy at each grade level and their membership in subpopulations;
  - b. Characteristics of the group of students low growth in each subject area, including grade level and membership in subgroups;
  - c. Characteristics of the subgroups of students as indicated in 2.A, including grade level and membership in subgroups;
  - d. Characteristics of the group of students graduating; and,
- (2) School climate, including suspension and referral data.
- (3) Student attendance and chronic absenteeism data.
- (4) English Learner data including:
  - a. Student achievement and growth rates on the ACCESS test for ELs, Rhode Island's English language proficiency assessment;
  - b. Disproportionate identification of English Learners as students with disabilities; and,
  - c. Data collected through on-site monitoring reports for schools and districts.
- (5) Achievement and outcome data for students with disabilities, including:
  - a. Student transition patterns;
  - b. Progress of students with IEPs;
  - c. Disproportionate identification of students for IEPs;
  - d. Disproportionate suspension of students with IEPs; and,
  - e. Data collected through on-site monitoring reports for schools and districts.

The revised diagnostic screen will provide LEAs with a clear normative and criterion-based view of their priority school or schools' performance and organizational strengths and weaknesses. This view into the school and district serves two important functions.

First, it harnesses RIDE’s capacity to support LEAs by delivering a high-quality, comprehensive, and accurate needs analysis. With a RIDE-managed diagnostic screen, all Priority Schools receive diagnostic data that (1) includes measures beyond the reach and/or of capacity of LEAs, (2) assures that all student subpopulation performance will be disaggregated down to the most granular form possible, (3) connects the data collected through federal programs to LEA decisions about intervention systems and strategies.

Second, by leading the identification process with a state-administered diagnostic screen, the state holds LEAs accountable for all intervention decisions that follow. Rather than naming schools and simultaneously collecting an improvement plan *along with* evidence of LEA completion of a needs assessment, this system requires shared acknowledgement of the results of the screening process *before* LEAs begin selecting intervention strategies. This sequence, coupled with required Commissioner-level approval of Priority School intervention plans, enables RIDE to hold LEAs highly accountable to the results of the diagnostic screen.

RIDE will design and administer the diagnostic screen utilizing current data collections. However, LEAs have access to school-level data that are not part of RIDE’s current data collection system, yet still contribute toward a rich picture of overall system performance. To that end, LEAs will be encouraged to augment the results of the diagnostic screen with additional data that will support valid inferences and root cause analysis. For all Priority Schools, the results of the RIDE-administered screen, coupled with LEA additions, will be presented and discussed at an initial “SEA/LEA data meeting.” This meeting, along with the data and reports that inform the discussion, will serve as the foundation for the next task in Stage One.

### ***LEA Selection of an Intervention Approach***

After the results of the diagnostic screen are shared, the LEAs have 45 calendar days to select their intervention approach. RIDE’s proposed intervention approach reflects a combination of the most powerful elements of the 1003(g) requirements and the seven federal turnaround principles. Although the four 1003(g) intervention models brought problematic rigidity, they were successful in requiring LEAs to engage in hard conversations with stakeholders, scrutinize systems and practices, review investment decisions, and initiate bold change with urgency.

RIDE’s intervention system attempts to maintain this sense of productive urgency and commitment to bold reform while at the same time, introducing greater LEA opportunity to construct a clear connection between the *reasons* for school underperformance and the selected intervention strategies. LEAs are required to select one of three intervention approaches for each Priority School.

### **Description of the Three Approaches**

### ***Closure:***

School closure occurs when an LEA closes the identified school and enrolls the students who attended that school in other public schools within the state that are higher achieving. These other schools should be within a reasonable proximity to the closed school and may include, but are not limited to, charter schools or new schools for which achievement data are not yet available. This approach remains consistent with the requirements set forth under School Improvement 1003(g).

Since the implementation of this waiver, one school was closed through consolidation within its district. The results of the newly consolidated school are under close observation through the Rhode Island accountability system.

### ***Restart:***

A restart approach is one in which an LEA converts a school or closes it and reopens a new school as:

- (1) a regional collaborative organized pursuant to RIGL Chapter 16-3.1;
- (2) a charter school operator or a charter management organization or similarly independent entity that materially changes school operations;
- (3) an education management organization that has been selected through a rigorous review process; or,
- (4) the creation of a joint Labor/Management Compact detailing reciprocal obligations that create a new management structure with shared decision-making designed to fully address the needs of each student in the school and which fully complies with all other applicable requirements.

A restart school must enroll, within the grades it serves, any former student who wishes to attend the school.

Approval of a restart requires the Commissioner to agree that the entity chosen by the LEA, through a process that adheres to local and state procurement requirements, is sufficiently vetted to reasonably ensure that the performance of the school under its management will significantly outperform the past performance of the school on measures to be determined by the Commissioner of Education.

Rhode Island's proposed restart approach is consistent with the requirements set forth under School Improvement 1003(g). Furthermore, schools choosing the restart approach will be required to construct a school reform plan that covers all seven federal turnaround principles, a condition of Commissioner approval.

### ***Flex Approach:***



The Flex Approach requires districts to select a comprehensive package of intervention strategies from a RIDE-developed and managed list of 28 empirically proven intervention strategies. The LEA selection of the strategies must be: (1) coherent, (2) comprehensive, (3) responsive to the results of the diagnostic screen, and (4) ambitious but achievable.

The Flex Approach was designed to reflect the basic principles of response to intervention (RTI) by classifying 28 intervention strategies into three tiers based upon their intensity and scope. The Flex Approach will require LEAs and Priority Schools to select and implement no fewer than nine intervention strategies of their choice. The nine strategies include three (3) Tier I, or *core school improvement strategies*; two (2) Tier II, or *intervention II strategies* that provide important supplements to a comprehensive reform plan; and four (4) Tier III, or *intervention III strategies*.

Core improvement strategies are required of all Rhode Island schools. They include full implementation of the Common Core State Standards, participation in Rhode Island's educator and administrator evaluation system, and utilization of a comprehensive data system used to inform daily instruction and school planning. RIDE maintains a strong commitment to ensuring high quality implementation of these strategies for all schools, and in particular for those identified through our accountability system.

Through these core school improvement strategies, all Priority Schools address five of the seven turnaround principles.

LEAs and Priority Schools will select the remainder of their reform strategies from

RIDE's Flex Menu of interventions. This menu was developed to ensure that the strategies would be

- Aligned to the seven federal turnaround principles;
- Empirically-proven, and responsive to the needs of both students and schools;
- Feasible and scalable within systems of radically difference sizes and needs;
- Focused on the needs of students with disabilities and English Learners;
- Grouped in a manner that demands difficult decisions but high-yield opportunities for affected LEAs.

Intervention III strategies are classified as intensive reform strategies. They are characterized by revision to the terms of the collective bargaining agreement or past practice; comprehensive changes to the leadership and/or governance structure of the school; and/or, comprehensive changes to the system of curriculum, instructional practices, and assessment.



Intervention II strategies are empirically proven approaches to school turnaround and/or improvement that address discrete, identified needs of schools, staff, or students. Intervention II strategies vary in intensity and scope. They may require additional resourcing to support implementation; supplement – rather than comprehensively redesign – a system of curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, student support, leadership, or family and community engagement; and/or address a unique and discrete identified need within the school.

From three years of implementation, we have learned that LEAs and Priority School leaders often have a clear vision of an essential strategy for addressing the reasons for the school's low performance. While these strategies often fall within the bounds of one of the 28 interventions on the Flex Menu, there are times that they pull together portions of multiple interventions or are not truly reflected there at all. For this reason, we are providing the opportunity for LEAs and Priority schools to propose a locally-created Intervention Strategy as one of the six total required under the Flex Approach. Locally-created strategies will be reviewed using the same criteria as Flex Menu strategies. In addition, their alignment to the Seven Turnaround Principles and the scope of their expected impact will be considered. A locally-created Intervention Strategy may only qualify as an Intervention III Strategy if it will impact the whole school and addresses one of the four capacity areas (Leadership, Support, Infrastructure, and Content) not already addressed by the other selections.

The list of strategies and requirements for Priority Schools are described in detail in Table 7 on the following page.

**Table 7: Flex Approach Strategy Options for Priority Schools**

<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Support</i>	<i>Infrastructure</i>	<i>Content</i>
<b>Intervention III Strategies: Priority schools select one from each area</b>			
L-III.1: Removal of building principal and replacement with a leader with experience and/or training in turnaround environments	S-III.1: Require at least 30 hours of focused professional development with a focus on instructional strategies to support students with disabilities and English Learners	I-III.1: Implement staff recommitment process to substantially different working conditions, including definition of school hours, job assignment, and job duties	C-III.1: Implement comprehensive improvement of instructional approaches for struggling students including focused professional development and a system for student progress monitoring
L-III.2: Restructure building leadership team to dramatically increase time available for instructional leadership	S-III.2: Hire building-level instructional specialists to support educators to serve English Learners, students with disabilities, and other students at risk for failure	I-III.2: Dramatically increase common planning time and implement a system for its effective utilization, both horizontally and vertically	C-III.2: Review student course-taking patterns and make substantial changes to school schedule and student placement to ensure access to rigorous academic core
L-III.3: Provide building administrators the authority and autonomy to hire, manage teacher placement, budget, and school schedule	S-III.3: Implement a system of peer support and assistance to support the needs of educators	I-III.3: Review and change student enrollment and placement processes to increase family engagement & improve student outcomes	C-III.3: Implement a culturally competent support system to improve safety, reduce suspensions, increase attendance, and support all students
<b>Intervention II Strategies: Priority Schools select two strategies from areas of their choice</b>			
L-II.1: Evaluate the principal and connect him or her with a mentor or appropriate resources to ensure ability to lead the school reform work	S-II.1: Implement a comprehensive drop-out prevention and reentry program	I-II.1: Complete an external audit of the use of school funds to guide staffing decisions and implement findings	C-II.1: Increase advanced coursework opportunities for students
L-II.2: Evaluate, assess, and diagnose the performance of the existing school leadership team and take appropriate job action	S-II.2: Implement a comprehensive ramp-up program for students at-risk of failure or subpopulations with the largest achievement gaps	I-II.2: Reallocate resources to increase support for direct instruction of students at risk for failure	C-II.2: Assign additional instructional coaches or other core content focused, job-embedded support for teachers
L-II.3: Contract with a vendor or partner with a track record of success to support the leadership team in school turnaround	S-II.3: Implement culturally competent family and community engagement program focused on instruction and academic performance	I-II.3: Develop and implement support systems for student transition into kindergarten and/or across break grades	C-II.3: Offer virtual education options for both at-risk and advanced students
L-II.4: Identify one leader to routinely monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the core curriculum/instruction and services to traditionally underserved students	S-II.4: Hire full time parent/community engagement specialist to implement family and community engagement that is systemic, sustained, and integrated with school improvement	I-II.4: Establish a comprehensive system to support struggling teachers with content and pedagogy, especially teachers of students with disabilities and English Learners	C-II.4: Implement an instructional monitoring system to ensure that the curriculum is being fully implemented and traditionally underserved students have access to academic core
L-II.5: Assign family/community outreach to member of leadership team and hold him/her accountable	S-II.5: Establish flexible or expanded learning opportunities with a focus on students at risk for failure	I-II.5: Implement a culturally competent tiered system of support focused on student psycho-social health	C-II.5: Increase student access to career, technical, or credentialing programs

## Intervention System Alignment to Seven Federal Turnaround Principles

RIDE’s intervention system is aligned to and fully covers the seven federal turnaround principles. Schools selecting the restart approach will be required to submit a school reform plan that covers the seven turnaround principles and will be required to implement the three core school improvement strategies described above. Schools selecting the Flex Approach will be selecting from a list of intervention strategies that have already been aligned to the seven turnaround principles. A crosswalk of the 28 intervention strategies of the Flex Approach with the seven turnaround principles is provided in Table 8. below.

<b>Table 8: Crosswalk of Flex Approach Strategies and Seven Turnaround Principles</b>								
<i>Federal Turnaround Principle</i>	<i>Strategy</i>							
<b>Principle 1:</b> Leadership	L-III.1	L-III.2	L-III.3	L-II.1	L-II.2	L-II.3	L-II.4	L-II.5
<b>Principle 2:</b> Effective teachers	S-III.1	S-III.2	S-III.3	C-II.2	I-II.4	Core 2		
<b>Principle 3:</b> Redesigning school day, week, year	I-III.1	I-III.2	C-III.2	S-II.5	I-II.3	C-II.3		
<b>Principle 4:</b> Instructional program	C-III.1	C-III.2	C-II.5	C-II.4	C-II.3	C-II.1	Core 1 & 3	
<b>Principle 5:</b> Using data	S-III.3	I-III.3	S-III.2	I-III.2	I-II.1	C-II.4	Core 3	
<b>Principle 6:</b> School climate	I-III.3	C-III.3	S-II.5	S-II.1	S-II.2	I-II.5	Core 3	
<b>Principle 7:</b> Family and community engagement	S-II.3	S-II.4	L-II.5					

### ***Commissioner Approval of the LEA Selection of a School Intervention Approach***

After selecting a school intervention approach, the LEA must submit its selection and its rationale to the Commissioner for review and approval. The authority of the Commissioner to approve or reject LEA approach selection is currently part of RIDE’s system for intervening in persistently lowest-achieving schools and codified in both state statute and regulation.

In the event that an LEA selects the Flex Approach, the LEA must submit the package of six selected intervention strategies– along with three core improvement strategies- for each Priority School. The Commissioner has thirty business days to review the selection and approve or reject the approach selection. It is during this period that LEAs are held rigorously accountable to the results of the diagnostic screening process and coverage of all seven turnaround principles. Intervention approach selections that fail to boldly and clearly address the student and system needs jointly identified through the diagnostic screening process and data meeting are not approvable.

### ***LEA Development of a School Reform Plan***

After Commissioner approval of the LEA intervention approach, LEAs are provided another 45 calendar days to develop a comprehensive, three-year school reform plan that includes the following elements:

- A detailed plan for the implementation of their selected approach that fully and comprehensively addresses all seven turnaround principles and clearly outlines LEA responsibilities and school responsibilities;
- A resourcing plan for their selected approach, including detailed information about the sustainable, scalable investment of newly available funding and fund flexibility afforded through the waiver;
- Detailed timelines and milestones for year 1 for both LEA and school responsibilities; and,
- Leading indicators and student outcomes measures for each major element of the school reform plan, including both LEA and school level indicators. For LEAs selecting the Flex Approach, leading indicators and student outcome targets will be required for each of the selected intervention strategies.

### **Stage 2: Implementation and Progress Monitoring (Years 2-3)**

Stage two is characterized by regular and intensive progress monitoring as well as communication and collaboration. This stage includes three tasks.

Table 9 summarizes the key functions of each of the tasks associated with *Stage Two: Implementation and Progress Monitoring* and further detail is presented below.

<b>Table 9: Stage Two Tasks and Functions, by Agency</b>				
<b>Task</b>	<b>Intended Function</b>	<b>SEA</b>	<b>LEA</b>	<b>School</b>
<b>Task 1: Implementation of the Intervention Approach</b>	Implementation of strategies included in approved school reform plan		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Establishment of performance monitoring system to enable regular review	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Task 2: Quarterly review of indicators &amp; implementation status</b>	Design and execution of quarterly performance review meetings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	LEA presentation of progress against targets, leading indicators, and strategy implementation status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	RIDE overall assessment of LEA implementation for all priority schools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Set and maintain clear expectations for system performance and consequences for success and failure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Task 3: Regular Communication and Collaboration</b>	Hold regular meetings with LEA leadership teams supporting priority schools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Minimize administrative burden and expedite services for all LEAs serving priority schools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Collaborative problem-solving to eliminate administrative, bureaucratic, or regulatory barriers to implementation of School Reform Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

### ***Implementation of the Intervention Approach***

Prior to the waiver, LEAs that were previously required to reserve up to equivalent of 20% of their Title I award for supplemental educational services and 10% for professional development under ESEA section 1116 will be provided the flexibility to reinvest the equivalent of the reserve. This was done in close collaboration with RIDE staff and adheres to the following broad parameters:

- Focused on clearly defined school and district improvement strategies that are explicitly connected to the improvement plans for Priority and Focus Schools;
- Responsive to the needs of traditionally underserved populations, including English learners and students with disabilities (when applicable); and
- Focused upon direct services to students and classroom teachers.

Schools selecting the Restart or Flex Approach are required to establish a rich and detailed set of performance targets that correspond to each major element of their approach. These will serve as the foundation for the quarterly progress monitoring that will be maintained throughout Stage Two.

### ***Quarterly Review of Leading Indicators and Implementation Status***

The majority of SEA resources will be dedicated to intensive quarterly progress monitoring of implementation and tracking the leading indicators included in each school reform plan. This progress monitoring will take the form of quarterly data meetings

between the SEA, LEA, and schools. During these quarterly data meetings, LEAs are expected to present their progress against the performance targets established in the school reform plan.

Rhode Island recognizes that interventions are most effective when scaffolded and sequenced appropriately. During the first year of full implementation (Stage 1), Priority Schools and their LEAs are held accountable for implementation targets, such as the establishment of systems, delivery of professional development, and investment of resources, as well as leading indicators such as student attendance rates, referral and suspension rates, and parent/family participation and engagement rates.

During Stage 2 (Years 2 and 3), all Priority Schools will be fully implementing all elements of their intervention model. Consequently, the nature of the performance targets for each school will also shift to include not only implementation targets and leading indicators, but also student outcome data such as state assessment results and graduation rates.

Subsequent to the PARCC transition, the data for all levels for a given school year will be assessed at the conclusion of the school year.

### **Stage 3: Rising Priority Through Exit and Priority, Caution (Years 3-5)**

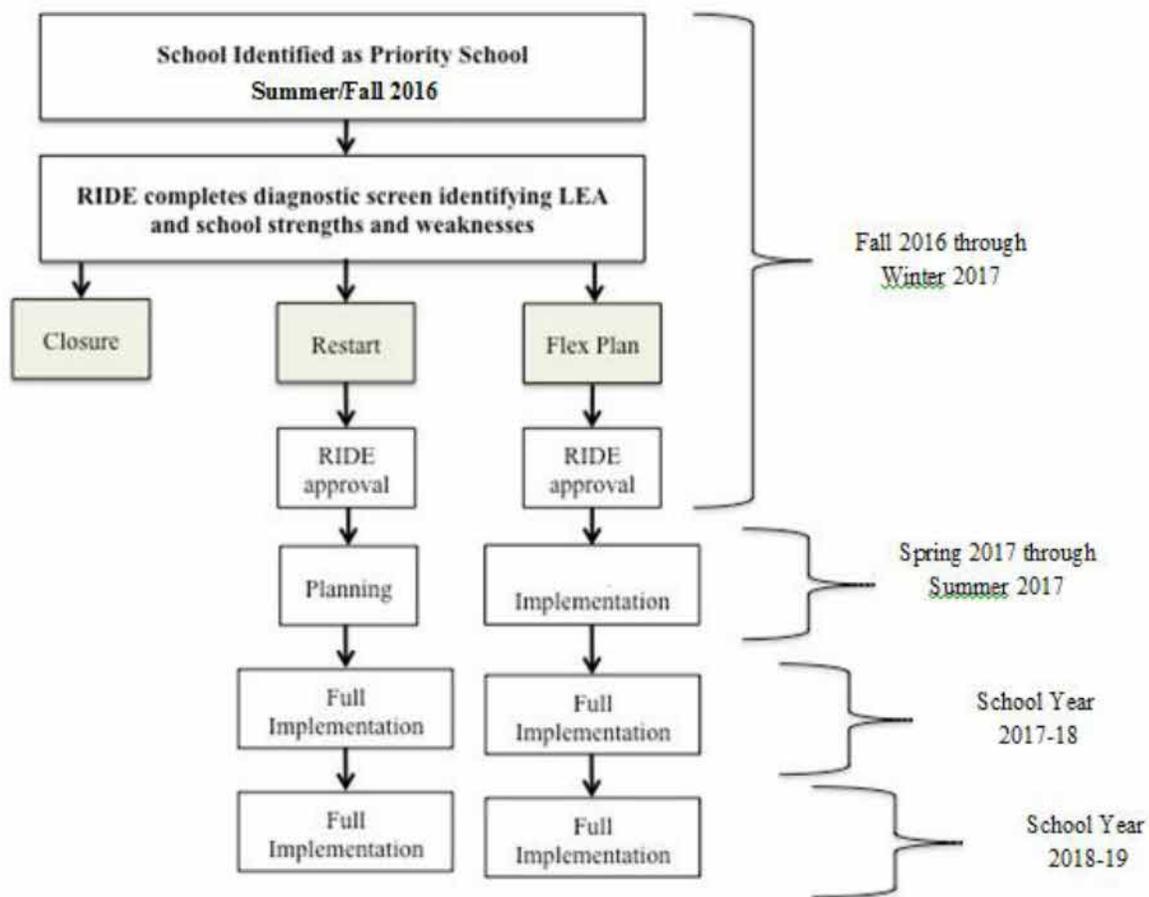
During the third stage of the intervention system, all Priority Schools will be in their third or fourth year of full implementation of their school intervention approach. For more information about stage three, please see section 2(d)iv.

2.D.iv Provide the timeline the SEA will use to ensure that its LEAs that have one or more priority schools implement meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles in each priority school no later than the 2014–2015 school year and provide a justification for the SEA’s choice of timeline.

During the 2012 and 2013 academic years, RIDE identified a full set of Priority Schools. During the period covered under our approved waiver extension – the 2014-15 school year -- RIDE suspended the practice of identifying new Priority Schools. This suspension is the result of extensive consultation with practitioners and stakeholders. During this consultation, there was agreement that it was both appropriate and reasonable to dedicate the 2014-15 school year to a rigorous and transparent review of the emerging PARCC data, to develop a collective understanding of the results, and to use those results to resume labeling beyond the 2014-15 school year. Schools already identified as Priority Schools that have not successfully exited will remain so-classified. Schools eligible for exit based upon performance will retain their ability to do so. Under this waiver renewal, RIDE will once again identify new Priority Schools based on the results of the spring 2016 PARCC exams.

The proposed intervention system ensures that all newly-identified Priority Schools will be in full implementation – actively implementing the sequence of scaffolded elements of their approved intervention plan – over the course of the entire 2016-17 school year.

**Figure 3: Implementation Timeline for Priority Schools Identified Under the Waiver Renewal**



**Stage One: Diagnosis, Intervention, and Implementation Timeline (Year 1)**

Late Summer/Early Fall Year One: All new Priority schools identified and diagnostic screen administered

Late Fall Year One: LEAs for all newly-identified Priority Schools select intervention approach and submit for Commissioner approval

Winter Year One: LEAs and newly-identified Priority Schools develop school reform plans

## Spring Year One: Implementation for all newly-identified Priority Schools

**Stage One Timeline Justification:** The implementation timeline for Stage One is simply a recognition that LEA driven interventions are more successful when scaffolded and sequenced. The concept of “full” implementation does not necessarily equate to exactly the same activities taking place in each year of intervention, for at least the two following reasons:

- (1) *Not all intervention strategies should be implemented simultaneously.* National research has shown the importance of appropriately and thoughtfully staging elements of a major reform initiative to ensure that the overall scope of the effort is well timed, manageable, and coherent. The first implementation year enables LEAs to appropriately time the various elements of their reform efforts.
- (2) *Rhode Island Statutory requirements governing staffing changes affect LEA implementation timelines.* Currently, teachers facing potential layoff must receive formal notice by June 1 of the previous school year. Through an first implementation period, LEAs can plan ahead for staffing changes.

We have extended the timeframe for Stage One from 6 months to a full school year for two reasons. First, the timing of the PARCC assessment and calendar for identification means that LEAs will learn that a school is Priority prior to or early in the school year immediately following the test. This greatly reduces the long delay that existed in the past between the school year of student learning, state assessments during the fall of the following school year, and results and identification not until the spring of the second school year.

Previously, Stage One began a full 12 months after the school year in which a school’s student achievement fell. Under this revision, it can now begin 3 months after identification. Second, we have learned from monitoring that if the LEA has not set the necessary conditions for reform, such as scheduling, new leader on-boarding, and developing a coherent vision for change, it can take as much as 3 quarters of work for full implementation to gain traction. Our proposed revisions take advantage of the timing of our new assessment system to allow for more careful planning while still ensuring that schools and LEAs are beginning to implement a full school year sooner than was possible in the past. Stage One will therefore allow for a 6 month period for diagnosis and planning, followed by a full year of implementation of approved improvement plans.

### ***Stage Two: Implementation and Progress Monitoring Timeline (Years 2 and 3)***

#### School Years 2 and 3:

All newly-identified Priority Schools in full implementation. RIDE conducts quarterly progress monitoring

#### Close of Year 2:

First opportunity for a Priority School to achieve first of two years towards exit criteria

### Close of Year 3:

Second opportunity for a Priority School to achieve first of two years towards exit criteria

**Stage Two Timeline Justification:** Priority Schools will be eligible to achieve the first of 2 consecutive years of meeting exit criteria at the close of Year 2. These schools will receive the additional indicator of Rising and will enter Stage Three at the start of Year 3. This timeline will allow rapidly improving schools to exit after three years of participation in the school reform process and two years of full implementation of their intervention. Spring testing under PARCC allows us to measure the results of interventions at the close of each year, making it possible to analyze the effect of reform and substantial work undertaken during the first year of implementation..

Experience and research indicates that in most cases reform requires 3-5 years of implementation to take hold. For this reason, we anticipate that most schools will not enter Stage Three until the close of Year 3 during the Year-end review described below.

**Stage Three: Implementation Through Exit Timeline (Years 3 or 4-5):** For rapidly improving schools only, Year 3 Full implementation with quarterly progress monitoring

### Close of Year 3: Year-end review

- First year that Priority schools that were Rising may exit by meeting exit criteria for two consecutive school years subsequent to implementation.
- First year that a Priority School shall, based on progress toward exit criteria, either:
  - Exit;
  - receive the additional indicator of Rising, or
  - receive the additional indicator of Caution.

### Year 4

- First possible year that a Priority School receiving the additional indicator of Caution could experience additional state intervention due to failure to implement and/or stagnant or falling performance
- Continued full implementation with quarterly progress monitoring

### Year 5

- Second possible year that a Priority School receiving the additional indicator of Caution could experience additional state intervention due to failure to implement and/or stagnant or falling performance
- Continued full implementation with quarterly progress monitoring

### ***Timelines for Priority schools identified prior to 2016***

The thirteen schools that were identified as PLAs and were reclassified as Priority Schools under the initial 2012 waiver will have completed at minimum 3 years of *full implementation* at the close of the 2014-15 school year. An additional eight schools were identified as Priority under RIDE’s previously approved waiver. Depending on the year of their identification, these schools will have completed 2 or 3 years of *full implementation* at the close of the 2014-15 school year. The transition to a new assessment system will delay RIDE’s ability to judge the progress of these 21 schools against the exit criteria. The next available student outcome data will be when PARCC results from the 2015 spring administration are released. As approved in our waiver extension, RIDE has determined that these results may afford Priority Schools the opportunity to proceed toward exit, but will not be used to assign the label of Caution to a school. For this reason, RIDE will not require that schools move into Stage 3 until results from the Spring 2016 PARCC assessment are available. This pause allows us to ensure that we have student outcome data for three full years of implementation prior to labeling a school Priority, Caution and considering additional state intervention.

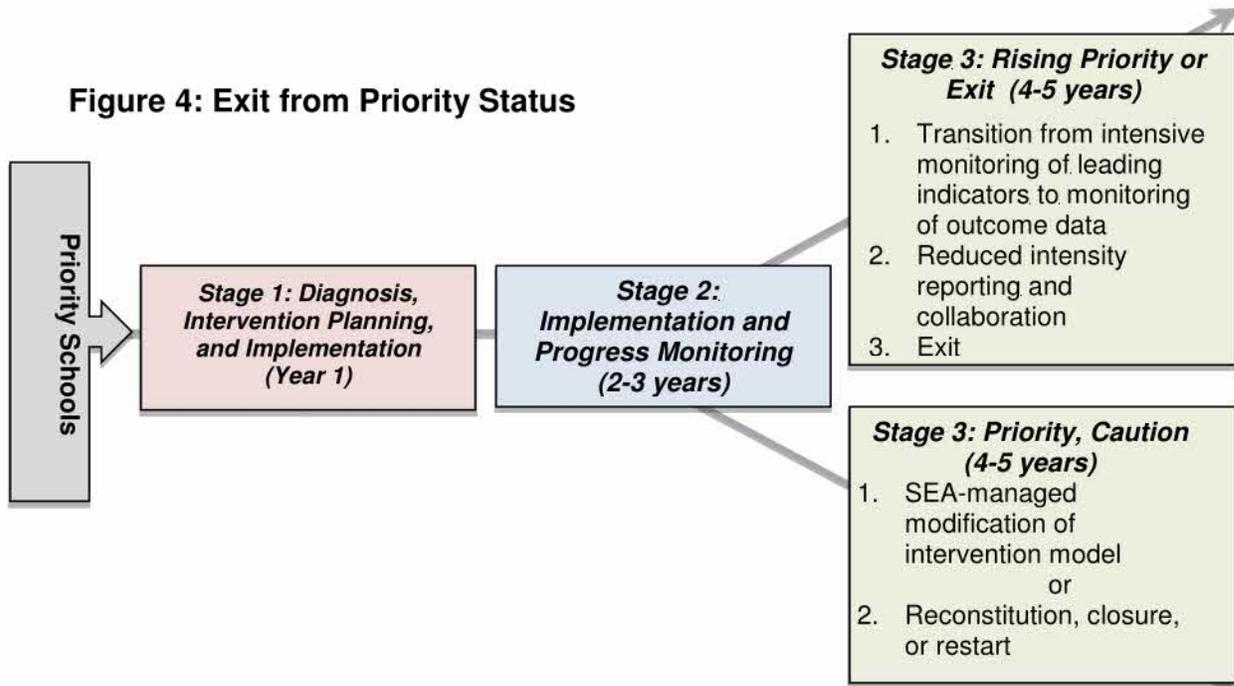
A summary of the implementation timeline for previously-identified schools alongside the timeline for schools that are identified after the transition to PARCC is presented in Table 4 below.

<b>Table 4: Implementation Timelines Comparison – Priority Schools</b>						
	<b>SY 2014-15</b>	<b>SY 2015-16</b>	<b>SY 2016-17</b>	<b>SY 2017-18</b>	<b>SY 2018-19</b>	<b>SY 2019-2020</b>
All Priority schools identified prior to SY 2013-14	Full implementation, Year 3,4 ,or 5.  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Continued Full Implementation	Full implementation, Year 4,5, or 6  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution	Possible additional SEA intervention  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution	Possible additional SEA intervention  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution	Possible additional SEA intervention  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution	Possible additional SEA intervention  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution
Priority schools identified close of SY 2013-14	Year 1  Early Implementation	Year 2  Full Implementation  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Continued Full Implementation	Year 3  Full Implementation  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Continued Full Implementation	Year 4  Full Implementation  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution	Year 5  Possible additional SEA intervention  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution	Year 6  Possible additional SEA intervention  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution
"Pause": No new Priority schools will be identified at the close of 2014-15						
New Priority schools identified close of SY 2015-16			Year 1  Identification and Implementation	Year 2  Full Implementation  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Continued Full Implementation	Year 3  Full Implementation  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution	Year 4  Possible additional SEA intervention  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution

2.D.v Provide the criteria the SEA will use to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement exits priority status and a justification for the criteria selected.

### ***Exit Based Upon Performance***

Exit from Rhode Island’s intervention system occurs in Stage 3 of an LEA’s implementation of a school intervention approach, which covers years three through five (school years 2018-19, 2019-20, and beyond for schools newly-identified under this waiver renewal.) See Figure 5 below for an overview of the stages and the criteria for exit. The system is designed to be rigorous, exiting schools only upon sustained improved performance. Rhode Island will ensure that there are meaningful consequences for priority and focus schools that do not make adequate progress after full implementation of interventions. Our proposed design recognizes that mid-term judgments about performance are important tools in differentiating schools that are ambitiously, rigorously and successfully implementing their intervention plan from those that are failing to implement and/or reach performance targets.



Priority schools in Stage 3 will be classified into one of two categories: Priority, Rising and Priority, Caution. This differentiation will be made on the basis of the school performance against the exit criteria. Priority Schools that, subsequent to a full year of planning and implementation, earn a CIS score in the range that is equivalent to a

classification of Typical will be labeled Priority, Rising indicating that the implementation of their reform agenda is on-track and that they are moving toward exit.

Alternatively, schools for which RIDE has three years of student outcome data subsequent to implementation that have failed in that time to achieve a CIS score in the Typical range will be labeled Priority, Caution. Priority Caution indicates that the reform agenda is falling off-track and that, without improvement, the school will be at risk for more intensive state intervention as authorized under Rhode Island General Law.

The differentiation of Priority Schools based upon mid-term performance is intended to provide LEAs and schools with *early indications* of their progress against the performance commitments set forth in their reform plan. In addition, it creates incentives for ambitious, urgent, and sustained implementation of the school reform plan during the first 24 months of implementation, a period that national research has found to be central to successful, durable improvement.

### **Exit Criteria**

Priority schools will be held to 3 years of implementation before they are eligible for exit. The long period of classification ensures that all schools eligible for exit have provided adequate evidence of *sustained, durable, significant improvement*.

Eligibility for exit requires Priority Schools must achieve a two-year long shift in rank ordering based upon composite index score that moves them into the Typical category for the two most recent consecutive years of full implementation. Schools must meet the 95% test participation expectation for both years and in both content areas (English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics) in order to meet these exit criteria.

## **2.E Focus Schools**

2.E.i Describe the SEA’s methodology for identifying a number of low-performing schools equal to at least 10 percent of the State’s Title I schools as “focus schools.” If the SEA’s methodology is not based on the definition of focus schools in *ESEA Flexibility* (but instead, e.g. based on school grades or ratings that take into account a number of factors), the SEA should also demonstrate that the list provided in Table 2 is consistent with the definition, per the Department’s “Demonstrating that an SEA’s Lists of Schools meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions” guidance.

Focus Schools will be identified by the Composite Index Score (CIS), which will account for low proficiency, large gaps, low growth, and low graduation rates. RIDE previously conducted extensive data runs that conclusively showed that any and all schools that meet the federal definitions for Focus Schools were in fact identified by the methodology in our

previously-approved waiver. We are confident that our proposed revisions to our methodology meet the requirements of ESEA as our indexing system identifies schools by:

- Holding all schools in our state accountable for gaps in student achievement through the use of all schools' subgroups as defined in 2.A of performers and our lower minimum  $n$  of 20.
- Providing an additional lens on student subgroup performance by providing data on the demographic composition of the group of students in the school's subgroups and of the group of students low growth.
- Continuing to include absolute performance as part of the identification of Focus Schools. This matters in Rhode Island because so many of our schools beyond the Priority Schools have extraordinarily low performance for all students. These schools typically serve primarily students living in poverty from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Additionally many students in the Focus Schools receive English language or special education services.
- Shining a spotlight on high schools that have graduation rates below 60%.

All schools currently classified as Focus will remain Focus under this waiver renewal unless they have met exit criteria. Focus Schools meeting the exit criteria will be classified according to their CIS score. Focus Schools that have shown significant progress and are eligible to meet exit criteria based on the following year's test results will receive the additional indicator of Rising. See section 2(E)iv for detailed information on exit criteria for Focus Schools.

As approved in our ESEA waiver extension request, RIDE will not classify new Focus Schools on the basis of the 2014-15 administration of PARCC. When results of the 2015-16 state testing cycle are available and the Composite Index Score is calculated based on the methodology described in section 2A, RIDE will identify any additional Focus Schools. RIDE will conduct analyses to ensure that the CIS identifies those schools with the lowest proficiency rates, largest gaps, low growth and lowest graduation rates.

Rhode Island currently has 11 Focus Schools representing more than 10% of our Title I schools. At the time of identification data that showed these schools demonstrated:

- Gaps in student performance that range from 27.2 to 77.8 percentage points.
- Absolute performance rates in the single digits in mathematics (eight schools range from 2% to 8% proficiency) and all have reading achievement rates between 37% and 55%.
- Levels of growth that make it impossible for students to become proficient if the rate remains constant.
- These schools have a CIS ranging from 36.5-57.

Since implementation of the Waiver, 3 Focus schools fell to Priority status, and 3 schools fell into Focus status, leaving a net total of 11 present Focus Schools with one school being labeled Focus, Rising.

2.E.ii Provide the SEA’s list of focus schools in Table 2.

<b>Focus Schools</b>	<b>District</b>		<b>Cohort</b>	<b>Model</b>	<b>Status</b>
Alan Shawn Feinstein Elementary	Providence	SWP	4	Flex	
Esek Hopkins Middle	Providence	SWP	3	Flex	
Frank D. Spaziano Elementary	Providence	SWP	3	Flex	
George J. West Elementary	Providence	SWP	3	Flex	
Harry Kizirian Elementary	Providence	SWP	3	Flex	
Nathan Bishop Middle	Providence	SWP	3	Flex	
NEL/CPS Construction Career	Cranston - District Charter	N/A	3	Flex	Rising
Providence Career Technical	Providence	SWP	3	Flex	
Asa Messer Elementary	Providence	SWP	4	Flex	
Segue Institute for Learning	Independent Charter	SWP	4	Flex	
Veterans Memorial Elementary	Central Falls	SWP	4	Flex	

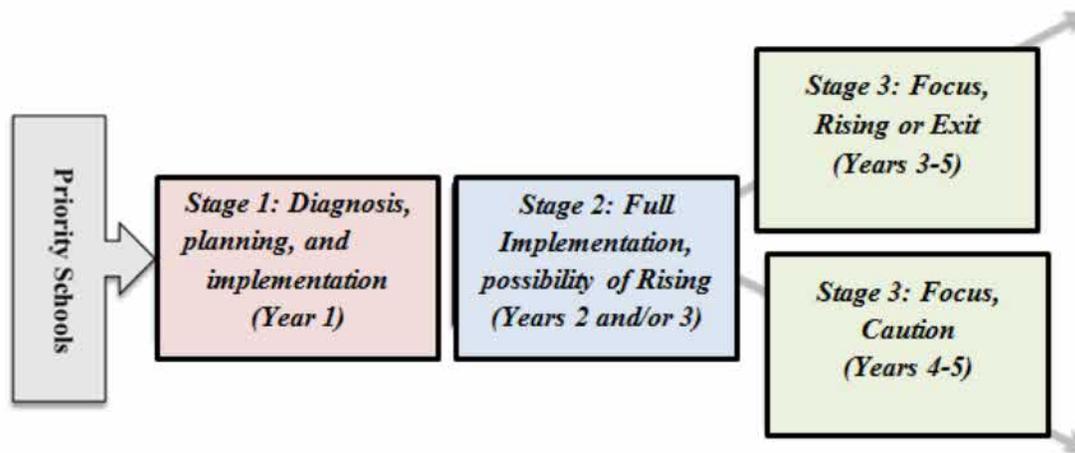
2.E.iii Describe the process and timeline the SEA will use to ensure that its LEAs that have one or more focus schools will identify the specific needs of the SEA’s focus schools and their students and provide examples of and justifications for the interventions focus schools will be required to implement to improve the performance of students who are the furthest behind.

### **Focus Schools Intervention System**

Rhode Island’s proposed intervention system treats the category of Focus schools as one of both opportunity and responsibility for the SEA and LEA. Consequently, Focus Schools travel through the same rigorous process described in Section 2(d)iii and the same quarterly monitoring and data review through implementation as Priority Schools. Figure 6 below shows the three stages of implementation for Focus Schools. These stages mirror those of Priority Schools, with one exception: Focus Schools are eligible

for exit after the second year of implementation. This is one year earlier than Priority Schools.

**Figure 5: Three Stages of Intervention, Focus Schools**



### ***Focus Schools Diagnostic Screening***

Because Focus schools, like Priority schools, are identified based heavily upon their achievement and performance gaps, Focus Schools receive the same diagnostic screening services provided to Priority Schools. Please see Section 2diii for more information about the nature of the diagnostic screen.

### **Focus Schools Intervention Approach Selection**

LEAs serving Focus Schools will be required to select intervention strategies that are clearly responsive to the results of the diagnostic screen. Consequently, all Focus Schools with ELs and students with disabilities exhibiting significant achievement gaps will be required to select intervention strategies that specifically address the needs of these student subpopulations.

Like Priority Schools, Focus Schools must select from one of three intervention approaches within 45 calendar days of identification. The table below provides additional information on RIDE’s capacity to support school implementation of the three core improvement strategies in support of traditionally underserved students.

Strategy	RIDE Support
<b>(1) Full staff participation in training to support school-wide transition to the Common Core State Standards, including:</b>	
a. An aggressive schedule for transition to the CCSS including statewide study of the standards;	<b>Study of the Standards workshops:</b> Study of the Standards workshops train core groups of teachers on the ELA and/or Mathematics standards
b. Development and/or adoption of CCSS-aligned curriculum; and	<b>Model Curricula:</b> The Intensive Curriculum alignment work will have standards-aligned curricula in the four core content areas: science, mathematics, social studies and English Language Arts.
c. Scaling of CCSS exposure activities to every teacher in every building by the 2012-2013 academic year	<b>ISS –</b> The IMS houses the CCSS as well as all curricula that have been created and loaded by the district, any other district(s) in Rhode Island, or by the state.  <b>Interim Assessment System -</b> The Interim Assessments system will provide assessment opportunities of CCSS materials in ELA and mathematics. This will help educators gain exposure to the content and assess where their students need further instruction on CCSS material.
<b>(2) Utilization of a comprehensive data system used to inform daily instruction and school planning, including an</b>	<b>ISS –</b> The ISS will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contain the CCSS.</li> <li>• contain CCSS-aligned curricula (created by the district and/or a consortium of districts).</li> <li>• contain CCSS-aligned interim assessments (fixed-form/state generated, teacher-created from blueprint, and teacher-created from individual item bank).</li> <li>• house lesson plans connected to standards (local and/or statewide). Lesson plans are created by teachers and may contain instructional strategies, resources, links, multimedia, etc.</li> <li>• allow curricula (including all attached lesson plans) to be shared with the district or across districts</li> <li>• allow teachers to group students by a large variety of criteria, create instructional/intervention plans tailored to individual students' or groups of students' needs,</li> </ul>
a. Instructional Support System (ISS) that provides an array of CCSS-aligned assessment and instructional tools;	
b. Curriculum and lesson planning development and sharing tools;	
c. Student growth visualization tool that enables teachers to view and track student progress;	

<p>d. Comprehensive classroom-based RTI tools that enable highly granular tracking of interventions and student response to intervention, including specialized modules for English Learners and students with disabilities; and</p>	<p>track student response to instruction/interventions, and share all of the above with each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contain an early warning system that will identify students who are at risk for dropping out of school based on several metrics triggering specific interventions .</li> </ul>
<p>e. Early warning system that identifies students manifesting early signs of dropout beginning in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.</p>	<p><b>Formative assessment training modules –</b> These modules will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be available to all educators through the ISS.</li> <li>• establish a common understanding of the purpose and components of the formative assessment process.</li> <li>• deepen educators’ understanding of how to plan for, use, and analyze data generated by formative assessments.</li> <li>• encourage collaboration among educators through a Community of Practice model.</li> </ul> <p><b>Data Use Professional Development -</b> Data Use PD will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training to district and school leaders on the use of data to drive instruction</li> <li>• Be data-source neutral, allowing educators to reflect on a variety of data</li> <li>• Be tiered to meet all participants at their current levels of data use</li> <li>• Focus on providing schools with the infrastructure, culture, and knowledge for sustaining data use</li> <li>• Build upon current RTI practices</li> <li>• Build knowledge on analyzing data in aggregated and disaggregated forms to address the needs of subgroups (ELLs and SWDs)</li> </ul>

Focus schools may select: (1) school closure, (2) restart, or (3) the Flex approaches. Closure and restart approaches are identical for Focus and Priority schools.

Focus schools selecting the Flex Approach face a similar set of options to those faced by Priority Schools. However, Focus Schools must select seven intervention strategies – compared to the nine required of Priority Schools – as part of their school reform plan. Focus schools implementing the Flex Approach must select and implement no fewer



than seven intervention strategies of their choice. The seven strategies include three (3) Tier I, or *core school improvement strategies*; two (2) Tier II, or *intervention II strategies*, that provide important supplements to a comprehensive reform plan; and two (2) Tier III, or *intervention III strategies*.

LEAs and Focus Schools may propose one locally-created Intervention Strategy as one of the four total required under the Flex Approach. Locally-created strategies will be reviewed using the same criteria as Flex Menu strategies in addition to the following:

- (1) Alignment to Seven Turnaround Principles
- (2) Scope of expected impact

A locally-created Intervention Strategy may only qualify as an Intervention III Strategy if it will impact the whole school.

Since Waiver implementation, all 11 identified Focus Schools (including those now classified as Priority Schools) have selected the Flex Approach.

During the 2012 and 2013 academic years, RIDE identified a full set of Focus Schools. During the period covered under this waiver extension – the 2014-15 school year, RIDE will suspend the practice of labeling new Focus Schools on the basis of PARCC data. This suspension is the result of extensive consultation with practitioners and stakeholders. During this consultation, there was agreement that it was both appropriate and reasonable to dedicate the 2014-15 school year to a rigorous and transparent review of the emerging PARCC data, to develop a collective understanding of the results, and to use those results to resume labeling beyond the 2014-15 school year. Schools already identified as Focus Schools that have not successfully exited will remain so-classified. Schools eligible for exit based upon performance will retain their ability to do so.

Please see Table 11 for more information about the requirements of the Flex Approach for Focus schools.

**Table 11: Flex Approach Strategy Options for Focus Schools**

<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Support</i>	<i>Infrastructure</i>	<i>Content</i>
<b>Intervention III Strategies: Focus schools select two from areas of their choice</b>			
L-III.1: Removal of building principal and replacement with a leader with a experience and/or training in turnaround environments	S-III.1: Require at least 30 hours of focused professional development with a focus on instructional strategies to support students with disabilities and English Learners	I-III.1: Implement staff recommitment process to substantially different working conditions, including definition of school hours, job assignment, and job duties	C-III.1: Implement comprehensive improvement of instructional approaches for struggling students including focused professional development and a system for student progress monitoring
L-III.2: Restructure building leadership team to dramatically increase time available for instructional leadership	S-III.2: Hire building-level instructional specialists to support educators to serve English Learners, students with disabilities, and other students at risk for failure	I-III.2: Dramatically increase common planning time and implement a system for its effective utilization, both horizontally and vertically	C-III.2: Review student course-taking patterns and make substantial changes to school schedule and student placement to ensure access to rigorous academic core
L- III.3: Provide building administrators the authority and autonomy to hire, manage teacher placement, budget, and school schedule	S-III.3: Implement a system of peer support and assistance to support the needs of educators	I-III.3: Review and change student enrollment and placement processes to increase family engagement & improve student outcomes	C-III.3: Implement a culturally competent support system to improve safety, reduce suspensions, increase attendance, and support all students
<b>Intervention II Strategies: Focus Schools select two strategies from areas of their choice</b>			
L-II.1. Evaluate the principal and connect him or her with a mentor or appropriate resources to ensure ability to lead the school reform work	S- II.1: Implement a comprehensive drop-out prevention and reentry program	I-II.1: Complete an external audit of the use of school funds to guide staffing decisions and implement findings	C-II.1: Increase advanced coursework opportunities for students
L-II.2: Evaluate, assess, and diagnose the performance of the existing school leadership team and take appropriate job action	S-II.2: Implement a comprehensive ramp-up program for students at-risk of failure or subpopulations with the largest achievement gaps	I-II.2: Reallocate resources to increase support for direct instruction of students at risk for failure	C-II.2: Assign additional instructional coaches or other core content focused, job-embedded support for teachers
L-II.3: Contract with a vendor or partner with a track record of success to support the leadership team in school turnaround	S-II.3: Implement culturally competent family and community engagement program focused on instruction and academic performance	I-II.3: Develop and implement support systems for student transition into kindergarten and/or across break grades	C-II.3: Offer virtual education options for both at-risk and advanced students
L-II.4: Identify one leader to routinely monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the core curriculum/instruction and services to traditionally underserved students	S-II.4. Hire full time parent/community engagement specialist to implement family and community engagement that is systemic, sustained, and integrated with school improvement	I-II.4: Establish a comprehensive system to support struggling teachers with content and pedagogy, especially teachers of students with disabilities and English Learners	C-II.4: Implementation of instructional monitoring system to ensure that the curriculum is being fully implemented and traditionally underserved students have access to academic core
L-II.5: Assign family/community outreach to member of leadership team and hold him/her accountable	S-II.5: Establish flexible or expanded learning opportunities with a focus on students at risk for failure	I-II.5: Implement culturally competent tiered system of support focused on student psycho-social health	C-II.5: Increase student access to career, technical, or credentialing programs

## ***The Needs of English Learners and Students with Disabilities***

The intervention strategies included in the Flex Approach were crafted to place rigorous yet proven intervention requirements on districts and identified schools with extremely low levels of academic achievement and growth of students with disabilities and English learners. All LEAs with large and persistent achievement gaps for students with disabilities and English learners that selected the Flex Approach will be required to select intervention strategies and craft a school reform plan that address these students' educational needs. This requirement will take three forms.

First, the diagnostic screen has been intentionally developed to yield targeted information about the educational needs and performance of students with disabilities and English learners.

To that end, LEAs and identified schools will receive targeted information about EL performance, including:

- Highly disaggregated state assessment results including item analysis and student growth percentiles for EL performance over time;
- ACCESS scores and ELP achievement (whenever possible);
- The performance of ELs in program and exited monitoring students,
- The rates of student exit from program;
- Disproportionality; and,
- EL access to linguistically appropriate curriculum, rich in both academic content and language acquisition supports.

LEAs and identified schools will receive targeted information about the performance of students with disabilities including:

- Disaggregated performance data from the state assessment;
- Graduation and Dropout rates;
- Participation and Performance on State Assessment;
- Suspension & Expulsion Rates by Disability and Race;
- FAPE, percent of children served in the regular education setting; and,
- Disproportionality.

Second, LEAs serving identified schools will be required to select intervention strategies that are clearly responsive to the instructional needs of their disaggregated subpopulations. The Flex Approach was designed explicitly to focus on the needs of students with disabilities and English learners; over 60% of the 28 strategies specifically address the unique educational needs of these students. Table 12 below summarizes these intervention strategies.

**Table 12: Flex Approach Strategies that Support English Learners and Students with Disabilities**

<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Support</i>	<i>Infrastructure</i>	<i>Content</i>
<b>Intervention III Strategies</b>			
	S-III.1: Require at least 30 hours of focused professional development with a focus on instructional strategies to support students with disabilities and English Learners		C-III.1: Implement comprehensive improvement of instructional approaches for struggling students including focused professional development and a system for student progress monitoring
	S-III.2: Hire building-level instructional specialists to support educators to serve English Learners, students with disabilities, and other students at risk for failure		
		I-III.3: Review and change student enrollment and placement processes to increase family engagement & improve student outcomes	C-III.3: Implement a culturally competent support system to improve safety, reduce suspensions, increase attendance, and support all students
<b>Intervention II Strategies</b>			
	S- II.1: Implement a comprehensive drop-out prevention and reentry program		
	S-II.2: Implement a comprehensive ramp-up program for students at-risk of failure or subpopulations with the largest achievement gaps	I-II.2: Reallocate resources to increase support for direct instruction of students at risk for failure	
	S-II.3: Implement culturally competent family and community engagement program focused on instruction and academic performance		C-II.3: Offer virtual education options for both at-risk and advanced students
L-II.4: Identify one leader to routinely monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the core curriculum/instruction and services to traditionally underserved students	S-II.4. Hire full time parent/community engagement specialist to implement family and community engagement that is systemic, sustained, and integrated with school improvement	I-II.4: Establish a comprehensive system to support struggling teachers with content and pedagogy teachers of students with disabilities and English Learners	C-II.4: Implement an instructional monitoring system to ensure that the curriculum is being fully implemented and traditionally underserved students have access to academic core
L-II.5: Assign family/community outreach to member of leadership team and hold him/her accountable	S-II.5: Establish flexible or expanded learning opportunities with a focus on students at risk for failure	I-II.5: Implement culturally competent tiered system of support focused on student psycho-social health	

Third, Focus Schools will be subject to intensive progress monitoring throughout the term of their identification. This progress monitoring will include the performance of all student subpopulation including students with disabilities and English learners.

Finally, Focus Schools will be required to implement a management system for response to intervention (RTI.) Through Race to the Top, RIDE is providing a comprehensive web-based system for RTI through a student information management system (ISS). This system will allow tracking of many types of student data and will have specific components dedicated to the needs of students with disabilities and English learners. The system is being rolled out to schools in the 2014-15 school year.

### ***Focus School Timeline for Implementation***

#### ***Stage One: Diagnosis, Intervention, and Implementation Timeline (Year 1)***

Late Summer/Early Fall Year One: All new Focus Schools identified and diagnostic screen administered.

Late Fall Year One: LEAs for all newly-identified Focus Schools select an intervention approach and submit for Commissioner Approval.

Winter Year One: LEAs and newly-identified Focus Schools develop their school reform plans.

Spring Year One: Implementation for all newly-identified Focus Schools

#### Close of Year 1:

First opportunity for a Focus school identified in Fall 2016 to achieve first of two years toward exit criteria and receive additional indicator of Rising.

#### ***Stage One Timeline Justification***

The Focus school timeline allows for the possibility of a school that shows such substantial improvement after Year One that it achieves a CIS equivalent to Typical to meet its first year of exit criteria. This is one year sooner than for Priority schools. The reasons for Focus School low performance may be specific to deficiencies in a particular student support or content area. As a result, the necessary interventions may be targeted in scope and possible for an LEA and school to implement quickly, without the need for an early implementation period. RIDE will therefore consider Year One results toward a Focus School's exit. Nevertheless, exit will require that the improvement endure for a second consecutive year.

## ***Stage Two: Implementation and Progress Monitoring Timeline (Years 2 and 3)***

### School Years 2 and 3:

All newly-identified Focus Schools in full implementation. RIDE conducts quarterly progress monitoring.

At the close of each school year, Focus Schools will have the opportunity to achieve the first of two consecutive school years toward exit and become Rising.

## ***Stage Three: Implementation Through Exit Timeline (No later than Years 4-5)***

For rapidly improving schools only, Year 2: Full implementation with quarterly progress monitoring

For rapidly improving schools only, Close of Year 2: First year that Focus Schools that were Rising may exit by meeting exit criteria for two consecutive years subsequent to identification.

### Close of Year 3:

First year that a Focus school shall, based on progress toward exit criteria, either:

1. Exit
2. receive the additional indicator of Rising, or
3. receive the additional indicator of Caution.

### Year 4 :

First possible year that a Focus School receiving the additional indicator of Caution could experience additional state intervention, including moving to Priority status, due to failure to implement and/or stagnant or falling performance

## **Modified Timelines for Focus Schools Identified Prior to 2016**

As with Priority Schools, the timeline for the transition from Stage 2 to Stage 3 for Focus Schools is affected by the transition to PARCC. Depending on the year of their identification, the 11 schools identified as Focus under the waiver will have completed 2 or 3 years of full implementation at the close of the 2014-15 school year and 3 or 4 years of full implementation at the close of the 2015-16 school year (when the results of the second administration of PARCC are available.) The timeline for these schools is summarized alongside the timeline for schools that will be labeled Focus under this waiver in Table 13 below.

<b>Table: 13 Implementation Timelines Comparison- Focus Schools</b>						
	<b>SY 2014-15</b>	<b>SY 2015-16</b>	<b>SY 2016-17</b>	<b>SY 2017-18</b>	<b>SY 2018-19</b>	<b>SY 2019-2020</b>
All Focus schools identified prior to SY 2013-14	Full Implementation, Year 2 or 3  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Continued Full Implementation	Full implementation, Year 3 or 4  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution	Possible additional SEA intervention  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution	Possible additional SEA intervention  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution	Possible additional SEA intervention  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution	Possible additional SEA intervention  Close of Year Decision: Rising • Rising • Exit • Caution
Focus schools identified close of SY 2013-14	Year 1  Early Implementation	Year 2  Full Implementation  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Continued Full Implementation	Year 3  Full Implementation  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Continued Full Implementation	Year 4  Possible additional SEA intervention  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution	Year 5  Possible additional SEA intervention  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution	Year 6  Possible additional SEA intervention  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution
"Pause": No new Focus schools will be identified close of SY 2014-15						
New Focus schools identified close of SY 2015-16			Year 1  Full Implementation  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Continued Full Implementation	Year 2  Full Implementation  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Continued Full Implementation	Year 3  Full Implementation  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution	Year 4  Possible additional SEA intervention  Close of Year Decision: • Rising • Exit • Caution

During the waiver period, Focus Schools may be accelerated into Priority status. In these cases, Focus Schools will move to the Priority timeline at Stage 2 or 3 to appropriately reflect the number of years the school has already been implementing school reform interventions.

2.E.iv Provide the criteria the SEA will use to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps exits focus status and a justification for the criteria selected.

**Classification Differentiation Based Upon Performance**

Focus schools in Stage 3 will be classified into one of two categories: "Focus-Rising" and "Focus-Caution". This differentiation will be made on the basis of the school performance against the exit criteria. Focus schools that, subsequent to identification, earn a CIS score in the range that is equivalent to a classification of Typical will be



labeled “Focus–Rising”, indicating that the implementation of their reform agenda is on-track and that they are moving toward exit.

Alternatively, schools for which RIDE has three years of student outcome data subsequent to identification that have failed in that time to achieve a CIS score in the Typical range will be labeled “Focus –Caution”. Focus-Caution indicates that the reform agenda is falling off-track and that, without improvement, the school will be at risk for more intensive state intervention as authorized under Rhode Island General Law.

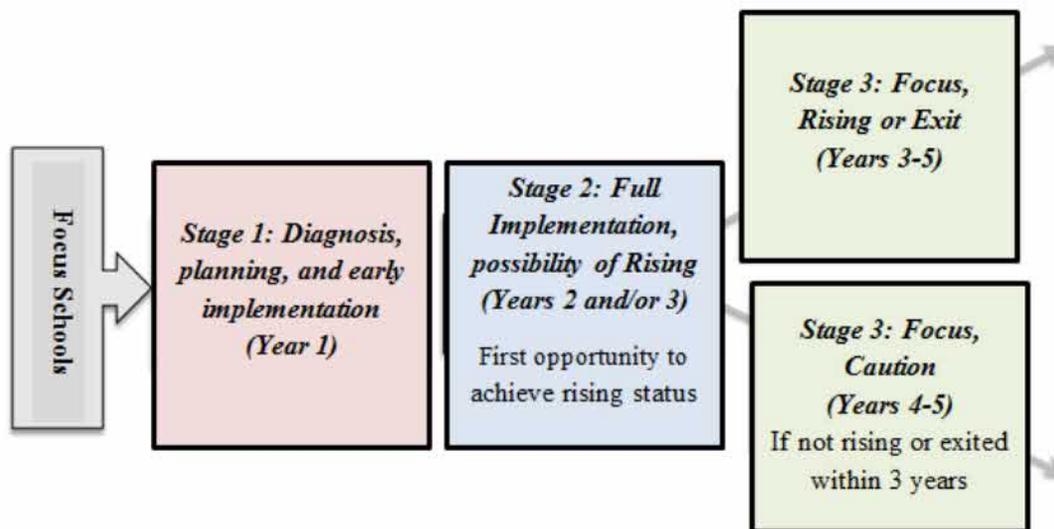
The differentiation of Focus Schools based upon mid-term performance is intended to provide LEAs and schools with *early indications* of their progress against the performance commitments set forth in their reform plan. In addition, it creates incentives for ambitious, urgent, and sustained implementation of the school reform plan during the first 24 months of implementation, a period that national research has found to be central to successful, durable improvement.

### ***Exit Criteria***

Focus Schools will be held to 2 years of implementation before they are eligible for exit. This period of classification ensures that all schools eligible for exit have provided adequate evidence of *sustained and significant improvement*.

Eligibility for exit requires Focus Schools to achieve a two-year long shift in rank ordering based upon composite index score that moves them into the Typical category for the two most recent consecutive years. Schools must meet the 95% test participation expectation for both years and in both content areas (English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics) in order to meet these exit criteria.

**Figure 6: Exit from Focus Status**



## 2.F Provide Incentives and Supports for other Title I Schools

- 2.F Describe how the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system will provide incentives and supports to ensure continuous improvement in other Title I schools that, based on the SEA’s new AMOs and other measures, are not making progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps, and an explanation of how these incentives and supports are likely to improve student achievement and school performance, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students.

## The State System of Support for Low-Performing Districts and Schools

### *Classification of Low-Performing Schools*

Rhode Island has developed a classification system that breaks all Rhode Island schools into six levels. These levels utilize criteria to classify schools into meaningful groups based upon their performance. Beyond mere classification, this approach is designed to enable meaningful support and intervention in low performing schools beyond those in Priority or Focus status.

### **Schools in Good Standing with Alerts**

RIDE will identify and classify schools that, based on the Composite Index Score, are at risk for overall low achievement, low growth, large achievement gaps, or low graduation rates.

## **RIDE support for Schools in Warning status**

Warning schools will not be required to select an intervention approach, but rather will implement intervention strategies of their choice that directly relate to the reasons for the identification. Schools may choose from the strategies included in the Flex Menu, may identify another empirically-proven strategy of equal intensity, or may develop another response to the reason for the identification. For example, a district whose school receives the Warning label due to fewer than 95% of students participating in the state assessment may need to put in place a communication plan for improving families' understanding of the assessment system.

In the annual submission of the district Consolidated Resource Plan (CRP), all districts with schools in Warning status will be asked to describe the school improvement intervention(s) to be implemented to address the reasons for identification. RIDE staff will conduct a desktop review of the CRP to ensure that the proposed intervention is of sufficient size, scope and quality to positively impact student achievement and address the schools' areas of need; and that federal resources in the CRP (Title I, II, III, and IDEA) are coordinated to support school improvement interventions.

## ***Support for All Low Performing Schools***

RIDE's Office of School Transformation coordinates supports for all low-performing Title I schools identified under the accountability and classification described in this waiver renewal application. The Office of Transformation delivers services through a combination of staff support, core state and regional partnerships, and a rich array of vendors under contract by RIDE.

The key support services include:

1. *Online Professional Development Materials* on key topics related to school turnaround, including:
  - a. Transformative leadership and school leadership team development
  - b. Formative assessment
  - c. Data Use
2. *Statewide Network of School Supports*, which provides information on key community-based organizations that can support school improvement strategies;

3. *Technical Assistance for LEAs Supporting Students with Disabilities and English Learners* through a core partnership with the New England Regional Education Laboratory;
4. *State Personnel Development Grant* for intensive capacity-building around Multi-Tiered Systems of Support;
5. *Diagnostic Screening Services*, which makes the diagnostic screen used for Focus and Priority schools available to any struggling school in Rhode Island; and
6. Online resources for school reform planning and related face-to-face technical assistance from Office of Transformation staff.

RIDE's Office of Transformation coordinates these supports for Priority and Focus Schools through regular meetings with district leadership and quarterly monitoring meetings that involve school and district leadership. In addition, any LEAs with schools in Warning status will be informed of these resources upon notification of the Alert. These LEAs will be provided with an Office of Transformation contact person who can provide more information, guidance on which resources may address the schools' needs, coordinate access.

## 2.G *Build Capacity to Improve Student Learning*

- 2.G Describe the SEA's process for building SEA, LEA, and school capacity to improve student learning in all schools and, in particular, in low-performing schools and schools with the largest achievement gaps, including through:
- i. timely and comprehensive monitoring of, and technical assistance for, LEA implementation of interventions in priority and focus schools;
  - ii. ensuring sufficient support for implementation of interventions in priority schools, focus schools, and other Title I schools identified under the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system (including through leveraging funds the LEA was previously required to reserve under ESEA section 1116(b)(10), SIG funds, and other Federal funds, as permitted, along with State and local resources); and
  - iii. holding LEAs accountable for improving school and student performance, particularly for turning around their priority schools.

Explain how this process is likely to succeed in improving SEA, LEA, and school capacity.

RIDE is focusing on capacity building at the LEA and SEA through five strategies.

### ***Strategy One: Building SEA and LEA Capacity through Clarity of Roles***

Over the past five years, RIDE has been striving to narrow and clarify the role of the agency relative to districts and schools. These efforts have taken two forms. First, the Basic Education Program sets forth four functions for the Rhode Island Department of Education in relationship to all school districts. These functions confine the role of the SEA only to duties that are either the *exclusive purview* of a state agency (such as policy development and promulgation, regulation and monitoring, and federal fund management) or to duties that are *most effectively or efficiently* delivered by a state agency (such as construction of statewide systems, addressing statewide barriers to reform, and connecting LEAs to state-level partners and resources.)

Within the context of the intervention system described in this application, RIDE will maintain a focus on these four functions through a set of service commitments made **by** RIDE's **to** LEAs and the identified schools they serve. These SEA commitments, which have already been formally adopted by the Commissioner and publicly distributed to affected LEAs, focus on:

- Differentiated SEA support for the lowest-performing districts and the schools they serve;
- Reduction of administrative burden, minimize or remove bureaucratic barriers, and reduce paperwork requirements;
- Setting clear performance expectations and establishing monitoring, accountability, and performance management systems that track LEA and school performance; and,
- Ensuring adequacy of resources and prudent, allowable, and appropriate investment of resources in Rhode Island's lowest performing schools.

### ***Strategy Two: Comprehensive Monitoring System for LEAs and Identified Schools***

Prior to our initial waiver, RIDE monitored school and district improvement initiatives through a system that relied primarily upon LEA self-reporting of implementation successes and challenges. This self-reporting system was punctuated with annual

reporting of key student outcome measures, primary state assessment results, graduation rates, and other similarly aggregate metrics. Although these measures are crucial in monitoring the *overall* effects of comprehensive reform initiatives, they do not provide equally important short-cycle, leading indicators that enable early stage judgment about the effectiveness of both intervention selection and execution.

Under this approved 2012 waiver, RIDE implemented a new approach to progress monitoring that is comprehensive, regular, and appropriate to the developmental stage of the reform initiative. RIDE has:

- (1) Worked with LEAs to assign each intervention strategy at each school both leading and outcome measures that enable targeted performance monitoring from implementation to school exit that is aligned to the school's individual context and method of implementation;
- (2) Dedicate substantial SEA resources to *early and mid-stage* progress monitoring of leading and outcomes measures, with a gradual release of performing monitoring in years 3-5 for Priority Schools that are consistently meeting performance targets; and,
- (3) Differentiate school classification status beginning as early as Year 2 for Focus schools and Year 3 for Priority Schools.

Using this more granular approach to progress monitoring with a heavy emphasis on early and mid-stage implementation, RIDE will ensure successful LEA implementation of intervention approach and improved student outcomes.

### ***Strategy Three: Alignment of Diagnostic, Intervention, and Progress Monitoring Efforts into Four Areas that Build LEA Capacity***

Although in the past RIDE routinely required a comprehensive needs assessment processes before awarding state and federal grant funding to LEAs, these needs assessments were usually LEA-designed and LEA-administered. Since the establishment of the new intervention system, RIDE has taken full responsibility for a foundational, comprehensive diagnostic screening process for Priority and Focus Schools. This diagnostic screening process provides:

1. The SEA, LEA, and identified school with a comprehensive criterion-based and normative view of their performance;
2. A diverse and broad concrete baseline against which to both measure school progress; and
3. A basis upon which the SEA can make data-informed judgments about the scope, breadth, intensity and nature of the interventions LEAs select for Priority schools.

Under this renewal application, we propose the addition of powerful new capacity made possible through Rhode Island's *Instructional Support System*. Using this new system to deliver the diagnostic screen will allow educators to drill down into each metric of the school's Composite Index Score to support further analyses and diagnostic strategies. This tool is being added at the request of our Educator Evaluation Advisory Group as part of their desire to more deeply understand their accountability data. In the diagnostic phase, it will allow LEA and school leaders to better understand current performance, determine which strategies will have the greatest impact for the particular students or groups of students who are struggling, and set precise annual targets that will allow them to assess the effectiveness of their interventions and whether they are on track to meet exit criteria.

***Strategy Four: Focused, Coordinated and Wise Investment of Federal, State, and Local Resources***

RIDE will focus on supporting LEAs in resourcing all intervention efforts in close collaboration with LEAs. Through this collaboration, RIDE will ensure that local, state, and federal resources are planned and invested to ensure sufficient support for implementation in priority schools of meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles. This collaboration will focus on four areas.

*Area One: Cost Coverage*

In the area of "Cost Coverage" RIDE provides support to LEAs to ensure that resourcing plans include all necessary expenditure categories and are of sufficient size and scope to support the full implementation of all of the selected interventions over a period of no less than three years

*Area Two: Spending Alignment*

In the area of "Spending Alignment" RIDE provides support to LEAs to ensure that proposed expenditures are clearly detailed and aligned to the proposed intervention(s) in both amount of funds allocated for specific activities and timing of spending. RIDE will exercise applicable authority to ensure that there are no extraneous expenditures and the budget will support the interventions outlined in the application and School Reform Plan.

*Area Three: Reasonableness*

In the area of "Reasonableness" RIDE will support LEAs to ensure that budget expenditures appear reasonable, are clearly justified, necessary, and allowable to support the implementation of the intervention approach.

*Area Four: Integration and Sustainability*

In the area of "Integration and Sustainability" RIDE will support LEAs to ensure a strategic use and alignment of resources; specifically, RIDE staff will identify sources and amounts (either new or repurposed) of local and federal funds that will complement designated grant funds to support timely implementation of the

intervention. This will include close collaboration with LEAs serving Focus and Priority schools to plan and manage all funds covered under ESEA, ensuring that the flexibilities afforded under the waiver are maximized to support the needs of low-performing schools.

### ***Strategy Five: Reduction of Administrative Burden***

RIDE has already begun to implement an agency-wide plan to reduce administrative and paperwork burdens on districts and schools, shift the SEA/LEA relationship *away from* compliance and toward active use of data and performance monitoring. To that end, RIDE is deeply engaged in the following work.

#### **Streamline data reporting requirements for LEAs; Provide state-level data analysis tools.**

RIDE is in the process of comprehensively rebuilding all state education data systems. As part of this effort, RIDE has consolidated data reports where possible, reduced redundancies in data collections, and integrated data systems into a more user accessible data communication system.

RIDE is currently implementing an enterprise data system to reduce burdens to the schools and districts in data collections and to facilitate the use of collected data to improve instruction and student learning. The agency's data system includes a data warehouse and a suite of decision support systems that store and provide access to individual student and teacher level data. Additionally, these systems include data verification and error-checking routines and a system for ensuring assignment of unique identifiers to individual students, which is a critical component in maintaining individual level longitudinal data.

We continue to expand the use of easy to use Web-based data applications with a built-in Automated Data Transfer agent (ADT) for timely and quality collection and reporting. We have provided services and trainings to hundreds of State and district administrators, data and IT managers, program coordinators and data clerks. We continue our ongoing process of eliminating redundant data collections, including thousands of duplicate records in enrollments, student membership and program eligibility.

RIDE recently developed a Web-based meta-data repository system to further reduce burdens on schools and districts and to provide a consistent and reliable means of access to data. State and local users may query this online system for data elements and embedded code-sets by keyword, entity, domain and data event names, and by program areas and data owners. Users may use the built-in tools to build record layout sheets and data submission templates. Analysts, data administrators and developers can apply the meta-data in system integration, data validations and in creation of enterprise data management and reporting systems.

#### **Improve the Efficiency of Federal Program Management**

Beginning in the 2010-2011 year, RIDE began a two-phase burden reduction program focused on federal program fund management. During Phase I, the Consolidated Resource Plan application was audited and revised to ensure that it adequately covered all federally required fields while, at the same time, minimized the amount of time required by LEAs. Through this audit, RIDE was able to consolidate nearly 25% of the content by elimination of duplication and consolidation of fields.

During Phase II of the burden reduction efforts, RIDE worked with technical experts to audit all federal program performance review processes and migrate toward a unified approach to on-site monitoring. This unified visit approach is designed to consolidate components of federal program monitoring in order to:

- (1) Create improved coordination across federal programs at the LEA level;
- (2) Examine data in light of federal program investments and results;
- (3) Reduce the time required for LEAs to report compliance matters including desk audit/reporting time and on-site monitoring time; and
- (4) Focus intensive RIDE monitoring activity on “high risk” districts or compliance elements.

RIDE efforts to reduce burden have to-date resulted in a reduced paperwork burden to LEAs by 15% for Title I, 15% for Title III and 20% for IDEA funding applications. RIDE will continue to run similar analysis throughout the flexibility period.

### Principle 3: Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership

#### 3.A *Develop and Adopt Guidelines for Evaluation and Support Systems*

Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide the corresponding description and evidence, as appropriate, for the option selected.

<p><b>Option A</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> If the SEA has not already developed and adopted all of the guidelines consistent with Principle 3, provide:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. the SEA’s plan to develop and adopt guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems by the end of the 2011–2012 school year;</li> <li>ii. a description of the process the SEA will use to involve teachers and principals in the development of these guidelines; and</li> </ol>	<p><b>Option B</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the SEA has developed and adopted all of the guidelines consistent with Principle 3, provide:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. a copy of the guidelines the SEA has adopted (Attachment 10) and an explanation of how these guidelines are likely to lead to the development of evaluation and support systems that improve student achievement and the quality of instruction for students;</li> <li>ii. evidence of the adoption of the guidelines</li> </ol>
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<p>iii. an assurance that the SEA will submit to the Department a copy of the guidelines that it will adopt by the end of the 2011–2012 school year (see Assurance 14).</p>	<p>(Attachment 11); and</p> <p>iii. a description of the process the SEA used to involve teachers and principals in the development of these guidelines.</p>
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### **Educator Effectiveness and the Rhode Island Theory of Action**

Research has proven that there is nothing more fundamental to student success than having the benefit of an excellent teacher who works in a school led by an excellent principal. We believe our most essential function as an SEA is improving and assuring the quality of education for students through our commitment to recruiting, developing, supporting, and retaining highly effective principals and teachers in our schools.

Therefore, the first priority in our strategic plan, *Transforming Education in Rhode Island*, is to ensure that we have excellent educators in every school in our state. To do their work effectively, teachers need the support of world-class standards, such as the Common Core State Standards, and they need to work within systems of accountability and support that: set appropriate annual objectives; diagnostically recognize problems at the school and district level; and provide a model and timeframe for school transformation that will accelerate all schools toward greatness. Teachers and school leaders who work within such a system are well prepared for a fair and transparent evaluation system that will provide guidance toward improving instruction and that will guide school districts in making appropriate personnel decisions that advance teaching and learning. Rhode Island is currently in the process of designing the next strategic plan that will create a roadmap through 2020. We are taking a community-based approach in identifying the priority areas, but will continue to support educator effectiveness through the work of educator evaluation and other initiatives.

### **Adopting Standards for Educator Evaluation**

[The Rhode Island Basic Education Program](#), which the R.I. Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education (Board of Regents) approved on June 4, 2009, states that:

Appraising personnel performance and quality is an extremely important factor affecting student learning. The LEA shall establish a set of clearly detailed and widely disseminated policies and procedures for the supervision and evaluation of all staff. These policies and procedures shall include personnel policy statements, job descriptions that outline job functions and responsibilities, and assignment and discipline of all LEA staff.

In order to ensure that all staff show consistent positive impact on student learning, the LEA shall have a formal evaluation process that is completed on a regular basis and is compliant with applicable legal requirements.

The evaluation system promotes the growth and effectiveness of staff, provides feedback for continuous improvement, and includes processes for disciplinary action and exiting of ineffective staff. The evaluation system shall be developed, implemented and managed by persons with the necessary qualifications, skills, and training. The evaluation system shall be described in sufficient detail so that it is clear who is responsible and what is expected. (G-15-2.2-4)

While the BEP regulations were still in draft form, RIDE spent 18 months developing *Rhode Island Education Evaluation System Standards (RI Educator Evaluation Standards)*. These *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* were created through a transparent, inclusive process. The R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) met with teacher and principal teams including union representatives, held community forums with the Rhode Island Urban Education Task Force, and integrated feedback from the LEAs' annual teacher and principal surveys. Following the initial draft of the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, we solicited public comment over three months and held two public hearings.

The Board of Regents approved the Rhode Island Standards for Educator Evaluation (*RI Educator Evaluation Standards*) on December 3, 2009, as described in the official minutes of the meeting:

*Approval of Educator Evaluation Standards*

Next, the Commissioner presented the Educator Evaluation Standards for approval. She reminded the Board that the evaluation standards are exactly that – standards - and that their use should be considered similar to the manner in which the Program Approval Standards are used to gauge the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. The Board discussed at length all of the suggested changes at the November 19th work session. The Department will develop timelines and guidance documents, including rubrics and model processes, at the agency level, as needed to ensure the timely adherence of district practice to these standards. The group discussed in detail Standard 1.3 – “This standard established four broad areas of performance that should provide the focus for all educator evaluation. Testimony and research all support the need to place student improvement as the primary measure of effectiveness.” A sentence added to standard 1.3: “An educator’s overall evaluation of effectiveness is primarily determined by evidence of impact on student growth.” Regents expressed their concern about the wording of the added sentence. The discussion involved the use of “student growth” versus student achievement.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Amendment to Standard 1.3 of the Board of Regents document, “Annotated Changes to RI Educator Evaluation System Standards” to read as follows: “An educator’s overall evaluation of effectiveness is primarily determined by evidence of impact on student growth and academic achievement.”

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education adopts the Rhode Island Educator Evaluation System Standards, as amended...

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

### [Educator Evaluation System Standards](#)

#### **Improving Teaching and Learning through Evaluation Systems**

Coupled with the BEP, the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* provide the framework that serves as the basis for all state and local human-resource management decisions — including certification, selection, tenure, professional development, support for both individual and groups of educators, placement, compensation, promotion, and retention. Every decision made in regard to the professional educators in Rhode Island, whether by an LEA or the SEA, will be based on evidence of the respective teacher's or principal's impact on student growth and academic achievement in addition to other measures of professional practice and professional responsibility. Through our Race to the Top application, we have also committed to the principle that no child in Rhode Island will be taught by a teacher who has been rated ineffective for two consecutive years.

The *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* require every LEA to establish an evaluation system that meets state standards by the (2011-12) school year. The 2011-2012 school year was a full year of gradual implementation for all LEAs. 2012-2013 was the first year of implementation of teacher and principal evaluation. Rhode Island LEAs are currently implementing new evaluation systems for certified support professionals. The evaluation of teachers, principals, and support professionals remains an LEA responsibility, and now it is done at a breadth and level of rigorous quality prescribed by state regulation.

Approved educator-evaluation systems in Rhode Island must align with the [Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards](#), [the Rhode Island Educator Code of Professional Responsibility](#), and the [Standards for Educational Leadership in Rhode Island \(Leadership Standards\)](#).

Additionally, the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* require LEAs to establish and support local District Evaluation Committees that include teachers, support professionals, administrators, and union representatives. This Committee in each LEA is charged with soliciting feedback from other educators, students, parents, and assessment experts, and it shares its findings with the LEA leadership.

To meet the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, each LEA's evaluation system must:

- base evaluation of educator effectiveness “*primarily on evidence of impact on **student growth** and academic achievement;*”
- differentiate educators into **four levels** of effectiveness (highly effective, effective, developing, and ineffective);
- **annually evaluate effectiveness** of all educators, including teachers, principals, and professional support staff;
- *ensure a **transparent, fair evaluation process**;*
- *involve **teachers and principals** in the development process; and*
- *provide opportunities for **professional growth** and improvement.*

As part of our Race to the Top commitment, RIDE used these six standards as a foundation and worked with educators from across the state to design the Rhode Island Model educator-evaluation system.

## **Developing Standards and Systems for Educator Evaluation**

### ***Engagement of teachers, principals***

As we developed the model statewide evaluation system – **The Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation System** - with the common definitions and methodologies and to assist with the resolution of evaluation-related concerns, RIDE established the Rhode Island Advisory Committee for Educator Evaluation Systems (ACEES). This committee was made up of 25 members: The Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education; Commissioner of Higher Education (or designee); one representative from each of the state’s teacher unions (Rhode Island Federation of Teachers & Health Professionals and the National Education Association – Rhode Island); one superintendent; one school committee representative; principals and teachers representing elementary, middle, and high schools; teachers of students with disabilities and of English Learners; professional support educators; one secondary student; one parent; and one representative from the business community. Members of this committee were nominated for a two-year period. The Commissioner sought nominations from professional organizations, as appropriate, to make all appointments.

ACEES worked to ensure that all members of the education community were deeply engaged in the development and implementation of the Rhode Island Model for educator evaluation. ACEES acted in an advisory capacity to provide RIDE with:

- feedback on key evaluation system deliverables; and,
- direction for overall system development through the design principles.

The ACEES committee first met on June 21, 2010, and continued to meet throughout the design and implementation of the Rhode Island Model Evaluation System.

Through ACEES, educators from 23 LEAs and organizations throughout Rhode Island participated in the development of the Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation System.

Six working groups developed and refined the content, and the ACEES committee reviewed their work. Three teachers of English Learners and three teachers of students with disabilities were members of these groups. Teachers of English Learners and teachers of students with disabilities participated in working-group sessions and attended open meetings designed to gather input from educators across the state. During the design process, RIDE staff members met on multiple occasions with the Association of Rhode Island Administrators of Special Education (ARIASE) and the English Language Learners Advisory Council to discuss evaluations.

RIDE continues to seek feedback during each year of implementation to improve the evaluation system based on feedback from educators. During 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 RIDE continued to survey all teachers, principals, support professionals and central office administrators to better understand their perspective on the design and implementation of new systems. The most current survey yielded responses from over 3900 teachers, 1300 support professionals, 310 building administrators, and 127 central office administrators. Additionally, during 2012-2013 the Commissioner began to meet monthly with representative principals and superintendents to advise RIDE. This group is known as the Educator Evaluation Advisory Committee and continues to meet monthly to review feedback and recommend adjustments to the system.

During the first year of implementation, 2012-2013, it was evident from the feedback that special educators were struggling with guidance more than other groups of teachers. RIDE sought volunteers to serve on a work group to examine all aspects of evaluation to ensure a high quality system and guidance for special educators. Their input resulted in the development of Student Outcome Objectives (SOOs) that are being used by support professionals and some special educators. At the same time, a work group for support professionals was established to design both practice and student learning components for these professionals. Given that this model was in gradual implementation during 2013-2014, the work group continued to meet to improve the model for implementation during 2014-2015.

### ***Flexibility for LEAs***

The *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* allow for LEAs that do not elect to participate in the Rhode Island Model Evaluation System (the Rhode Island Model) to design or adapt their own system to meet the requirements set forth in the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*. Any LEA evaluation system that is distinct from the Rhode Island Model must be submitted to RIDE to secure approval of the system. If an LEA is unable to independently meet the standards, then the LEA must adopt the Rhode Island Model.

RIDE prepared [guidelines and resources](#) that inform LEAs on what to submit for approval, including format, links to standards, supporting documentation, deadlines, and other specifics. RIDE reviews documentation for compliance with the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*. All 9 districts that elected to develop their own systems had their designs reviewed, and they all received initial approval. To gain full approval, all 9 districts needed to resubmit their models to address open issues. The guidelines and



resources for districts that elected to develop their own evaluation system in compliance with the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* are posted on the RIDE Web site.

The process of developing an evaluation system to meet the Rhode Island Educator Evaluation System Standards is a significant undertaking. Districts that elected to follow this pathway did so with the belief that they would be adapting a system that is in existence and that can be modified to meet the standards. RIDE recommended that districts begin by developing an understanding of the standards and rubrics for approved systems and then review the district's current system to identify gaps and to develop strategies to address these areas in the redesign or modification of the current system. RIDE encouraged districts to take the gap-analysis approach as the first step in review, including a set of yes/no questions to evaluate how well the current evaluation-system structure matches the expectations of the Educator Evaluation System Standards. Districts were asked to answer a set of yes/no questions, and whenever the answer was "no" or "partially," preliminary ideas for modifying the current system were to be noted so as to create the infrastructure necessary to create and sustain a system that meets RIDE standards. Districts were also asked keep a running log of the evidence that supports "yes" or "partially" ratings so that this data could be used in the preparation of the proposed plan that the district would write in response to the guidelines document.

In the fall of 2009, the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers & Health Professionals (RIFTHP) received a grant from the American Federation of Teachers to develop a model urban evaluation system. The RIFTHP brought together labor-management teams from the six most densely populated urban districts (including active participation from Providence, West Warwick, and Woonsocket) to work collaboratively with RIFTHP and RIDE to develop a model educator evaluation and support system that meets the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*. Since 2009, the six districts have been meeting regularly to assess their evaluation systems against the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, review models of educator evaluation, and work with nationally recognized experts to design a model urban evaluation system that was piloted in the 2010-11 school year. RIDE has continued to work collaboratively with the RIFTHP group and has granted approval of its evaluation system, the Innovation Initiative on Educator Evaluation (Innovation Model). Six urban districts are implementing the Innovation Model for teachers. These same six districts are implementing the RI Model for building administrators and have received approval for their own support professionals' model.

In addition to the Rhode Island Model and the Innovation Model, one LEA (Coventry) has developed its own evaluation system and two charter schools (The Learning Community and Achievement First) have received approval for their teacher evaluation models. Coventry also has implemented an approved building administrator evaluation model. All other LEAs are using implementing the Rhode Island Model for Educator Evaluation. Though there are seven LEAs and two charter schools that have received approval for teacher evaluation systems, it is important to note that RIDE has defined the required student learning measures for all systems and provides the training in this area to all LEAs. Systems must include formal and informal observations, information

from students, parents and others, state defined measures of student learning and assessments of professional responsibilities in addition to the areas of practice and student learning. Written feedback is required throughout the process in order to provide actionable feedback so educators can develop professional growth plans or improvement plans that are aligned to the feedback and to school and district needs. By integrating these multiple measures and by focusing on improvement, we will improve the instruction in schools and student growth and achievement. The Evaluation System Standards outline an expectation of annual evaluation. During the 2014 legislative season, the Rhode Island House and Senate passed legislation outlining a cyclical process for educators who are effective and highly effective. In short, the legislation stipulates that educators who are rated effective are evaluated no more than every two years while educators who are rated highly effective are evaluated no more than once every three years. A link to the legislation is [here](#). Interpretation and guidance is posted on the [RIDE website](#).

### **3.B Ensure LEAs Implement Evaluation and Support Systems**

3.B Provide the SEA’s process for ensuring that each LEA develops, adopts, pilots, and implements, with the involvement of teachers and principals, including mechanisms to review, revise, and improve, high-quality teacher and principal evaluation and support systems consistent with the SEA’s adopted guidelines.

## **Overview of the Rhode Island Evaluation System**

As discussed in 3.A., the Board of Regents has promulgated regulatory Educator Evaluation System Standards (*RI Educator Evaluation Standards*) that apply to all public schools in Rhode Island. These standards go beyond the level of mere guidance; they are regulatory, and all educator-evaluation systems in Rhode Island must meet these legal standards. To put these standards into action, RIDE (as discussed in 3.A.), in partnership with educators across the state, developed the Rhode Island Model for Education Evaluation.

Most LEAs adopted the Rhode Island Model; however, as discussed in 3.A. seven LEAs and two charter schools developed their own district-level models. RIDE has approved both alternate models as meeting all of the requirements of the Evaluation System Standards. The rubric and other documents required for approval were noted in 3.A.

## **Elements of the Rhode Island Evaluation System**

An effective teacher can change the course of a student’s life. Research has shown that teacher quality is the single most important school-based factor influencing student achievement, so, naturally, a top priority should be giving teachers the guidance and support they need to be successful. A fair and accurate evaluation system is a critical tool for developing and improving the effectiveness of our teachers while also recognizing the outstanding performance of our most successful teachers.



Unfortunately, the evaluation models that had been in use in the majority of our schools did not provide the kind of feedback and support teachers deserve as professionals. Often, evaluations were infrequent or inconsistent, with little consideration for the teacher's professional development or how much students were actually learning in the classroom.

Our Rhode Island Educator Evaluation System Standards (*RI Educator Evaluation Standards*), which have the force of law, require a local evaluation system that uses multiple measures to determine educator effectiveness, based primarily on impact on student growth and academic achievement. The *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* call for annual evaluations; although, as noted, recent legislation introduced a cyclical process for educators receiving ratings of Effective or Highly Effective. Educator-evaluation systems in Rhode Island focus on collaboration and feedback to fuel professional growth and on specific goals and objectives to measure progress.

To meet the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, each LEA's evaluation system must:

- base evaluation of educator effectiveness “*primarily on evidence of impact on **student growth** and academic achievement;*” and,
- differentiate educators into **four levels** of effectiveness (highly effective, effective, developing, and ineffective).

In accordance with the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, all educators will receive clear, actionable feedback in order to improve, and any educator who receives a rating of Developing or Ineffective will receive more targeted support to accelerate improvement. These educators will work with their evaluator to develop a detailed Improvement Plan with clear objectives, benchmarks, and timelines and to identify an improvement team to assist with their development.

In order to meet the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, each LEA's evaluation system must use multiple observations and other measures to evaluate effectiveness of **all** educators, including teachers, principals, and professional support staff.

Evaluations are conducted more frequently if appropriate, depending on the educators' experience and assignment. Evaluations also may be conducted more frequently due to prior evaluation outcomes or concerns from principals. RIDE believes that fair, valid, and reliable evaluation systems are important because they provide opportunities to acknowledge best practices and to offer support when needed.

To determine overall educator effectiveness, educator evaluations in Rhode Island considers three central components:

- Professional Practice (Classroom Environment and Instruction);
- Professional Responsibilities; and,
- Student Learning.



RIDE developed matrices that show how the three components of the evaluation system – student growth, professional practice, and professional responsibilities – interact to determine the educator’s final composite effectiveness rating -

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EducatorEvaluation/GuidebooksForms.aspx>

### ***Professional Practice***

Professional Practice encompasses a spectrum of knowledge and skills that result in effective instruction, based on the Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards or Rhode Island Standards for Educational Leadership. For the RI Model, working groups of teachers, administrators, and other educators from around the state developed the rubrics that were field tested, revised and have been implemented since 2012-2013. Teachers are evaluated on a range of professional practices, including: the implementation of lesson plans, use of critical thinking tools, strategies to engage students and the ability to create a safe learning environment. There are two primary domains in Professional Practice for teachers: Classroom Environment and Classroom Instruction. School-based administrators are being evaluated on elements relating to their leadership skills, such as the ability to establish and maintain a school mission, the ability to evaluate staff or the ability to develop a strong collaborative culture.

According to the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, measures of “quality of instruction” (or Professional Practice) must include, at a minimum, observations of educator practice using valid and accurate observation rubrics and tools. Both formal and informal observations must be integrated into all systems. The feedback RIDE received on RI Model rubrics indicates that they can be applied to the varied settings encountered by teachers of English Learners and teachers of students with disabilities. Other systems being implemented gradually during 2011-2012 reported similar feedback. In the 2013-2014 mid-year survey building administrators affirmed that each of the six component areas in the practice rubric for building administrators is critical. Support professionals implemented the initial version of their practice rubric during 2013-2014. As a result of gradual implementation, the practice rubric for support professionals was modified to better reflect the authenticity of their roles in districts.

The evaluation rubrics and tools allow teachers, principals and support professionals to receive ongoing, timely, and constructive feedback about their professional practice that will lead toward the development of an individualized professional-development plan. Further, the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* require LEAs to collect and analyze data about individuals’ and groups of educators’ professional-development needs so as to develop coherent plans to address these needs. The evaluation system must “provide feedback on performance to all educators to support continuous professional development.”

### ***Professional Responsibility***



Professional responsibility defines the educator's role and responsibility within the learning community, including participation in decision-making, willingness to help and be helped by others in support of student learning, and efforts to advocate for students. We developed and posted on our website [rubrics](#) that outline the specific expectations for all educators regarding Professional Responsibility.

### ***Student Learning***

The most heavily weighted component of teachers', principals' and support professionals' evaluations must be based on evidence of student growth and academic achievement. We include educators' effect on student growth and achievement because we believe that this is the most important measure of the teacher, principal and support professional – and that adults' performance measures should be tied to the performance of their students. This is our mechanism to ensure that students will have access to high-quality instruction that prepares them for college, careers, and life.

### ***Student Learning: Student Learning Objectives***

Many teachers in Rhode Island have for many years been setting standards-aligned goals for their students. Teachers are planning backward to align their daily and weekly instruction with their long-term goals, giving valid and rigorous assessments on an ongoing basis to measure student progress toward their goals, and instructing their students powerfully, informed by the goals, plans, and assessments.

The Rhode Island Model and all other approved educator-evaluation systems in Rhode Island make this best practice a part of every teacher's planning and every principal's leadership, as teachers and principals set Student Learning Objectives through which evaluators will measure growth for all teachers and schools, including those who teach in grades or subjects that are not part of the state assessment system.

Student learning is best measured by looking at multiple sources. Evaluators are working with both teachers and school-based administrators to set Student Learning Objectives that measure and assess the growth of student learning in every classroom. Student Learning Objectives are specific, measurable goals based on Rhode Island content standards or other nationally recognized standards that may be aligned with the School Improvement Plan and the LEA's strategic plan. These goals are not student-specific; they are classroom-wide or relating to specific groupings of students within a classroom.

A Student Learning Objective is a long-term (typically one semester or one school year) academic goal that teachers set for groups of students. It must be specific, measurable, based on available prior student-learning data, and aligned with state standards as well as with relevant school and district priorities.

Student Learning Objectives should represent the most important learning during an interval of instruction and may be based on *progress* or *mastery*. Objectives based on



*progress* require students to make a certain amount of progress from a baseline measure toward a clear benchmark of performance (e.g., all students will move up 3 reading levels within one year). Objectives based on *mastery* require students to demonstrate a particular level of skill and knowledge in that specific course content, regardless of any baseline measures (e.g., all students will be reading level W texts by the end of the year).

Teachers work together with other teachers and administrators to develop a set of Student Learning Objectives for each grade level, course, or school. All teachers of the same course in the same school use the same set of objectives, although specific *targets* may vary if student starting points differ among classes. Teachers may add additional objectives beyond the required 2 to 4 range if their teaching context requires it (e.g., those teaching more than 4 different subjects).

Student Learning Objectives present an opportunity for teachers and administrators to be closely involved in shaping the manner in which their practice and the performance of their students is evaluated and measured. With the use of Student Learning Objectives, educators work together to determine how content should be prioritized and to establish clear expectations for how student learning should be assessed. Student Learning Objectives allow for the use of multiple measures of assessment, including existing off-the-shelf assessments and those objectives that are developed by teams of educators. Teachers and administrators set targets based upon available data for their specific population of students.

Setting and attaining Student Learning Objectives requires the purposeful use of data through both formal and informal assessments. This process recognizes and documents academic gains in tested and non-tested grades and subjects and supplements NECAP (or, beginning in 2015, PARCC) scores in tested grades and subjects. Finally, Student Learning Objectives focus instruction on district and school improvement plans and on student needs.

To ensure that all educators have the support they need to develop appropriate Student Learning Objectives, RIDE created a cross-office team to work with educators in the field and to draft guidance and sample Student Learning Objectives specifically for teachers of English Learners and teachers of students with disabilities. RIDE continues to meet with directors of special education and with the English Language Learners Advisory Council to receive feedback and guidance on the evaluation process and on Student Learning Objectives.

RIDE received significant feedback in the 2011-2012 school year indicating that teachers of students with disabilities needed more samples that addressed the various types of assignments found in their field. To meet this need, RIDE convened a small group of teachers of students with disabilities to assist in designing sample Student Learning Objectives. These educators have now written [several sample Student Learning Objectives](#) for teachers of students with disabilities.



In addition to these sample Student Learning Objectives for teachers of students with disabilities, we learned that a separate FAQ on evaluations was needed for teachers of students with disabilities. We worked with these teachers to identify the questions for the FAQ, which we posted on our website and included in the Addendum for 2013-2014.

For some educators, setting or evaluating Student Learning Objectives represented a major shift in practice. It required collaboration and the use of data that was new and, at first, challenging; however, the result will be more purposeful instruction, closer monitoring of student progress, and, ultimately, greater student achievement. Over time this process will help establish statewide perspectives on student progress and learning. Survey data from the first three years of implementation confirms this assessment. There is more focus than ever on student learning and professional conversation about student progress and achievement. Educators also report increased comfort and confidence with the SLO process, though they still report there is still room for improvement in terms of quality and rigor.

Setting Student Learning Objectives requires being able to answer three key questions. Teachers should answer these questions with their colleagues, not in isolation:

1. What are the most important things my students must learn?
2. How will I measure how much my students learn?
3. Based on what I know about my students, what is a rigorous, but attainable target for how much and at what level should my students learn? How will my students demonstrate their knowledge and skills?

Teachers begin the process of setting Objectives by working with their colleagues to determine the most important standards and content in their grade(s) and subject(s). Ideally, these discussions occur just before school starts or early in the year. In some cases, priority standards or content may already be identified by the school or district.

Once teachers identify the priority standards and content of their Student Learning Objectives, they must determine how they will measure their students' learning over the course of the year. What assessments are available? Are they of high quality? Are they common to other teachers who teach the same grade(s) and subject(s)?

Finally, teachers must gather all available data and historical information they have on current students in order to set numerical targets for how much their students will learn over the course of the instructional period. Pre-test data or assessment data from the prior year can be used to set quantifiable targets for students. Targets should always be set using the highest-quality source of evidence available. Targets should be rigorous and attainable for all students or ambitious, based on the past performance of similar cohorts of students, when taught with best practices from the school, district, or outside the district.

Horizontal and vertical consistencies are two additional critical elements to consider when setting Student Learning Objectives. When a Student Learning Objective is horizontally consistent, all teachers in the same grade-level or subject collaborate on shared Student



Learning Objectives. Vertically consistent Student Learning Objectives should be consistent with the school administration's school-level goals (for teachers in applicable subject areas and grade levels). School-level objectives, in turn, should be consistent with key district goals and priority metrics or with the school or district improvement plan.

The Student Learning Objective process is used statewide. RIDE determines the protocol for how objectives are set, monitored, and scored. LEAs have flexibility in which assessments they use in various grades and subjects and the local common-scoring rubrics they use to score student performance on those assessments. Because RIDE wants to make sure the approved educator-evaluation systems are adaptable to different contexts and in keeping with the goal of reducing duplication and unnecessary burdens on LEAs and schools, LEAs also have flexibility in determining who will evaluate teachers, especially if individuals other than administrators have conducted evaluations before.

RIDE provides training to evaluators on how to approve, monitor, and score Student Learning Objectives. RIDE is also providing direct guidance to teachers on how to set and monitor Student Learning Objectives, including a series of exemplar Student Learning Objectives for various grades and subjects that RIDE released at the beginning of the (2011-12) school year, revised for 2012-2013 and revised again for 2013-2014 while also increasing the number of samples. These exemplars served as additional guidance for implementation in the 2012-13 school year. For 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 RIDE developed a series of on-line modules to provide additional supports to the field.

In addition, RIDE built an Instructional Support System (ISS) — an online platform that houses data, curriculum, and assessment materials. The ISS, facilitates the Student Learning Objective process by making it easier for teachers and administrators to access common assessments and student-achievement data they need to make informed decisions and reduces duplication and unnecessary burdens on LEAs and schools.

During full administration of the evaluation system, teachers set 2 to 4 Student Learning Objectives and building administrators share a set of 2 to 4 Student Learning Objectives.

All Rhode Island LEAs, including the seven districts and two charter schools that have their own approved models are following the same approach to Student Learning Objectives throughout their evaluation systems.

RIDE has a long term strategy to address the quality, consistency, and rigor of the Student Learning Objective process. The SLO process will supplement the Student Growth Scores or will be the primary source of evidence when a growth score is not available. We understand the critical role that the SLO process has in the evaluation system. There is a two-pronged approach to addressing SLO quality. The first is embedded in the overall training conducted by the Office of Educator Quality and Certification and the second is by making explicit connections to the work in the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. In combination we will:

- Identify grade/course specific SLOs for all new curricula being developed. Over time, we will have ensured that high quality SLOs are built into the development of curricula;

- Train a core leadership team in every school in the state on how to use data to inform instruction and assessment decisions. Using student data to inform setting SLO targets will be a core part of this training;
- Build assessment literacy by providing access to on-line modules that are accessible to every teacher and administrator in RI. The focus on building valid and reliable curriculum embedded assessments will improve the evidence used for SLOs over time;
- Provide additional SLO exemplars and on-line modules on our web site to illustrate and explain the features of high quality SLOs;
- Introduce a suite of assessment tools through our Instructional Support System that include interim assessments, a test building engine, and item banks; and,
- Increase the amount of training on SLO writing, approval, and development as part of the four day Summer Institutes for all evaluators.

RIDE will continue to monitor the quality of SLO over the next several years. We will study the relationship between SLO scoring and Student Growth Scores for educators that have both scores. We will audit schools that have significant differences between the two measures to understand why they have occurred. Collectively we believe that these efforts will help us strengthen the SLOs while providing resources to support that goal. During 2014-2015, the Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment is already working to strengthen assessment practices through an intensive support project with four (4) LEAs (see Principle 1 Assessment Project). This group is currently working closely with a RIDE team to examine their current local assessment system in order to improve it and reduce redundancy. This work ultimately supports the SLO process because the process is grounded in local assessment systems.

### ***Student Learning: The Growth Model***

As outlined on page 9 of the Guidance for Renewal process document, RIDE is requesting flexibility that stretches beyond that which is offered in other documents. We will integrate student growth into teacher and principal evaluation beginning in 2016-2017. The following section outlines our progress to date in the calculation and use of growth scores as well as our rationale for the change.

In addition to the Student Learning Objectives, The Rhode Island Growth Model will be used to measure student learning for teachers in tested grades and subjects using PARCC beginning in the 2016-2017 school year. For these teachers, the Rhode Island Growth Model rating is based on how a teacher's students progressed in comparison with other students throughout the state who had similar scores in previous years. To increase the accuracy and precision of this growth rating, the score will reflect two years' worth of assessment data. The Rhode Island Growth Model will also be used as

an evaluation tool for school administrators, where applicable, in combination with Student Learning Objectives.

The Rhode Island Educator Evaluation system will not use the Median Growth Score (MGS) for individual educator’s summative ratings until 2016-2017 because of the transition to a new assessment and new assessment testing timeframe (fall to spring). If this transition were not taking place, Rhode Island would not delay further the use of a teacher median growth score in a final effectiveness rating. We plan to base the student learning component of the Rhode Island Educator Evaluation system on Student Learning Objectives (SLO) data which will be included in the final summative effectiveness ratings as it was in SY2012-2013. At the same time, we will emphasize the use of student growth data to inform instructional changes and practices, support calibration of SLOs, set SLO targets, and inform professional development planning. Based on Rhode Island’s Basic Education Program and Educator Evaluation Standards, LEAs can and should use summative evaluation ratings and possible median growth scores to inform their personnel decisions. Specifically, our approach maintains a strong component on student learning through the SLO process that applies to **all** teachers and building administrators while at the same time builds increased knowledge and capacity at the local level to understand how MGS can be used appropriately for improving educator effectiveness that results in improved student learning. While this delays the use of a student growth score in final effectiveness ratings for the 26% of teachers and principals in grades and content areas where growth can be calculated, our commitment to the use of growth data has not changed. Table 1 below outlines the variety of ways RI currently uses and will use growth data in the coming years. Table 2 clarifies how and when student learning evidence is included in Rhode Island’s Evaluation System.

**Table 1: Rhode Island’s Reporting and Use of Student Growth Data**

	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	<b>2015-2016</b>	<b>2016-2017</b>
Instructional Program Improvement	Current students growth data available to educators based on Fall 2012 NECAP	Current students growth data available to all educators based on Fall 2013 NECAP	Current students growth data available to all educators based on Fall 2013 NECAP	Current students growth data available to all educators based on Spring 2015 PARCC	Current students growth data available to all educators based on Spring 2016 PARCC
School Accountability System Reporting	School Growth as portion of accountability index based on NECAP	School Growth as portion of accountability index based on NECAP	School Growth as portion of accountability index based on NECAP/PARC C- pending correlation study between tests	School Growth as portion of accountability index based on PARCC	School Growth as portion of accountability index based on PARCC

Individual Educator Growth Ratings Reports and Use	Growth scores determined based on 2011-2012 rosters	One year median scores shared with all teachers via EPSS in fall 2013 (based on Fall 2012 NECAP)	Two year median scores shared with all teachers and principals via EPSS in fall 2014 (based on Fall 2013 NECAP)	Year One PARCC growth scores shared via EPSS in summer 2016.	Second Year growth scores shared and calculated in final effectiveness ratings
Use of Growth Data in the Educator Evaluation System	Emphasis on use of student growth information from GMV to understand student learning on state assessment as consider setting of SLOs	Check for the system- how growth scores compare to SLO scores, student grades and other data  Check for SLO accuracy and rigor  Data for LEAs to use when considering student and teacher assignments	Check for the system- how growth scores compare to SLO scores, student grades and other data  Check for SLO accuracy and rigor  Data for LEAs to use when considering student and teacher assignments	Check for the system- how growth scores compare to SLO scores, student grades and other data  Check for SLO accuracy and rigor.  Data for LEAs to use when considering student and teacher assignments	Integrated into Final Effectiveness Rating  Continue to use the data in ways outlined in previous years
Training and Support for Building an Understanding about Growth	Principal growth sessions to understand what growth is; summer online modules.	Admin sessions to understand student level and teacher level growth; use of on-line modules	Admin sessions to understand student level and teacher level growth; use of on-line modules.	Building a new understanding of PARCC growth and the transition from NECAP to PARCC as part of readiness for 2016-2017; modules and in person sessions.	Prepare for summer release of ratings with growth included

**Table 2: Student Learning Evidence in Rhode Island’s Evaluation System**

<b>School Year</b>	<b>Student Learning Objective Scores Included in Educator Final Effectiveness Ratings</b>	<b>MGS Derived and Used as Part of Evaluation System</b>	<b>MGS Included Educator Final Effectiveness Ratings</b>
<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>2014-2015</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>2015-2016</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes (summer 2016)</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>2016-2017</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>

Specifically, in SY 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, we completed the following steps:

- We have assigned MGS to every eligible educator within Rhode Island’s Educator Performance Support System (EPSS) in November 2013;
- In November 2014, educators were provided with a second year MGS;
- We have provided building principals access within the EPSS to view the MGS for teachers within their buildings;
- We have and will continue to provide workshops to building principals and central office administrators to learn how MGS should be reviewed for their impact on professional development, student assignments, and calibrating SLO targets.

In addition to the steps already completed we will also complete the following steps:

- We will continue to analyze SLO and state assessment data to determine the correlation between the two measures. Additional phases of analysis include reviews of data for groups of teachers as well as analysis at the individual level.
- We will continue to host training sessions and discussion sessions to build understanding of the scores and the uses of the scores. New modules or on-line courses will be developed to assist in building an understanding of the student growth scores, educator median scores and the uses of the data to inform instructional improvement and student learning.
- Even though we cannot make assumptions about how PARCC growth data will impact special educators or other groups of educators, we continued during 2013-2014 to analyze NECAP data to more deeply understand how growth scores impact educators and we will review PARCC data, once it is available, to understand how that data will impact educators.
- Our Technical Advisory Committee reviewed our approved amendment plan in March 2014 to offer feedback to RI for additional technical assistance to LEAs and additional considerations for transitioning successfully from NECAP to PARCC.

Starting in the 2013-14 school year, teachers who are responsible for student learning in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics in grades 3 through 7 and building administrators in schools with students in grades 3 through 7 will receive information based on their students’ growth on the NECAP ELA and mathematics assessments, as



compared with students with a similar academic score history, however, these scores will not be factored into the summary rating for an individual teacher. The first year of growth-model scores was available in the 2012-13 school year. We will not use the growth-model scores in evaluations, however, until we have two years of data from the PARCC assessments – that is, until 2016-2017.

RIDE will calculate the growth-model scores and supply the scores to evaluators. The scores will help determine the educator’s summative rating on Student Learning.

RIDE has developed guidance for districts to help in determining who, in addition to the teacher of record, would be a contributing educator accountable for student growth. This guidance, “A Tool to Assist in the Development of Policies and Practices for Identifying Contributing Educators,” contains detailed information about including contributing teachers, notably teachers of English Learners and teachers of students with disabilities, within the growth determinations for the evaluation system.

RIDE has engaged in substantial analyses of teacher-course-student linked growth data. As we conducted our analysis, we paid particular attention to how the results of growth-model data for teachers of English Learners and teachers of students with disabilities. In February 2012, the Rhode Island Technical Advisory Committee met to review growth data and to make recommendations to RIDE for further analysis. The RIDE Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members are national experts in their fields of educator quality and measurement. The TAC has met three or four times each year to provide guidance to RIDE on all aspects of the RI Model, including long term validity plans and monitoring implementation fidelity. RIDE used currently available NECAP data to understand the data and is now looking ahead to having PARCC data so we can understand how growth will perform. RIDE will continue to seek TAC guidance as we transition to PARCC.

We will not use student growth as a factor in evaluations until we have two consecutive years of growth data from the same assessment, that is, until 2016-2017. Two consecutive data points (e.g., a student’s test scores from his or her grade 4 and grade 5 NECAP mathematics tests) are needed to calculate Rhode Island Growth Model results. Each student’s growth is compared with that of his or her *academic peers*. Academic peers are defined as all students *statewide* with a similar PARCC score history, regardless of student demographics or program information (e.g., race/ethnicity, SES, IEP, LEP). The student’s growth is measured as a percentile from 1-99, with higher values indicating more growth relative to academic peers. For example, a student with a *Student Growth Percentile* of 90 showed more growth than 90 percent of his or her academic peers. With the Rhode Island Growth Model, a student can have a high Student Growth Percentile even when performance is not yet at a proficient level.

For a group of students (e.g., in a classroom or school), Student Growth Percentile data will be aggregated to determine the median Student Growth Percentile of the group of students. To do so, all tested students’ Student Growth Percentiles are arranged in order (i.e., 1-99) to determine the median Student Growth Percentile, which is most representative of the school or of the teacher’s students. The median Student Growth

Percentile is the point at which half of the students' Student Growth Percentiles are above and half are below.

Just as we will use the Growth Model as part of the process of evaluation of teachers, aggregating data for all tested students in their classrooms, we will also use the Growth Model as part of the process of evaluation of principals, aggregating data for all tested students in their school.

## **Implementing the Evaluation System**

### ***Field testing and implementation of the evaluation system***

RIDE field-tested the evaluation systems during the 2010-2011 school year, beginning in March, when four LEAs implemented some aspects of the Rhode Island Model, but the LEAs did not use the evaluations as the basis for any personnel decisions.

The Rhode Island Model districts and districts developing their own systems were held to the same timelines for implementation. Through the field testing (2010-2011) and gradual implementation of educator evaluations (2011-2012) in all LEAs, RIDE implemented a thoughtfully designed system that incorporates the insights and suggestions of teachers and administrators. School-based administrators and teachers in all districts participated in each element of the evaluation process, at varying levels, during gradual implementation in an effort to help everyone feel comfortable with the process. All LEAs gradually implemented their approved evaluation systems for teachers and administrators during the 2011-2012 school year. Systems were fully implemented during the 2012-2013 school year and continue to be fully implemented.

Development of a model for evaluating support professionals took place during the 2012-2013 school year with a work group of support professionals. During the 2013-2014 school year, the model was implemented gradually in all LEAs. Like the teacher and administrator models this means that support professionals participated in each element of the evaluation process, at varying levels, in an effort to prepare for full implementation. Full implementation will begin in 2016-17.

### ***Gradual implementation of the evaluation system***

All Rhode Island school LEAs gradually implemented an evaluation system during the 2011-2012 school year. All LEAs implemented approved evaluation systems on a gradual basis, with the exception of two districts that are going through implementation of the Rhode Island Model. Here is our description of gradual implementation:

An effective evaluation system is key to developing, supporting and improving the effectiveness of our educators as well as recognizing the outstanding performance of our most effective teachers and leaders. While it is substantial work to implement a new evaluation system, it is the right work. We owe it to our educators and our students to work together to overcome the challenges to implementing this new system. Before the Rhode Island Model was fully implemented in school year 2012-13, we wanted to



ensure that educators had a chance to practice implementing the system and provide feedback to RIDE. Gradual implementation allowed districts to identify challenges and begin developing solutions before implementation began in 2012-13.

During gradual implementation, LEAs engaged in all aspects of the educator-evaluation system but with fewer required observations, Student Learning Objectives, and Professional Growth Goals. Every component of the system was introduced gradually throughout the year. This approach enabled educators to acclimate to the Rhode Island Model in a year of hands-on learning, before final evaluation ratings carry more weight. Teachers set only two Student Learning Objectives and one Professional Growth Goal, and they had only two classroom observations (one long, one short). Under implementation, teachers set up to four Student Learning Objectives, as well as Professional Growth Goals and several observations. Principals also followed a gradual implementation of their own evaluation during the current school year. They established one professional goal, two student learning objectives and participate in two school site visits.

All LEAs implemented evaluation systems during the 2012-13 school year, incorporating lessons learned from the year of gradual implementation. Even beyond these initial years, we will continuously improve the evaluation systems, based on educators' feedback and experience.

During development and during the initial years of implementation, RIDE has continued to meet with and survey groups of educators to understand better the use of rubrics and the development of Student Learning Objectives/Student Outcome Objectives [Mid-year survey](#) results showed positive trends in several areas. The survey information also outlined areas of technical assistance and support still needed. Many of the challenges were and are local challenges. RIDE continues to clarify its role in supporting the local implementation of state-wide developed systems and policies.

One of the main purposes of this gradual implementation year was to give districts and schools the opportunity to develop context-specific solutions to implementation challenges. There is no one right answer to the question about how to do this well. Instituting the new system is exceptionally difficult work for districts and schools, but has been shown to dramatically impact the professionalism, culture and collegiality within schools.

During gradual implementation, each evaluator was required to complete a series of training sessions focused on the specifics of the evaluation system, including sessions on Student Learning, Professional Growth Plans, observations and feedback, and conferencing. These training sessions were led by Intermediary Service Providers—experienced teachers and administrators whom RIDE has trained. A second series of training sessions occurred for the evaluators of building administrators.

### ***Support for implementation of the evaluation system***



To ensure that teachers receive information about the model, RIDE has designed communication tools for building administrators to share directly with teachers in their schools. These materials include shorter communication documents as well as “meeting in a box” materials and on-line modules. In preparation for implementation, evaluators received more targeted follow-up training, beyond the initial orientation to the model. During the 2013-2014 school year, RIDE adjusted its training strategy in response to LEA leadership teams. After several opportunities to work across districts, teams determined more time was needed to calibrate at the local level. In lieu of state-wide trainings, RIDE staff offered [calibration sessions](#) for professional practice, SLO approval, providing feedback and scoring SLOs. During the summer of 2014, RIDE continued to offer refresher training for all evaluators. This training included training on the support professional model in preparation for implementation during 2014-2015. Additionally, RIDE continues to offer calibration sessions to districts. During 2014-2015 RIDE is partnering closely with approximately 6 principals across the state to support and better understand what is needed for high quality implementation of a system that supports improvement. Finally, the RIDE Educator Evaluation web page is updated throughout the year with additional resources, including Student Learning Objective resources.

The effective implementation of the model evaluation system depends upon having well-trained evaluators. In most cases, teachers are evaluated by their school principal. On occasion, they may be evaluated by a trained evaluator with relevant content knowledge or instructional expertise. Rhode Island LEAs may use “complementary evaluators.” These complementary evaluators may have specialized expertise in a content area or grade level and may assist the building principal or primary evaluator in completing the evaluation process. All developed guidance and rubrics for evaluations specifically address team teaching and co-teaching scenarios. All expectations of competency and of effect on student growth apply to every teacher, regardless of whether he or she is assigned as a sole classroom teacher or as a co-teacher, such as a teacher of English Learners or a teacher of students with disabilities. School-based administrators are evaluated by superintendents or their designees.

To ensure that LEAs have the capacity needed to implement the model evaluation system, trained Intermediary Service Providers (ISPs) were available to LEAs, through Race to the Top funding. Each LEA had access to ISPs for a specified number of days based on their RTTT funding. Additional days could be negotiated at the LEA’s request. The ISPs were highly trained and are available to support both evaluators and teachers as needed. Some LEAs supplemented their RTTT funding in order to release a full time educator to serve as a district Evaluation ISP. These educators were trained by RIDE with the other statewide ISPs to ensure consistency in approach. As Rhode Island approaches the end of Race to the Top, districts have shifted their attention to building local capacity. Principal caseload continues to be a challenge for Rhode Island, but other educators in varied roles are supporting the implementation of evaluation systems. The calibration sessions implemented during 2013-2014 are all designed using protocols that can be replicated and implemented easily by local leaders as follow up sessions in the future or as sessions conducted with teachers in order to deepen



their understanding of the system. Some of the supports that ISPs have provided to LEAs include: conducting observations; helping teachers set student-learning objectives; supporting conferences; giving feedback; holding district- or school-level information or training sessions; and supporting and collaborating with principals and teachers in the implementation of the model evaluation system. As confidence and comfort levels have increased during the first two years of implementation, the need for ISP support has decreased. This is a positive indication that LEAs are taking ownership of the quality of implementation of the systems.

In hiring the ISPs, RIDE established the following qualifications as criteria for applicants:

- evidence of strong leadership and facilitation skills;
- previous experience developing and leading teacher professional development;
- excellent project-management and organization skills;
- excellent oral-communication and writing skills;
- outstanding critical-thinking skills;
- the ability to work effectively with others at all levels of an organization;
- capacity to work independently and to manage multiple responsibilities simultaneously;
- the ability to identify challenges and to be flexible to actively work to find solutions;
- outstanding interpersonal and teamwork skills;
- openness and responsiveness to feedback;
- comfort working with computers and strong working knowledge of the Microsoft Office suite;
- familiarity with a range of school settings within Rhode Island, including high-need schools; and,
- holding or recently holding valid certification as a teacher or administrator or having recent experience in higher education.

Evaluation ISPs are responsible for:

- leading training for district personnel or teams on the evaluation system; and,
- supporting districts, schools, and educators with on-the-ground evaluation system implementation and technical support (e.g., collaborating with principals, teachers and district administrators; calibrating and norming ratings).

Some of the supports that ISPs provide to LEAs include:

- conducting observations;
- helping teachers set student-learning objectives;
- supporting conferences;

- giving feedback;
- holding district- or school-level information or training sessions; and,
- supporting and collaborating with principals and teachers in the implementation of the model evaluation system.

### ***Providing guidance on evaluations***

To ensure successful implementation of systems of educator evaluation in Rhode Island, RIDE is engaged in an ambitious training schedule for all evaluators in LEAs that have selected the Rhode Island Model. In 2011 every LEA submitted a list of evaluators for every school and within the central office. Once identified, it is required that they attend all required training. We repeat the summer training over multiple weeks and locations in order to ensure that everyone can coordinate training with their summer schedules.

During the 2011- 2012 school year, training involved four “modules.” All evaluators received training through these modules. Training continued in the summers of 2012, 2013 and 2014, with four-day training seminars. . . Here is a description of the summer academies:

**Academy for Personnel Evaluating Teachers (New Evaluator):** Four-day rigorous training (9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. each day) seeking to prepare personnel evaluating teachers to accurately observe and rate practice, lead professional feedback conversations, set and approve Student Learning Objectives, and engage with the Educator Performance and Support System.

**Academy for Personnel Evaluating Building Administrators:** Three-day rigorous training (9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. each day) seeking to prepare personnel evaluating building administrators to conduct effective school visits and accurately rate performance, lead professional feedback conversations, approve school wide Student Learning Objectives, and engage with the Educator Performance and Support System.

During the summer of 2013, 2 day follow up trainings were required for all evaluators. During the 2013-2014 school year, RIDE has replaced traditional training sessions with calibration sessions. Each LEA must participate in two of four calibration sessions. . . They focus on professional practice, approving SLOs, providing feedback and scoring SLOs. Finally, during summer 2014 RIDE again required two-day training for all evaluators of teachers and support professionals. During the 2014-2015 school year RIDE is partnering with a small group of principals for deep support around implementation. A new calibration session is also being offered to all districts for the support professional model. Descriptions of the summer training sessions can be found here- [Summer Training Resources - Educator Evaluation - Teachers & Administrators Excellent Educators - Rhode Island Department of Education \(RIDE\)](#).

RIDE has also provided training for educators in the seven districts and two charter schools that have *not* selected the Rhode Island Model, regarding the use of Student



Learning Objectives as one of the valid and reliable measures of Student Learning. These districts and schools must also participate in two of the four calibration sessions during 2013-2014 and must continue to participate in summer training

In addition to these resources for evaluators, all LEAs have their own District Evaluation Committee to ensure successful implementation of the evaluation system at the local level.

District evaluation systems are an integral part of the district human-capital management system and are supported by district educators who regularly review and revise the system in response to systematic feedback and changing district needs.

All districts must establish and support a District Evaluation Committee that includes teachers, support professionals, administrators, and union representatives. The committee solicits feedback from others (e.g., students, parents, assessment experts), who bring added perspective or expertise when appropriate. The committee reviews the effectiveness of the evaluation system; the validity and utility of the data produced by the system; the fairness, accuracy, and consistency of decisions made; and the currency of the system. The committee then uses the information from the analysis to make recommendations for revisions to the system. Finally, the District Evaluation Committee communicates data from the evaluation system to district personnel responsible for strategic planning and professional development to work in partnership toward a coherent approach to educator quality, professional development, and continuous organizational improvement.

The District Evaluation Committee works with district leadership to assure the resources of time, financial support, and evaluation expertise necessary to maintain the quality of the evaluation system.

### **Reviewing and Approving Evaluation Systems**

To comply with state regulations, including the Rhode Island Standards for Educator Evaluation (*RI Educator Evaluation Standards*) and the Rhode Island Basic Education Program (BEP), LEAs must either:

- *adapt* their own educator evaluation system to “primarily” include student growth and achievement and meet state standards; or
- *adopt* a state-provided educator evaluation system, the *Rhode Island Educator Evaluation Model System* (The Rhode Island Model).

Each LEA is responsible for meeting the RIDE reporting requirements for assuring the quality of educator evaluation.

RIDE has developed a detailed and rigorous rubric based on the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards to approve all systems*. The rubric addresses:

- the quality of the design, rubrics, and instruments used to measure educators' professional practice, responsibilities, and content knowledge;
- how well evaluation systems ensure fairness, accuracy, and consistency of educator ratings;
- the engagement of principals, support professionals, and teachers in ongoing evaluation system development;
- how the district uses evaluation results to inform key human resource decisions; and
- how systems use evaluation data to create professional development plans.

RIDE holds LEAs accountable for the use of evaluation data for the purposes designated in their approved evaluation-system designs. The integration of information generated from LEA-reported educator evaluations and the Rhode Island teacher-certification database along with the student information in the RIDE DataHub will allow RIDE to collect, analyze, and report extensive data. RIDE will have the capacity to use this information to monitor the extent to which LEAs are actually using evaluations to inform decisions about educator assignment, professional development, compensation, promotion, tenure, renewal, and termination, and RIDE will support LEAs to help ensure that they are using educator evaluations to develop cadres of highly effective teachers and school leaders.

### ***Valid measures for evaluations***

An evaluation based on multiple measures, including observations of practice and evidence of student learning, provides the best and most complete assessment of educator effectiveness. Neither observations nor test scores alone should be the sole basis of an evaluation. Many validation safeguards have been built into the system, including training for evaluators, ongoing refinement of the system, and the opportunity to review an evaluation if a teacher or administrator feels it is inaccurate.

Rhode Island's winning application to Race to the Top, which netted \$75 million in federal funds, included a commitment to the creation of an educator-evaluation system focused on professional growth and student learning. In addition to RIDE's in-house experts, a team of evaluation specialists was trained to support schools with the ongoing evaluation process.

Rhode Island educator-evaluation systems must meet certain criteria regarding the evaluators and their training in order to ensure that the valid measures are used consistently and accurately across all schools in each district. All Rhode Island educator-evaluation systems must:

- use evaluators who are trained and able to make valid and accurate judgments;
- ensure that the evaluation team as a whole has sufficient diversity of experience and content knowledge to accurately assess educators across subjects, grades, and programs (including ELL and special education settings); and,

- include norming mechanisms to regularly confirm the accuracy and reliability of evaluator ratings.

Evaluation systems in Rhode Island will continue to improve based on educators' experiences and continued feedback from the Technical Advisory Committee, from educators in the field, and from formal reviews of the data.

At the state level, RIDE will periodically audit the evaluation process within districts to ensure that evaluations are fair and accurate and that they adhere to the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*. Additionally, all evaluators will be trained and must demonstrate the ability to make accurate judgments.

As we developed our Educator Performance and Support System, the data platform that supports the implementation and management of educator-evaluation systems across Rhode Island, the platform generates LEA level reports that will serve as warning flags, indicating when the LEA should conduct an audit of the evaluation system. RIDE will identify similar warning flags using multiple data sources available at the state level, including a review of ratings in all components of the system to identify large discrepancies that merit further review.

Each LEA is responsible for ensuring that its evaluation system is implemented with fidelity by reviewing the accuracy and utility of the data produced and by viewing the decisions made for fairness and consistency. Each LEA must provide procedural safeguards to ensure the integrity of the system, including evaluation appeals. Appeals will be handled at the LEA level, in accordance with LEA policy and practice, collective-bargaining agreements, and processes set forth by the District Evaluation Committee. In the event that an evaluation process yields a contradictory outcome (e.g., a teacher has an extremely high Student Learning rating and an extremely low rating in Professional Practice and Professional Responsibilities), a review of the evaluation will be conducted at the LEA level.

All approved educator-evaluation systems in Rhode Island must align with the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, the Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards, the Rhode Island Educator Code of Professional Responsibility, and the Standards for Educational Leadership in Rhode Island (Leadership Standards). The Rhode Island Model aligns with all of these standards and uses valid and reliable measures to evaluate Professional Practice, Professional Responsibilities, and, as described in 3.A.ii., evidence of student growth and achievement based on statewide assessments, student-learning objectives, and other measures of student learning.

Those LEAs that chose *not* to adopt the Rhode Island Model had to meet the same criteria as outlined in the District Guidelines for approval of evaluation systems, which include evidence of quality of instruction, of student learning, and of professional responsibilities. For approval of their systems, these LEAs had to submit to RIDE a description of the evaluation instruments and how they are to be used.



To ensure that measures are valid and reliable, the application for LEAs seeking approval of an evaluation system includes these requirements and questions:

Provide an overview of the evaluation of teachers by listing each instrument and providing a brief description.

How is teacher observation included in the evaluation of quality of instruction? Describe the instrument(s) used and attach copies of the instrument (e.g., directions, rubric, forms, and feedback) to this proposal.

In your description, address all of the following points:

- What is the process of observation?
- What Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards are measured in the observation?
- How frequently is observation conducted?
- What are the possible ratings from the observation?
- What other parameters govern the observation?
- What feedback is provided?
- Who conducts the observation?
- What qualifications are necessary to be an observer?
- How are they trained and how are their evaluations monitored for continued accuracy?
- What other information would help RIDE understand the instrument(s)?

How evidence of student learning is included in the teacher's evaluation? Describe the instrument(s) used and attach copies of the instrument (e.g., directions, rubric, forms, and feedback) to this proposal.

In your description, address all of the following points:

- What is the process of evidence selection and review?
- What Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards are measured in the review?
- How frequently is the review conducted?
- What are the possible ratings from the review?
- What other parameters govern the review?
- What feedback is provided?
- Who conducts the review?
- What qualifications are necessary to be a reviewer?
- How are they trained and how are their evaluations monitored for continued accuracy?
- What other information would help RIDE understand the instrument(s)?

How are teacher professional responsibilities evaluated in the system? Describe the instrument(s) used and attach copies of the instrument (e.g., directions, rubric, forms, and feedback) to this proposal.

In your description, address all of the following points:

- What is the process of evidence selection and review?
- What Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards are measured in the review?
- How frequently is the review conducted?
- What are the possible ratings from the review?
- What other parameters govern the review?
- What feedback is provided?
- Who conducts the review?
- What qualifications are necessary to be a reviewer?
- How are they trained and how are their evaluations monitored for continued accuracy?
- What other information would help RIDE understand the instrument(s)?

## **Use of Evaluations**

### ***Using evaluations to improve instruction***

The *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* provide procedural safeguards to ensure fairness and professional-development plans to enable educators to grow professionally and to improve their effectiveness. This system serves as our new framework for making human-capital decisions.

The evaluation system must provide each educator with specific and actionable feedback on his or her individual performance, including impact on student growth and achievement, and recommendations for professional growth. Once the growth model is in use (2016-17), RIDE will provide principals and teachers in tested grades and subjects with reports on their own effect on student growth and achievement in their classrooms or schools as an additional data point for reflection on instructional needs. There is a focus on support and development for every Rhode Island teacher and building administrator at the heart of the educator evaluation now in place in Rhode Island. This commitment is critical to ensuring that educators continuously improve their practice.

Using Race to the Top funds, RIDE embedded the use of educator-evaluation data into every aspect of human-capital management in Rhode Island public schools. The BEP and the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* require that evaluation systems inform the types of ongoing professional development needed by individual educators and groups of educators. The information generated from evaluations enable LEAs, principals, and teachers to make better-informed decisions about the specific, most appropriate types of professional development that individual educators need.



Rhode Island is still committed to the use of educator evaluation data to inform individual and collective professional development. The Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS) allows district and building administrators to run reports in order to identify these needs. The integration of educator-evaluation data and the Rhode Island certification database into the Rhode Island longitudinal data system (Data Hub) in the future will allow RIDE and the LEAs to review reports that connect aggregate student data with educator data plan professional-development initiatives. RIDE will be launching a professional development platform that will allow LEAs and RIDE to post online courses and other professional development offerings. Offerings will be tagged to areas of teacher practice and student achievement. The rating and tracking of professional development will allow RIDE to determine the efficacy of professional-development offerings and providers over time in order to inform future investments. This tracking will reduce duplication and unnecessary burdens on LEAs and on schools. The state and LEAs will have access to information about the quality of professional development offered in order to select the most effective professional development for identified local needs. Finally, the renewal of educator certification is linked to evaluation results. Individuals who receive ratings of Developing or Ineffective complete improvement plans. RIDE audits educators to review the plan of a percentage of these educators as part of the renewal process.

RIDE will encourage state and federal dollars to fund only those providers who have a proven track record of improving educator effectiveness. RIDE will also produce reports on the results of different professional-development providers in order to allow LEAs and individual educators to select the most effective professional development for identified local needs.

The Rhode Island Basic Education Program (BEP) requires that LEAs develop systems to assign and promote educators based on evidence of their effectiveness. Going forward, LEAs will use professional-development dollars more efficiently and effectively because our evaluation and support systems will provide specific feedback tied to educator competencies and linked with the Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards.

A rigorous, transparent, and fair educator-evaluation system is essential to our commitment to have an effective teacher in every classroom and an effective principal in every school in Rhode Island. The manner in which RIDE and the LEAs use data from educator evaluations is critical to this effort. Pursuant to the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, LEAs must have in place processes to use evaluation results for the following purposes:

- providing individualized feedback on performance to all teachers, principals, and support professionals, including detailed analysis of their performance (based on student growth) and recommendations for professional growth and development; and,
- supporting continuous professional development and improvement;

Teacher and principal evaluation and support systems in Rhode Island result in differentiated professional development that meets the needs of teachers.



Pursuant to the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, LEAs must have in place processes to use evaluation results for improving performance of ineffective educators by providing intensive support and evaluation specifically designed to improve their performance and dismissing those who are unable or unwilling improve in a timely manner.

Any administrator or teacher who receives a rating of developing or ineffective must have the opportunity to improve. With the support of the evaluator, he or she will create an improvement plan and identify sources of support and training, as well as benchmarks and timelines for improvement. The Rhode Island Model links an educator's evaluation, which identifies strengths and areas for development, with that educator's personal reflection on his or her practice and an individualized Professional Growth Plan.

To develop a Professional Growth Plan, each educator completes a self-assessment at the beginning of the school year, when they reflect on their past performance, consider relevant student learning data, and set professional goals for the upcoming year. Educators use the Professional Practice and Professional Responsibilities Rubrics to identify both strengths and areas for development and to ensure that their goals are aligned with the competencies on which they will be evaluated.

Professional Growth Goals must be specific and measurable, with clear benchmarks for success. Support and development vary depending on goals identified by individual educators. All educators participate in ongoing, job-embedded professional development, such as peer observation or participation in a professional learning community, all designed to help them achieve their goals. Collaborative, professional conversation about performance between educators and their evaluators helps educators to improve their practice over the course of the year.

### ***Using evaluations to inform personnel decisions***

Pursuant to the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, LEAs must have in place processes to use evaluation results for the following purposes:

- creating incentives for highly effective educators, including establishing a process to identify individuals or groups of educators who demonstrate exemplary effectiveness and recognize and capitalize on their talents through differentiated roles and responsibilities, formal recognition, or other incentives; and,
- providing objective information to support meaningful renewal and tenure decisions.

To obtain RIDE approval of their educator-evaluation systems, all Rhode Island LEAs must demonstrate that they have processes and policies in place to use data for at least the purposes listed above. LEAs that adopt the Rhode Island Model system must also document how they use evaluation data for the purposes listed above or adopt model processes and policies recommended by RIDE in these areas. Thus, all Rhode Island LEAs use educator-evaluation data captured from LEA evaluation systems to develop, promote, recognize and reward, renew or retain, assign, and terminate teachers and



principals. The use of the data began in 2012-2013. LEAs continue to develop human capital policies using educator evaluation data.

In order to gain state approval for its evaluation system, each LEA also had to demonstrate that it will use educator-evaluation data to make decisions about promotion into leadership positions (i.e., mentor teacher, grade-level or discipline chair, or, with proper certification, assistant principal, principal, or other equivalent roles). Similarly, principals who demonstrate highly effective performance should be considered for principal-mentor roles and central-office leadership positions. Only those educators who have consistently been rated effective or highly effective on the LEA's educator-evaluation system will be considered by LEAs as eligible for promotion to positions of increased leadership, including transfer of a principal from one school to another..

RIDE requires LEAs to set ambitious goals for improving teacher and principal effectiveness. It is vital that LEAs also develop targeted goals for developing systems that empower teachers and principals to improve performance, evaluate out ineffective teachers and principals, and assign effective teachers and principals to fill vacancies. These are important steps to strengthen the use of educator-effectiveness data to inform key human-capital management decisions.

Rhode Island believes that differentiated compensation, linked to evidence of effectiveness, can be an important lever in recruiting and retaining the best teachers and principals to improve student achievement. Our Strategic Plan, *Transforming Education in Rhode Island*, indicates that RIDE will lead a collaborative effort to review and analyze research regarding the successful implementation of performance-based compensation systems that districts can adopt by 2015.

Using Race to the Top funds, RIDE funded two programs through competitive grants to LEAs, multi-LEA collaboratives, or LEA-union partnerships. Two grants were awarded. One project focused on the development of a teacher leader pathway while the other has resulted in the redesign of principal compensation schedules. RIDE provided consulting support on compensation reform to help these LEAs design robust new performance-based compensation models. RIDE provided consulting support on compensation reform to help these LEAs design robust new performance-based compensation models. In the end, Rhode Island has two viable models for LEAs to adopt or use as guidance for their own compensation systems.

Our evaluation system is designed to enable LEAs to dismiss ineffective teachers and principals after two years of ineffective evaluations. Individuals must receive fair and valid evaluations and opportunities to improve their practice; however, an educator who continues to underperform, as evidenced through the documentation and data from the evaluation system, will be dismissed by the LEA. This does not preclude LEAs from dismissing ineffective teachers and principals before two years, if evidence merits dismissal.



RIDE will also use evaluation data to place into state-sponsored leadership roles only those educators who have had a positive effect on student academic growth and who have demonstrated an ability to lead others to increased measures of success. All state-sponsored educator training and support programs will use effective and highly effective evaluation as an essential, nonnegotiable selection factor. No teacher will be permitted to advance to these state-sponsored leadership roles without achieving effective or highly effective levels on his or her evaluation. Further, to inform state-level policy decisions, we will use this evaluation data over time to understand and document how teachers are being cultivated, supported, assigned, and removed.

Although a single teacher can have a profound impact on student learning over one year, that effect generally diminishes if a student does not have equally effective teachers in subsequent years, with half the gains being lost the following year and nearly all of the gains lost within two years. To ensure that students have continual years of effective teachers, the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* allow Rhode Island to link teacher-effectiveness ratings to the students whom those teachers teach and to identify students who are taught in any year by an ineffective teacher. Under the BEP and the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, LEAs must ensure that any student who is taught by an ineffective teacher in one year is assigned to an effective or highly effective teacher in the next.

The BEP requires LEAs to “address staffing of low-performing schools with highly effective” staff to make up for previous disproportionate staffing of less effective teachers to high-need students. The educator-evaluation data system will enable RIDE to annually monitor whether districts are placing ineffective teachers in such schools. Rhode Island’s Equity Plan will also integrate the use of effectiveness data to build our understanding of any gaps in access to excellent educators and to identify strategies for reducing the equity gaps.

Using information from the evaluation system, RIDE will build principal capacity to hire effective teachers based on mutual consent. RIDE focuses on building the capacity of principals—particularly those in low-performing, high-poverty LEAs—to screen and hire effective applicants. As part of our implementation of the educator-evaluation system, RIDE will provide training for all the principals and superintendents in the state on effective teacher observation and evaluation.

The *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* call for LEAs to provide appropriate levels of support based on evaluation findings. RIDE requires LEAs to report annually on the number of teachers and principals who received evaluations of ineffective, developing, effective, and highly effective; the number of educators terminated annually as a result of “ineffective” evaluations; and the evaluation history of those teachers and principals during their terms of employment with the LEA. This reporting requirement will allow RIDE to ensure that LEAs are in fact dismissing those teachers and principals who repeatedly demonstrate ineffective teaching and to ensure that termination decisions are accurate and fair.

Prior to the adoption of the BEP, Rhode Island had an ambitious and U.S. Department of Education-commended teacher equity plan, focused primarily on the equitable distribution of “highly qualified teachers” based on certification (as defined under NCLB) and other credential measures. Based on research from the field, we understand that these measures are not adequate to ensure that children in high-poverty and high-minority schools have equitable access to highly effective teachers. Thus, we will use our educator-evaluation system standards to monitor and drive action to improve the equitable distribution of and equitable access to teachers and principals. Through our data-management system, we will monitor the distribution of highly effective, effective, developing, and ineffective teachers and principals across classrooms, schools, and LEAs, and will use these data as well as component level data to hold LEAs accountable for achieving an equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals with highly effective teachers and principals going to struggling schools and classrooms. RIDE will collect and analyze data on the numbers of highly effective, effective, developing, and ineffective teachers and principals at each school in the state; differences between high- and low-poverty and high- and low-minority schools statewide and within each LEA; and differences across different types of teaching assignments (for example, general and AP courses) both statewide and in each LEA and school. Additionally, RIDE will study the experience of teachers and leaders in these settings and monitor the assignments of all educators.

## **Continuous Improvement of Evaluation Systems**

### ***Teacher and principal involvement***

During the first year of implementation, RIDE conducted webinars, drop-in sessions and surveys to gather feedback from educators in the field. RIDE continues to seek input and to respond to concerns from educators regarding the evaluation system, through work groups, a dedicated email account, state-wide surveys and in-person sessions. The Educator Evaluation Committee currently serves as a significant feedback loop for implementation successes and concerns. The Committee includes Superintendents and Principals. Periodically, the committee meets with teacher representation to review possible system changes.

RIDE publicizes through the weekly Field Memo and through list-serves, with messages such as this one:

Do you have questions about the Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation and don't know where to find answers? Join us for a conversation about implementation of the Rhode Island Model.

We are offering some sessions as drop-in sessions and some in an online webinar. The drop-in sessions do not require registration.

On February 1, 2012, RIDE partnered with the National Education Association – Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals to co-



host a webinar for all educators on evaluations and to provide the latest updates on the evaluation system. During February 2012, RIDE conducted an online statewide survey for teachers on educator evaluations. The survey asked teachers questions about their experiences with the evaluations as well as about their perspective on evaluation systems in general. Later that month, RIDE opened an online survey of principals on educator evaluations. RIDE continued to conduct state-wide surveys during 2013-2014.

In addition, Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist held teacher meetings in every LEA in Rhode Island during the previous (2010-11) school year in order to discuss the evaluation system directly with teachers so as to respond to concerns and to receive feedback. The Commissioner invited all teachers in each LEA to join her at these meetings, and she provided her e-mail address to all teachers in order to respond to follow-up questions as necessary. These meetings were closed to the public in order to allow teachers to express their views frankly to the Commissioner.

Finally, RIDE received feedback throughout the 2011-2012 school year from the two districts that have agreed to be “early adopters” and to go through implementation of the Rhode Island Model. RIDE conducted focus groups and surveys of teachers and school leaders to obtain information about the process of implementation of an educator-evaluation system so as to guide our work going forward toward implementation in all LEAs during the 2012-2013 school year. During 2013-2014 additional groups were established for support professionals, a work group for revisions to building administrator evaluation and a work group for long term planning of evaluation system adjustments. Recommendations for modifications to the support professional models and building administrator models are in effect for 2014-2015. The Educator Evaluation Advisory Committee is currently reviewing implementation over the past two years to make recommendations for system modifications in 2015-2016. They are considering future modifications to the weights of system components and the scoring approach for all Rhode Island systems.

### ***Feedback received and goals for improvement***

Some of the feedback we have received to date include:

- the paperwork and the time required to complete the beginning-of-the-year components (e.g., self-assessment, professional growth plan, Student Learning Objectives) is a significant concern;
- writing Student Learning Objectives is complicated, especially for special educators;
- the Teacher Professional Practice rubric should be streamlined to eliminate redundancy and to clarify expectations for observable and non-observable areas;
- the current weights don't adequately emphasize the importance of practice; and,
- the evaluation conferences are meaningful and focused on how to improve practice, but preparing for them requires a lot of work.

Some of our goals for incorporating this feedback and improving our evaluations are to:

- increase clarity related to expectations, requirements, and timelines;

- 
- streamline the process and forms to address capacity issues while maintaining a robust model that yields accurate ratings and fosters professional growth- forms have been streamlined to reduce the amount of time on paperwork;
  - review rubric competencies to identify redundancy- practice rubrics have all undergone one round of revisions to eliminate redundancy;
  - review the current weights and scoring approaches for the 2015-2016 school year; and,
  - examine the number of required professional goals- the number of required goals was reduced.

## Attachment 1: Notice to LEAs

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo  
Friday, March 14, 2014**

**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

1. Rhode Island receives approval for Race to the Top no-cost extension
2. Next year's junior class to take NECAP, not PARCC assessments
3. RIDE developing options for cyclical structures within annual educator-evaluation systems
4. Housing aid available for repairs needed for health and safety
5. Families informed about PARCC Field Test
6. NECAP retest process completed
7. Presentation scheduled on Common Core, PARCC

**From the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE)**

***Health and Safety:***

8. National Youth HIV and AIDS Awareness Day to be held April 10

**From the U.S. Department of Education**

9. Information released on federal budget, early learning, FAFSAs, nutrition, poster contest, emergency preparedness
10. New round of Investing in Innovation grants announced
11. Schools, students encouraged to sign up for updates on First Lady's visit to China

#### **From other federal agencies**

12. U.S. Department of Labor awarding grants for education of disadvantaged youth

#### **From other organizations**

13. College Board seeking nominations for Guidance and Admission Assembly Council
14. ResilientKids to hold workshop on mindfulness
15. Boston Globe offers classroom materials to Rhode Island educators

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#### **Action Item Calendar**

March 28: Distinguished Educator recommendations due

March 28: Textbook lists due

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### **Notes from Commissioner Gist**

#### **1. Rhode Island receives approval for Race to the Top no-cost extension**

Over the course of the four years of our Race to the Top federal grant, we have used the \$75 million to support transforming education in Rhode Island. Among the major initiatives the grant has supported are:

- professional development for educators on transition to the Common Core State Standards,
- development by educators of curriculum in English language arts and mathematics aligned with the standards,
- professional development for educators on the use of data,
- implementation of annual evaluations for all educators,
- induction program and supports for new teachers,
- academy for training aspiring principals,
- development and implementation of virtual learning math modules for students.

At this time, Rhode Island has met almost all goals in our Race to the Top application, and the state and all 52 participating school districts have expended almost all of the \$75 million grant

funding. This entire project has been a success thanks to the ongoing and extensive partnerships formed among RIDE and the teams from your LEA and all other participating LEAs. I am deeply grateful for your hard work and support as we have implemented these many new systems and initiatives over the past four years.

On Wednesday, we learned that the U.S. Department of Education has approved our request for a no-cost extension to our Race to the Top Scope of Work, which will give us additional time to complete a few specific projects that RIDE initiated using funds from the grant. As its name implies, the no-cost extension will entail no additional cost to Rhode Island; rather, it gives us an additional year to expend remaining funds and to achieve our Race to the Top goals.

The U.S. Department of Education has approved our request to use \$2.4 million in remaining funds. Of this total, \$1,952,000 will enable RIDE to complete work on a system, now known as the Instructional Support System, that will provide all educators with support and resources, including:

- information to better serve our students;
- a bank of Common Core-aligned items, for classroom use;
- model lesson plans and units of study;
- assessments for measuring student progress (Interim Assessments); and
- other resources and information that support teaching and learning.

The Instructional Management System is still available for your use. The redesign of the system, which will be called the Instructional Support System, is under way; phase 1 will be ready

for use in June, and the redesign will be completed by the end of the calendar year.

As our team discussed with you yesterday at the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association general meeting, you have met your commitments regarding this Race to the Top-funded initiative, so no further steps on your part are necessary for you to begin using the Instructional Support System. Thanks to the no-cost extension, however, you will have the opportunity to request unspent Race to the Top funds to further your expertise in the use of the data and resources in the Instructional Support System.

Our no-cost extension provides funding for two additional components of the Race to the Top Scope of Work:

- \$200,000 for develop a “platform” to provide educators with better access to professional development; and
- approximately \$280,000 to provide additional professional development to educators preparing to work in the lowest-achieving schools.

Our Race to the Top team will communicate further with you regarding potential changes to your approved Scope of Work, the rollout schedule of the Instructional Support System, and opportunities for further professional development regarding data, resources, and support for struggling schools.

I am very pleased to say that, thanks to this no-cost extension, Rhode Island is on course to expend all Race to the Top funds and to meet the goals agreed to in our Race to the Top Scope of Work.

## **2. Next year’s junior class to take NECAP, not PARCC assessments**

One topic we discussed this week at the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association general meeting concerned our testing schedule for the next school year (2014-15). I know there has been some confusion in the field, so I want to clarify the matter: Next year's junior class (Class of 2016) will take the NECAP assessments in the fall (October 2014); next year's junior class will *not* be required to take the PARCC assessments and the students will not be "double-tested." Next year's freshman and sophomore classes will take PARCC assessments, beginning in the Spring of 2015. These students (Class of 2017 and Class of 2018) will be the first to take the PARCC assessments as part of both our annual state assessments and our diploma system.

As you may be aware, we will describe these accountability-system revisions in the application we will submit to the U.S. Department of Education for an extension of our Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver. To help guide us in developing this application, we are working with a focus group, which includes superintendents and heads of school. I am interested in any and all feedback from the field, so if you have any comments or concerns about these revisions to our accountability system please feel free to share your concerns with me. Your opinions (including support for our transition to the PARCC assessments) will help us prepare our request for a waiver extension.

### **3. RIDE developing options for cyclical structures within annual educator-evaluation systems**

Last year, based on feedback we received, we put in place the option for differentiated educator evaluations, which has reduced the workload and streamlined the process for evaluators – but we know that there is more to do. Over the past several months, we

have been working with folks from a handful of LEAs and we have been using feedback from our mid-year educator-evaluation surveys to review the differentiated model for educator evaluations. Our goal is to see how we can create cyclical structures (something many have been advocating) within the system of annual evaluations. We plan to come up with some options for LEAs, which you will be able to try out locally, as early as the coming school year. We will be providing you with more information about these cyclical structures in future communications.

#### **4. Housing aid available for repairs needed for health and safety**

You may have seen a news story last week that reported on unhealthy conditions in one of our public schools. The report implied that state funding (housing aid) would not be available for repair work in this school because of the current moratorium on school construction. Please keep in mind that maintaining the health and safety of our students and staff members is our highest priority. The current moratorium on school construction does allow for construction or repairs necessary “for immediate health and safety reasons,” (RIGL 16-7-41.1) and several such emergency projects have received approval during the time of the moratorium.

As a reminder from our Office of Statewide Efficiencies, state law requires annual school-facility inspections by local or state building inspectors and fire chiefs, as well as by other authorities having jurisdiction. Establishing and maintaining high standards for indoor environmental quality requires ongoing maintenance and operations efforts involving all members of the educational community. On our website, you can access applicable healthy

school-building laws and regulations, posted under our Coordinated School Health Program and School Construction Program.

## **5. Families informed about PARCC Field Test**

As we prepare for the beginning of the PARCC Field Test on **March 24**, I have prepared this letter to all friends of education, which we will distribute over the next few days through our list-serve and on social media:

As we continue working together to transform education in Rhode Island, one of our top priorities has been adopting college- and career-ready standards that clearly state what our students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Over the past three years, we have worked with teachers and school leaders across the state to prepare for the new Common Core State Standards, and I am pleased that this year these standards are guiding instruction in all of our public schools.

Another priority for us has been developing assessments to help us see whether students have mastered the Common Core State Standards. In partnership with educators in 16 other states, we have been working for three years to develop a new set of assessments called PARCC (Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers). Next year, our schools will transition to these new PARCC assessments. Students in grades 3 through 10 will take PARCC assessments in the spring of 2015. (Students in grade 11 will take the NECAP, in October 2014.)

To help everyone get ready for PARCC, about 9,000 students in most of our schools will participate in a PARCC “field test,” beginning on Monday, March 24. For most participating students, this practice test will take a total of about 3 to 5 hours, over two or three sessions. The experience of participating in the practice run will give students and teachers the opportunity to become more familiar with PARCC, helping to get them ready for the actual assessments next year. Keep in mind that there will be no report of results from this year’s practice run, so there is no need for any anxiety about performance during the field test. And by the way – we expect glitches to occur during the practice run. We want to iron out the bugs now so that everything will go more smoothly when we roll out PARCC assessments next year.

I truly believe PARCC assessments will improve teaching and learning in our state in several ways. Like our current assessments, PARCC assessments will ask students to provide written responses to many questions, giving students the opportunity to show what they know and can do. Unlike our current assessments, however, PARCC will be offered in the spring – in line with the materials students are taking in their current classes. Unlike the NECAP, students will take PARCC assessments during two separate testing windows – but the total number of testing hours will be very similar to the current testing schedule: about 9 hours per student, depending on grade level. (One difference is that PARCC will assess writing proficiency in grades 3 through 11, not in three grades only.)

For most students, PARCC will be computer-based and therefore more engaging for students. Teachers will receive

results much more quickly than they received NECAP results, so they can use information from PARCC to better guide instruction and to support individual students. Of course the questions on PARCC line up with the standards in the Common Core, so the PARCC material will be familiar to our teachers and to the students taking the assessments. We have posted a number of helpful materials on PARCC assessments on our [website](#), and the PARCC consortium [website](#) has important materials on the field test as well.

Our students have made significant progress over the past five years, and I believe the Common Core and the new PARCC assessments will help us continue on the right course in the coming years. The PARCC field test will be an important step on this exciting journey!

## **6. NECAP retest process completed**

On Tuesday, we completed the NECAP retake process for high-school seniors who had not yet fulfilled the state-assessment component of the Diploma System. I am extremely grateful for the excellent organization and the spirit of hope and accomplishment that our assessment team encountered in school districts across the state. The hard work and positive attitude from you, your staff members, and your students made this process proceed smoothly. Every report I have received has emphasized that the students and staff members took this retest opportunity seriously, that students were trying hard to show their best work throughout the testing, and that many students felt proud and optimistic on the completion of the assessments. We will have results for you by the end of next month, and I believe that many students will show improvement and that the

Class of 2014 will be more ready for success beyond high school than any other graduating class from our state.

### **7. Presentation scheduled on Common Core, PARCC**

The Rhode Island ASCD has announced a professional-development opportunity, "Keeping Up with the Core: What Rhode Island Educators Need to Know to Implement Common Core Thoughtfully and Prepare Purposefully for PARCC," to be held on **Wednesday** (March 19), from 4 to 5:30 p.m., at the Cranston Public Library, Sockanosset Cross Road.

The RI-ASCD notes that this high-level presentation and discussion will provide an overview of what the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) mean for our students and our classrooms and how the CCSS prepares our students for college and challenging careers. The presenters will provide an overview of the latest information that Rhode Island educators should know to implement CCSS thoughtfully and to prepare purposefully for PARCC assessments. The presentation will also discuss and model ways to discuss the CCSS with parents and the community. A question-and-answer period will allow for dialogue on common issues related to CCSS implementation. Handouts will be provided. Register at [www.riascd.org](http://www.riascd.org)

**From RIDE**

***Health and Safety:***

**8. National Youth HIV and AIDS Awareness Day to be held  
April 10**

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that, in 2010, young people aged 13 to 24 accounted for 26 percent of all new HIV infections in the United States, and nearly half of the 19 million new sexually transmitted diseases reported each year are among young people ages 15 to 24. In an effort to bring attention to this issue, **April 10** has been designated as National Youth HIV and AIDS Awareness Day. The 2014 theme is: Engaging Youth Voices in the AIDS/HIV Response. Today's young people are the first generation that has never known a world without HIV and AIDS. An AIDS-free generation is not possible without our nation's youth. Please feel free to share the HIV/AIDS Awareness resources that are available on the Advocates for Youth website, at <http://amplifyyourvoice.org/nyhaad> with your school staff. The Department of Health has additional resources for HIV prevention, at:

<http://www.health.ri.gov/healthyliving/sexualhealth/about/safersex/index.php>

### **From the U.S. Department of Education**

#### **9. Information released on federal budget, early learning, FAFSAs, nutrition, poster contest, emergency preparedness**

Please see these notices from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach:

#### **Education Budget**

On March 4, after sending his annual budget request to Congress, President Obama visited Powell Elementary School in Washington, D.C., highlighting the school's

preschool program as a model for the nation. “These kids may not be the most excited people in town on budget day,” the President said, “but my budget is designed with their generation and future generations in mind. In my State of the Union address, I laid out an agenda to restore opportunity for all people.... The budget I sent Congress this morning lays out how we’ll implement this agenda in a balanced and responsible way. It’s a roadmap for creating jobs with good wages and expanding opportunity for all Americans. And at a time when our deficits have been cut in half, it allows us to meet our obligations to future generations without leaving them a mountain of debt.”

The President is requesting \$68.6 billion in discretionary funding for the U.S. Department of Education, an increase of \$1.3 billion – or 1.9 percent – over the Fiscal Year 2014 level. “The President’s budget request reflects his strong belief that education is a vital investment in the nation’s economic competitiveness, in its people, and in its communities,” Secretary Duncan said. “Despite the encouraging progress we’ve seen, wide opportunity and achievement gaps continue to hurt many families, which puts our nation’s economy and future at risk.”

The President proposed a new initiative called Race to the Top-Equity and Opportunity, which would create incentives for states and school districts to drive comprehensive change in identifying and closing both achievement and opportunity gaps. Grants would enhance data systems to sharpen the focus on the greatest disparities and invest in strong teachers and leaders in high-need schools. Grants would also support other strategies that mitigate the effects of concentrated poverty, such as expanded learning time,

access to rigorous coursework, and comprehensive student supports. (See also [Equity of Opportunity](#).)

The President also proposed the new [ConnectEDucators program](#), which would provide funding to help teachers and principals better leverage new resources made available through technology to improve college- and career-ready instruction and personalize learning. Technology can help educators teach to more rigorous standards, but technology alone cannot improve student learning. Educators must know how to make the best use of technology – such as creating and sharing high-quality open digital content – and how to use data to help students learn. (See also [Teachers and Leaders](#).)

Among the continued priorities, targeted to strengthen the education pipeline from cradle-to-career, are:

- making high-quality preschool, infant and toddler care, and home visiting available for children ([more](#));
- improving affordability, quality, and success in postsecondary education ([more](#)); and
- making schools safer and creating positive learning environments ([more](#)).

Want to dig deeper? Among the resources online are a [press release](#), a [blog post](#), the [budget summary](#), and [fact sheets on cross-cutting issues](#). Furthermore, one can [view video](#) from the agency's budget briefing for stakeholders and [listen](#) to the agency's press call.

## **Early Learning**

Last week, Secretary Duncan and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius visited the newest preschool among the Child and Family Network Centers in Alexandria, Virginia, to observe a quality bilingual program in action and discuss the President's budget request for Fiscal Year 2015. He proposed \$500 million – double last year's funding – for Preschool Development Grants and reintroduced the Preschool for All initiative, with an initial \$1.3-billion investment. There is also additional funding requests for Head Start, Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grants, and evidence-based home visiting.

This week, the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services held a stakeholder briefing on federal investments in early learning and development (view video).

Also, both agencies are seeking additional input on the 2014 Preschool Development Grants competition through a dedicated website, as well as a public meeting on Thursday (March 20), from 3:30 to 5 p.m., in Washington, D.C. (watch live).

### **Student Loans**

Last week, at an event with the First Lady at Coral Reef High School, President Obama laid out details of his plan to equip all Americans with the education and skills they need to compete in today's global economy and launched a new Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion initiative to give more students the opportunity to attend, afford, and graduate from college. "Unfortunately, there are still a lot of young people all across the country who say the cost of college is holding them back," he asserted. "Some of you may have sat around the kitchen table with your

parents, wondering about whether you'll be able to afford it. FAFSA is – by far, the easiest way to answer that question.”

Under the FAFSA Completion Initiative, the U. S. Department of Education will partner with states so that they can identify individual students who have not completed the FAFSA. States can then use this limited information to support school and district efforts to increase FAFSA completion, starting in the 2014-15 school year. These efforts build on the success of a pilot project launched by the agency in 2010 working directly with about 100 districts. (Note: In a letter to the nation's governors, Secretary Duncan explains the history, requirements, and procedures for this initiative.)

### **Healthy Lunchtime Challenge**

The First Lady is again challenging America's most creative junior chefs to put their talents to use and whip up delicious lunchtime recipes. The third "Healthy Lunchtime Challenge and Kids' State Dinner" invites children, ages 8 to 12, and their parents or guardians, to create and submit an original lunch recipe that is healthy, affordable, and tasty. All recipes must adhere to the guidance that supports the U.S. Department of Agriculture's MyPlate. Recipes must also represent each of the food groups, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy foods, with fruits and vegetables making up roughly half of the plate or recipe. Fifty-six children and their parent or guardian - one pair from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and U.S. territories – will be flown to Washington, D.C., to attend a Kids' State Dinner at the White House, during which a selection of the winning

recipes will be served. Recipes may be submitted online through **April 5**.

### **Poster Contest**

The White House invites elementary- and middle-school students to submit original poster designs for the 2014 Easter Egg Roll. This year's theme, "Hop into Healthy, Swing into Shape," promotes the First Lady's Let's Move! initiative to help kids grow up healthy and reach their full potential. The deadline for submissions is **March 21**, and the winning design will be part of the White House's 2014 Easter Egg Roll program.

### **Emergency Preparation**

Communities are better prepared to withstand an emergency and recover quickly when everyone is involved. Yet, despite an increase in weather-related disasters, nearly 70 percent of Americans have not participated in a preparedness drill or exercise – aside from a fire drill – at their home, school, or workplace in the past two years. In an effort to continue building resilience, the federal family is pleased to announce America's PrepareAthon!. The first America's PrepareAthon! National Day of Action is April 30. It will focus on preparing individuals, organizations, and communities for tornados, hurricanes, flooding, and wildfires. (Note: All are invited to participate in a webinar – Tuesday (March 18) or Thursday (March 20) – to learn more about the campaign and ways to be involved.)

## **10. New round of Investing in Innovation grants announced**

Please see this notice from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Innovation and Improvement:

The Office of Innovation and Improvement has published a Notice Inviting Applications for awards up to \$3 million each in the “Development” category of the 2014 Investing in Innovation (i3) grant competition. In its fifth round of competition, the i3 program continues its aim to develop and expand practices that accelerate student achievement and prepare all students to succeed in college and careers. This year’s areas of focus include English Learners, students with disabilities, and technology-enabled learning, among others.

**11. Schools, students encouraged to sign up for updates on First Lady’s visit to China**

Please see this notice from the U.S. Department of Education Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnership:

The First Lady will travel to China from Wednesday (March 19) through March 26. During the trip to China, as on previous international trips to Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, the First Lady will be focusing on the power and importance of education, both in her own life and in the lives of young people in both countries.

She will also be visiting important historical and cultural sites in China, and will share with students in the U.S. the stories of the students she meets in China, as well as interesting facts about China’s history and culture – emphasizing the importance of students learning from one

another globally. The First Lady is encouraging students and classrooms across the U.S. to follow her trip by [signing up](#) for updates throughout the visit. View the First Lady's message to students [here](#).

[PBS LearningMedia](#) and Discovery Education will offer engagement opportunities for young people surrounding the trip, along with resources available for U.S. classrooms that explore the culture, geography, current events, and people of China.

If you know of any high school students that want to get involved, have them sign up to join live webinars and opportunities to ask questions that will be answered by the first lady.

### **From other federal agencies**

#### **12. U.S. Department of Labor awarding grants for education of disadvantaged youth**

The U.S. Department of Labor will award YouthBuild grants to organizations to oversee the provision of education, occupational skills training, and employment services to disadvantaged youth in their communities while performing meaningful work and service. The program addresses affordable housing, education, employment, crime prevention, and leadership development. The application deadline is April 22. For more information, click [here](#).

### **From other organizations**

### **13. College Board seeking nominations for Guidance and Admission Assembly Council**

The College Board is seeking nominations for two member positions on the Guidance and Admission Assembly Council. The committee is in search of experienced professionals who are knowledgeable about College Board programs and services. Individuals who have been active volunteers in College Board regional activities might be particularly well qualified for nomination. Information about the council and nomination forms are available [here](#). The nomination deadline is **April 22**.

### **14. ResilientKids to hold workshop on mindfulness**

A Rhode Island nonprofit, ResilientKids, is working with 1,300 students in nine Rhode Island public schools, most of them in high-need districts, teaching mindfulness and yoga as part of the school day. Students and teachers report excellent results - increased focus, reduced stress, fewer behavioral referrals.

ResilientKids is offering a workshop for teachers, principals, social workers, parents, guidance counselors, psychologists, and school nurses, featuring two national leaders in mindfulness in education. The workshop has two goals: explore the concept of mindfulness and how it can be applied to support adults working in your school, and engage in hands-on learning about mindfulness concepts and techniques.

The workshop will take place on Friday, **April 11**, from 8 a.m. to noon, at the Squantum Association, 947 Veterans Memorial Parkway, East Providence.

To learn more about ResilientKids, see:

<http://www.resilientkids.org>

**15. Boston Globe offers classroom materials to Rhode Island educators**

Please see this message from The Boston Globe:

The Boston Globe News in Education (NIE) program is pleased to extend an exciting offer to Rhode Island educators and their students.

Thanks to the generosity of private donors and corporate sponsors, Boston Globe NIE digital classroom subscriptions and educational resources are available free of charge to Rhode Island teachers in kindergarten through grade 12.

Teachers can register for their free Globe NIE subscriptions at:

<http://nieonline.com/bostonglobe/order.cfm>.

The registration process is quick and easy. Once registered, teachers and their students will have 24/7 access to the following:

- The Boston Globe e-paper, which includes translation into 12 languages and the ability to listen to individual articles
- BostonGlobe.com, which includes archived articles from 1872 to present.

In addition to their NIE subscriptions, teachers will have full access to Boston Globe NIE Common Core lesson plans, a weekly Boston Globe news quiz and newsletter, daily science webcasts, a Words in the News vocabulary quiz generated by grade level, a caption contest for editorial cartoons, and much more.

***RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:***

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/CommissionerDeborahAGist/FieldMemos.aspx>

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, April 11, 2014**

**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

1. RIDE prepares ESEA Flexibility Request renewal application
2. RIDE participates in settlement agreement with U.S. Department of Justice regarding students, adults with disabilities
3. NECAP retest results to be ready this month

**From the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE)**

***Assessments:***

4. NECAP Science testing to begin on May 5

***Health and Safety:***

5. Annual School Health Report forms to be posted Monday, due **June 20 – Action Item**

***Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge:***

6. Exceed website launched; schools, programs eligible to apply to participate in BrightStars

**From the U.S. Department of Education**

7. Grants available for school counseling, turnaround-school leaders

8. U.S. Department of Education posts materials on parent, community engagement

**From other state agencies**

9. Governor's Workforce Board to issue grants for partnerships between employers and education providers

**From other organizations**

10. Brown University math institute to run math day camp for high-school girls
11. Rhode Island Bar Association develops lessons, schedules essay contest to mark Rhode Island Law Day

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**Action Item Calendar**

- April 25: NECAP Science testing schedules due  
April 28: Selection of induction model due  
May 30: District Teacher of the Year nominations due  
June 20: School Health Reports due (see below)
-

## **Notes from Commissioner Gist**

### **1. RIDE prepares ESEA Flexibility Request renewal application**

As you may know, RIDE is engaged in the process of applying for a renewal of the ESEA Flexibility Request, which the U.S. Department of Education initially approved in May 2012. This approved request allowed us to implement our current system of school accountability. Under our previous system, we classified schools based almost entirely on the percentage of students who attained proficiency on state assessments. The current system includes many additional measures, including progress toward goals, growth over time, percent of students attaining proficiency with distinction, closing achievement gaps, and graduation rates. Our current system also provides schools identified for intervention with the autonomy to select interventions that respond to their context and their needs.

To earn approval for our renewal request, we need to make some revisions to our classification system, largely because of the transition from NECAP to PARCC assessments. This transition requires us to rethink how we can measure progress toward goals and annual growth as factors within our accountability system.

Over the past month, we have discussed our renewal request in several forums, and we will continue our outreach efforts over the course of the next several weeks. We will draw on what we've heard and learned from teachers, school leaders, parents, and community organizations as we work to complete our renewal request.

**2. RIDE participates in settlement agreement with U.S. Department of Justice regarding students, adults with disabilities**

RIDE was glad to be a part of the news conference on Tuesday regarding the settlement agreement that Rhode Island has signed with the U.S. Department of Justice. We will continue to work with you and your team to ensure that students with intellectual or developmental disabilities and their family members are involved in designing educational plans. Our shared goals are to see that students with intellectual or developmental disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment, as appropriate for their educational needs, and that these students receive the necessary instruction and support to prepare them for careers that will be challenging and fulfilling, for further career preparation and training during their adulthood, and to live as independently as possible.

**3. NECAP retest results to be ready this month**

We have received some good news: The results of the 2014 NECAP retest will be available this month, which is sooner than we had anticipated. We will let you know when you will be able to access the scores from your LEA through our e-ride system. I am pleased that Measured Progress and our assessment team have worked to expedite this process.

**From RIDE**

***Assessments:***

**4. NECAP Science testing to begin on May 5**

The NECAP Science testing window this year is **May 5 – 22**. All testing—including accommodations and make-up testing—*must* be completed by May 22. In planning your assessment schedule, you should take into consideration religious holidays and local events that may affect students' ability to participate. It is important that you allow ample time for make-up test sessions for those students who are absent for any reason (including absences for religious holidays) during regularly scheduled testing dates.

Principals and test coordinators are ultimately responsible for ensuring that all eligible students are tested. Therefore, you and your staff members must:

- ensure that parents and guardians are aware of the purpose of the assessment and that they have access to your NECAP testing schedule in advance so that they can plan accordingly;
- strongly discourage parents and guardians from planning any vacations or other activities that would prevent their children from testing with their peers during scheduled test-administration days;
- ensure that parents and guardians are aware that their children must make up any testing they missed while absent and that all make-up testing must be completed no later than May 22; and
- encourage parents and guardians to contact the principal, test coordinator, or teacher if their children will be absent during testing so that schools can arrange for make-up testing.

During the testing period, please encourage students to get plenty of rest, to eat a good breakfast on the day of testing, and to

perform at their very best so that we all can take pride in the accomplishments of our students and their teachers!

***Health and Safety:***

**5. Annual School Health Report forms to be posted Monday, due June 20 – Action Item**

The *Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs*, Section 2.5, require all LEAs and nonpublic-school authorities to submit to the Commissioner of Education and to the Director of Health on an annual basis a report pertaining to the school or district health program. The Annual School Health Report provides a standardized template to fulfill this reporting requirement and allows RIDE and the Department of Health to monitor school and district compliance with school health-related statutes, regulations, and protocols that ensure the health and safety of students and staff at all Rhode Island schools.

To ensure compliance with school health and safety statutes and regulations and to align with the beginning of each academic school year, this Annual School Health Report will apply to the school years 2013-14 and 2014-15. All future annual reports must be submitted prior to each school year.

The Annual School Health Report template will be available through eRIDE on Monday (April 14). You will receive an e-mail notification from RIDE when the report is open for completion and submission via eRIDE. The reports are due on **June 20**.

For a preview of the Annual School Health Report and for assistance in understanding what will be required, please see the

Annual School Health Report Tutorial and Guidance/Q&A document.

***Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge:***

**6. Exceed website launched; schools, programs eligible to apply to participate in BrightStars**

The Exceed website has launched! Exceed is the new name for the Rhode Island cross-departmental initiative to implement the work of the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant. The name conveys the commitment of all of those in our early learning community who are working to help ensure that all of our young children have the opportunity to soar. Exceed is one of the key initiatives supporting the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan of the Rhode Island Early Learning Council, which was formed in 2010 to advise on the development of sustainable, high-quality systems of early-childhood education and care in Rhode Island.

Educators in our public schools can support outcomes for young children by understanding the quality of their early-childhood classrooms and by developing and implementing best practices. BrightStars is the first step. Last month, 11 public-school early-childhood programs applied to BrightStars. These applicants will have access to grants of up to \$30,000, and they will have access to technical assistance to improve the quality of their programs. All early-childhood programs in public schools are eligible to join BrightStars.

If you would like more information or if you would like someone to come and speak with your team about Exceed, please contact Melissa Emidy, at [Melissa.emidy@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Melissa.emidy@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8165.

## **From the U.S. Department of Education**

### **7. Grants available for school counseling, turnaround-school leaders**

The U.S. Department of Education is currently seeking applications for the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program and the Turnaround School Leaders Program. The school-counseling program provides funding to districts to establish or expand school-counseling programs, with special consideration given to applicants that can: demonstrate the greatest need for counseling services in the schools to be served, propose the most innovative and promising approaches, and show the greatest potential for replication and dissemination. Applications are due **April 28**. The school-leadership program supports projects to develop and implement or enhance and implement a critical-leadership pipeline that selects, prepares, places, supports, and retains school leaders for School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools or SIG-eligible schools. Applications are due **May 23**.

### **8. U.S. Department of Education posts materials on parent, community engagement**

The U.S. Department of Education is proud to release a framework for schools and their broader communities to build parent and community engagement. Across the nation, less than a quarter of residents are 18 years old or younger, and everyone has a responsibility for helping schools succeed. The Dual Capacity framework – a process used to teach staff to effectively engage parents and for parents to work successfully with the schools to increase student achievement – provides a model that schools and districts can use to build the type of effective community

engagement that will make schools the center of communities ([web page](#), with blog post, frequently asked questions, and video).

### **From other state agencies**

#### **9. Governor's Workforce Board to issue grants for partnerships between employers and education providers**

Please see this message from the Governor's Workforce Board:

The Governor's Workforce Board is pleased to issue a Request for Proposals for a second round of funding of up to \$1.75 million to support innovative partnerships between employers and education and training providers that will provide work-readiness, skills training, experiential learning, and career pathways to address the workforce needs of Rhode Island employers and increase the employability of students, out-of-school youth, and unemployed adults. Awards are anticipated to range from \$80,000 to \$200,000.

Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to attend a bidders' conference on **Wednesday** (April 16), from 10 - 11:30 a.m., at the Department of Labor & Training, 1511 Pontiac Avenue, Cranston. Pre-register by contacting Amelia Roberts, at 462-8864 or [Amelia.Roberts@dlt.ri.gov](mailto:Amelia.Roberts@dlt.ri.gov).

For a copy of the Request for Proposals, click below:

- [MS Word Version](#)
- [Pdf Version](#)

For a copy of an Excel version of the required Outcome Targets form, [click here](#).

### **From other organizations**

#### **10. Brown University math institute to run math day camp for high-school girls**

Please see this message from Brown University, and feel free to share this message with high-school mathematics teachers:

The Brown University Institute for Computational and Experimental Research in Mathematics ([ICERM](#)) has scheduled GirlsGetMath, a math day camp for 25 Providence-area high-school girls.

This five-day, non-residential mathematics program is open girls who will have just completed either grade 9 or grade 10 by July.

[GirlsGetMath](#) will encourage these young women to explore, and will invite them to excel in, the mathematical sciences. Accomplished professional women, enthusiastic about serving as career models as well as scientific mentors, will lead the program. Potential topics include: cryptography, the mathematics of voting, image processing, prime numbers and factoring, and fractals.

The goals of the program are:

- to show high-school girls that the study of mathematics can be exciting, beautiful, and useful;

- to build confidence in students' mathematical knowledge through engaging and expert mathematical instruction;
- to introduce high-school students to a variety of career opportunities in which sophisticated mathematical ability plays a key role;
- to emphasize the strategic role mathematics plays for success in STEM careers;
- to provide the participants with a support group and expert mentors who are successful undergraduates, graduate students, and professionals from the STEM workforce; and
- to have a positive influence on the way students view their mathematical interest and ability.

Tuition is \$100 (lunch included). Generous financial aid is available.

The program website and application details can be found here:

<http://icerm.brown.edu/girlsgetmath2014/>

Application deadline: **May 15**

The selection committee will review all applications after the May 15 deadline. Accepted students without 100-percent financial aid will receive information on how to pay the tuition in their acceptance letter.

**11. Rhode Island Bar Association develops lessons, schedules essay contest to mark Rhode Island Law Day**

The Rhode Island Bar Association notes that the 2014 Rhode Island Law Day will take place on May 2. The association has developed some topics for schools to use to meet the educational goals for Law Day. For information on classroom-program lessons and on the Rhode Island Law Day essay contest, go to:

<https://www.ribar.com/For%20the%20Public/Law%20Related%20Education/2014lawday.aspx>

***RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:***

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/CommissionerDeborahAGist/FieldMemos.aspx>

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, April 18, 2014**

**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

1. LEAs can opt for cyclical evaluation model
2. LEAs receive 2014 NECAP retest results
3. RIDE schedules webinars on ESEA Flexibility Request
4. Mount Pleasant, Ponaganset leaders selected as principals of the year
5. Met School teacher to be honored for teaching entrepreneurship

**From the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE)**

***Assessments:***

6. Deadline for requesting student exemption from NECAP Science testing is **May 23**
7. Second testing window for the grade-8 technology assessment to open **April 28**

***Educator Certification:***

8. RIDE seeks public comments on new tests for educator certification in two areas

***Grants and awards:***

9. RIDE awards \$2.9 million in grants for 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Community Learning Centers

**From other organizations**

10. Highlander Institute to hold blended-learning conference on **May 3**

**Attachments to this Field Memo**

Cyclical Evaluation Model

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**Action Item Calendar**

April 25: NECAP Science testing schedules due  
April 28: Selection of induction model due  
May 30: District Teacher of the Year nominations due  
June 20: School Health Reports due

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**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

## **1. LEAs can opt for cyclical evaluation model**

We all are proud of our ongoing work toward ensuring that we have excellent teachers in every classroom and excellent leaders in every school. Our commitment to educator evaluations that provide educators with valuable information to improve performance is a key part of this on-going initiative.

As you know, we have received a lot of input over the past year from teachers, from principals, and from you and your association encouraging us to consider approval of a cyclical model for teacher evaluations. Educators have expressed a strong desire to maintain a high-quality evaluation process that emphasizes improvement, but they have also expressed a serious concern about the capacity of our evaluators to conduct full-scale evaluations of every teacher each year, as our current design requires. Over the past few months, we have worked closely with both the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association and the Rhode Island Association of School Principals to design together a cyclical model for evaluations that could begin in the coming school year. We are pleased that we have identified cyclical options that will allow us to maintain our shared commitment to providing a high-quality evaluation system while easing some of the burden on practitioners.

Thanks to this work, next year you will be able to select from among a new set of several options so as to make the best choice for evaluations that meet the needs of your school community. In the coming school year, you may choose to fully evaluate all teachers, to continue with the differentiated model that we approved a year ago, or to implement the newly designed cyclical model. I have attached to this field memo a document (Cyclical Evaluation Model) that outlines the features of the cyclical model.

In the coming weeks, we will provide you with more details and guidance about the cyclical model and how to notify us as to which model you will use in your schools. I appreciate the opportunity to work in partnership with you and the leadership of your association to develop this option for your consideration.

## **2. LEAs receive 2014 NECAP retest results**

I am glad that we were able to provide you on Wednesday afternoon with the your students' results on the 2014 NECAP retake. I hope that your high-school team has been able to speak to as many students and families as possible before the April vacation. It's important that students who have met the state-assessment graduation get this information as soon as possible, and it's also important that students who have not yet met this graduation requirement review with your team their next steps toward earning a diploma. Here at RIDE, we continue to collect information about the status of students in the Class of 2014, and I plan to report next month to the Board of Education regarding how many students are eligible for graduation this spring and how many current seniors are pursuing other options, such as other approved assessments, waivers, or more time in school.

## **3. RIDE schedules webinars on ESEA Flexibility Request**

As I noted to you in last week's Field Memo, we are in the process of developing our application for renewal of our ESEA Flexibility Request, which allowed us to implement our current system of school accountability in 2012. In renewing our request, we intend to leave the accountability system largely unchanged, but we do have to make some changes because of our transition next year from NECAP to PARCC assessments. We continue to seek input on our renewal application, and to that end we have scheduled two

webinars for people in the education field and for the general public as well.

- Tuesday, April 29, from 4:30-5:30 p.m.: [RSVP online](#)
- Wednesday, April 30, from 4:30-5:30 p.m.: [RSVP online](#)

(The content will be the same for both, so those interesting in participating need to RSVP for only one.)

I invite you and others on your team to participate in either webinar, and please feel free to share this invitation with others in your community.

#### **4. Mount Pleasant, Ponaganset leaders selected as principals of the year**

Congratulations to Patricia Marcotte, of the Ponaganset Middle School, in Foster-Glocester, and to Scott Sutherland, principal of Mount Pleasant High School, in Providence, on their selection by the Rhode Island Association of School Principals as Rhode Island 2014 principals of the year.

The association honored Patricia as the Middle School Principal of the Year, noting that parents appreciate how hard Patricia works to provide supports to students in need of extra help, that teachers are motivated by her depth of knowledge and her enthusiasm, and that administrators recognize how she is continually engaged with the other schools in her community to ensure smooth transitions for students entering middle school and for graduates moving on to Ponaganset High School.

The association honored Scott as the High School Principal of the Year, recognizing that he has served for more than 10 years as a

school administrator in Providence and that over the past two years he has “dramatically led the culture and climate transformation” at Mount Pleasant. The association noted that Scott has “led the transformation to ... establish a safe, welcoming environment [ and ] create a true professional learning community” at the school.

Thank you, Patricia and Scott, for the work you are doing for students and teachers in your schools and for the families in your communities!

#### **5. Met School teacher to be honored for teaching entrepreneurship**

The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship will recognize Jodie Woodruff, of The Met School, in Providence, as one of the Global Enterprising Educators of 2014 at its annual Global Gala next week in Washington. The organization will honor Woodruff for establishing the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center at The Met, for setting up internships for her students, and for bringing entrepreneurs from the community into the school on a weekly basis. Congratulations to Jodie and to The Met on this recognition!

**From RIDE**

#### ***Assessments:***

- 6. Deadline for requesting student exemption from NECAP Science testing is May 23**

All requests for state-approved special consideration or exemption from NECAP Science testing must be submitted online no later than **May 23**, via eRIDE, using the following link:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/SASC/>

We strongly encourage all requests for exemption to be submitted as soon as possible rather than at the end of the testing window. Early submission of these requests will allow you sufficient time to test the student if the request for exemption is denied.

As a reminder, *no* exemption request will be processed until a *signed copy* of the “Form 1: District Assurances Form” has been faxed to RIDE (222-3605).

As in previous years, when your and your testing coordinators log into eRIDE you will see the icon “NECAP/RIAA Exemption Requests,” and you can use this icon to access the necessary online forms.

In addition, the “State-Approved Special Considerations for Statewide Assessments: Guidelines & Forms” document has been updated for the current school year to outline the policies and procedures for requesting student exemptions. This document is available on the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/Assessment/NECAPAssessment/NECAPExemptions.aspx>

The document is also available on the eRIDE exemptions page, at:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/SASC/>

It is very important that you review this guidance document before attempting to submit requests through eRIDE. If you have any questions about NECAP Science exemptions, please contact Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley (phone: 222-8494; e-mail: [Kevon.Tucker-Seeley@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Kevon.Tucker-Seeley@ride.ri.gov)).

### **7. Second testing window for the grade-8 technology assessment to open April 28**

The second testing window for the grade-8 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills technology assessment opens right after April vacation, from **April 28 to May 23**. All grade-8 students who did not take the assessment during the first window must take the assessment during this window. A refresher webinar is being offered for those proctors who would like to brush up on details for administering the assessment. Proctors may register for one of the refresher webinars, which we will offer on Wednesday, April 30:

- [Refresher Webinar – Wed., April 30<sup>th</sup> – 8:00 AM](#); or
- [Refresher Webinar – Wed., April 30<sup>th</sup> – 3:00 PM](#)

A reports-overview webinar will be held on June 4, after all students have completed the assessment for the year. This webinar will help proctors retrieve the appropriate level of student, class, school, and district reports; read and interpret the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills data contained in the reports; and apply the results to instructional or programmatic decision-making. Details for registering for the Reports Overview webinar will be sent directly to proctors.

More information about the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills assessment can be found on the [RIDE web site](#).

***Educator Certification:***

**8. RIDE seeks public comments on new tests for educator certification in two areas**

ETS, the testing company whose assessments we use for educator certification, is adding new tests and phasing out older tests. There are currently two tests (speech-language pathology and middle-school science) that have been regenerated; these changes will affect certification requirements in Rhode Island. We are seeking public comment from the education community and the general public on the proposed redesigned certification tests and on the passing scores for initial educator certification in the areas of speech-language pathology and middle-school science. To provide comments on the proposed certification tests and passing scores, please visit:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Certification-Updates>.

If you have any questions about these new assessments, please feel free to contact Hilda Potrzeba, at [hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov](mailto:hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8891.

***Grants and awards:***

**9. RIDE awards \$2.9 million in grants for 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Community Learning Centers**

RIDE has awarded \$2,926,223 in grants to run school-linked afterschool and summer programs, as part of the federally funded 21st-Century Community Learning Centers initiative.

We have awarded grants to:

- AS220 – \$88,200
- The Boys & Girls Club of East Providence – \$163,353
- The Boys & Girls Club of Providence – \$105,000
- The Central Falls School District – 2 grants – \$240,350
- The Cranston Public Schools – 2 grants – \$235,589
- The East Bay Community Action Program – \$61,000
- The Highlander Institute – \$135,000
- Inspiring Minds – \$149,000
- The Learning Community Charter School – \$105,000
- The Met School – \$100,000
- The Mt. Hope Learning Center – \$149,858
- Newport Community School – 2 grants – \$214,379
- The Paul Cuffee School – \$135,000
- The Pawtucket School Department – 2 grants – \$343,732
- The Swearer Center, at Brown University – \$141,762
- The Woonsocket Education Department – 2 grants – \$300,000
- The YMCA of Greater Providence – 2 grants – \$259,000

These grants are to provide before-school, afterschool, vacation-time, and summer programs for children and youth in high-poverty communities. The programs offer academic support, enrichment, recreation, and family-engagement services. RIDE awarded the grants through a competitive application process. With the addition of these grants, there will be 24 agencies in Rhode Island operating 21st-Century Community Learning Centers that serve a total of 53 schools.

RIDE administers the 21st-Century Community Learning Centers program and provides technical assistance and professional development to the grant recipients to ensure that the programs are of high quality, that they are linked to academic achievement, and that they are aligned to the state standards for afterschool programs.

### **From other organizations**

#### **10. Highlander Institute to hold blended-learning conference on May 3**

The Highlander Institute is hosting its third annual Blended Learning & Technology Conference on Saturday, May 3, at the URI Feinstein Campus, in Providence. Strands for both educators and administrators promise to inspire. The afternoon “unconference” will provide participants with the time and space to discuss topics that they are tackling in their schools. The conference keynote speaker will be Richard Culatta, director of the Office of Educational Technology for the U.S. Department of Education. His work focuses on leveraging technology to create personalized learning experiences for all students and on promoting increased connectivity to improve access to education and to make college more affordable. Culatta is passionate about accelerating innovation in education, with a particular interest in games for learning, personalized learning, and open education. [Click here to register for the Blended Learning and Technology Conference.](#)

***RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:***

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/CommissionerDeborahAGist/FieldMemos.aspx>

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, April 25, 2014**

**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

1. LEAs encouraged to communicate with, develop plans for seniors who have not yet met graduation requirements
2. RIDE nearing completion of ESEA Flexibility Request renewal application
3. East Greenwich, Providence high-school seniors named as 2014 Presidential Scholar semifinalists
4. Pell School, Greene School selected as 2014 Green Ribbon Schools
5. Woonsocket school complex recognized as outstanding growth project
6. Districts, schools win state grants for energy efficiency, library services
7. Highlander Institute invites educators to register for May 3 conference on blended learning and technology

**From the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE)**

***Assessments:***

8. PARCC testing schedules posted; PARCC can be used as end-of-course measure, juniors will take NECAP assessments in October

***Reports to RIDE:***

9. School calendars to be submitted to RIDE by **May 16** –  
***Action Item***

***Health and Safety:***

10. Principals must submit reports to RIDE after each  
emergency drill

***School Finance:***

11. RIDE updates calculations of education aid for Fiscal  
Year 2015

**From the U.S. Department of Education**

12. U.S. Department of Education announces new  
Investing in Innovation grants; applications due **June 24**
13. Education, Agriculture Secretaries encourage support  
for summer meal programs
14. U.S. Department of Education to develop plan to  
strengthen teacher-preparation programs
15. Resources available on prevention of teen dating  
violence and sexual assault

**From other state agencies**

16. Manufacturing Workforce Summit scheduled for **May 29**, pre-registration required
17. Adult Education Professional Development Center, Broadband Rhode Island announce plan to improve adult digital literacy

### **From other organizations**

18. Organization seeks host families for exchange students
19. Farmers Insurance launches program to thank teachers, provide teachers with grants

### **Attachments to this Field Memo**

FY 2015 Formula Updates – April 2014

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### **Action Item Calendar**

**Today** (April 25): NECAP Science testing schedules due  
**Monday** (April 28): Selection of induction model due  
May 16: School calendars due (see below)  
May 30: District Teacher of the Year nominations due  
June 20: School Health Reports due

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## **Notes from Commissioner Gist**

### **1. LEAs encouraged to communicate with, develop plans for seniors who have not yet met graduation requirements**

Last week, you received student results on the 2014 NECAP retake. The good news is that several hundred more students have attained at least partial proficiency or made significant growth, and these students have now fulfilled this component of our Diploma System. As we continue to collect more information from you and your colleagues, our team at RIDE is compiling the data and I will make a full report on students' progress toward graduation at next month's meeting of the Board of Education.

I hope that your high-school team was able to speak about the results to as many students and families as possible before the April vacation. As you continue to plan for current seniors who have not yet met this graduation requirement, it's important that students who have not yet met this graduation requirement review with your team their next steps toward earning a diploma. If you have any procedural questions regarding students pursuing other options, such as other approved assessments, waivers, or more time in school, please contact Cali Cornell ([cali.cornell@ride.ri.gov](mailto:cali.cornell@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8251), and of course I am always available to talk with you about these matters as well.

### **2. RIDE nearing completion of ESEA Flexibility Request renewal application**

As the May 12 submission deadline approaches, we are completing the process of developing our application for renewal of our ESEA Flexibility Request, which allowed us to implement

our current system of school accountability in 2012. It has been very important to all of us at RIDE that we develop our renewal request in consultation with you and your colleagues, as well as with other school leaders, teachers, and community members. I want to thank you and your association for helping us with this process; we have been developing our renewal request based in part on input from a focus group that included several superintendents: Superintendents Auger, Barnes, Erinakes, Ricci, and Thies, as well as a head of a charter public school (Jeremy Chiapetta), and other school district leaders (Marco Andrade, Dennis Mullen, Lois Short, and Alan Tenreiro), and I want to thank all of the participants for their insights over the course of five meetings.

Overall, we intend to leave the accountability system largely unchanged, but we do have to make some changes because of our transition next year from NECAP to PARCC assessments. I want to remind you, however, that we continue to seek input on our renewal application, and to that end we have scheduled two webinars for people in the education field and for the general public as well:

- **Tuesday** (April 29), from 4:30-5:30 p.m.: [RSVP online](#)
- **Wednesday** (April 30), from 4:30-5:30 p.m.: [RSVP online](#)

(The content will be the same for both, so those interested in participating need to RSVP for only one.)

I once again invite you and others on your team to participate in either webinar, and please feel free to share this invitation with others in your community.

### **3. East Greenwich, Providence high-school seniors named as 2014 Presidential Scholar semifinalists**

The U.S. Presidential Scholars Program, at the U.S. Department of Education, has informed us that the program has selected three seniors in Rhode Island public high schools as 2014 Presidential Scholars semifinalists. Congratulations, to Alice Raynor, of Classical High School, in Providence, and to Heather Shen and Michelle Xiong, both of East Greenwich High School. The Presidential Scholar award is one of the highest honors in the country for high-school students. Alice, Heather, and Michelle are 565 semifinalists; over the next two months, the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars will select about 140 of the semifinalists as 2014 Presidential Scholars.

### **4. Pell School, Greene School selected as 2014 Green Ribbon Schools**

On Tuesday, the U.S. Department of Education announced that two Rhode Island schools have won 2014 Green Ribbon School awards: the Claiborne Pell Elementary School, in Newport, and The Greene School, a charter public school in West Greenwich.

Green Ribbon Schools are recognized “for their exemplary efforts to reduce environmental impact and utility costs, promote better health, and ensure effective environmental education, including civics and green career pathways.”

The Pell School, which is lodged in a new facility that opened at the beginning this school year, was recognized for the many design features in the building (e.g., reflective roof materials, low-velocity ventilation system, optimal orientation for daylight) as well as for its environmental and outdoors program, such as the

Fitness Gram for all students and the garden-to-table initiative. The Greene School was honored in part because of its focus on environmental literacy: teachers deliver the majority of the curriculum through environmental topics, such as energy, biodiversity, and sustainable development; students learn through multidisciplinary “learning expeditions,” such as the 100 Mile Radius Dinner, which culminates in a meal prepared with local foods.

Across Rhode Island, many of our teachers and students are deeply engaged in exciting environmental projects, ranging from community gardens to energy audits to wildlife protection. The two schools that the U.S. Department of Education recognized represent some of the best ongoing work in our communities to teach schoolchildren about the world in which we live and to ensure that our school buildings are models of green design. Congratulations to the students, teachers, school leaders, and community members who have earned these awards!

#### **5. Woonsocket school complex recognized as outstanding growth project**

Grow Smart Rhode Island has awarded a 2014 Smart Growth Award to the City of Woonsocket in recognition of the Woonsocket Middle School complex, which the organization has identified as one of our Outstanding Growth Projects in the state. “The newly developed Woonsocket Middle School complex is a remarkable example of far-sighted city planning,” Grow Smart Rhode Island notes in its citation. “Following a complicated clean-up of the site and of contaminated groundwater that had threatened the Blackstone River ... the city created a safe, state-of-the-art educational complex.” The school will receive its award at the Grow Smart Rhode Island summit next month.

Congratulations to the city and school leaders in Woonsocket who brought this project to fruition!

#### **6. Districts, schools win state grants for energy efficiency, library services**

Three of our school districts and one high school have received Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative grants from the Office of Energy Resources. The Chariho Regional, East Greenwich, and Lincoln School Districts have received grants totaling \$538,000 for energy-efficient lighting upgrades, boiler replacements, and installation of controls for heating systems and fans. West Warwick High School received a grant to install a solar-voltaic system on its field house and ice rink. All of these investments will save money for the school districts by lowering energy costs and they will benefit our state by supporting renewable energy. I applaud the school leaders from Chariho, East Greenwich, Lincoln, and West Warwick for responding to this grant opportunity and for investing in energy efficiency.

Yesterday, the Office of Library Services awarded Library of Rhode Island grants to the Archie R. Cole Middle School, in East Greenwich, to enable students to create short promotional videos for fiction and nonfiction books, and to the Central Falls Public Library, to work with the Central Falls School Department and other organizations to design a media-education lab and to hold a summer camp that will teach digital literacy to grade-8 students. These both sound like exciting and important programs that will benefit Rhode Island middle-school students.

#### **7. Highlander Institute invites educators to register for May 3 conference on blended learning and technology**

The Highlander Institute invites educators and all friends of education to attend its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Blended Learning & Technology Conference, on Saturday, May 3, from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., at the University of Rhode Island Providence Feinstein Campus, Media Education Lab at the Harrington School, 80 Washington St. (the Shepard Building, which also houses our RIDE offices). Richard Culatta, the Director of the Office of Educational Technology at the U.S. Department of Education, will be the keynote speaker. The conference will include both a teacher “track” (Classroom Tools and Instruction) and an administrator “track” (Decision Points and Policies). The institute is particularly reaching out administrators who may wish to attend, as specific aspects of the program will be geared toward school and district leaders. If you or your assistant superintendent are interested in registering for this conference, please contact me directly and I will provide you with registration information. More details about the conference are available here:

<http://www.blendedlearningconference.com/>

## **From RIDE**

### ***Assessments:***

- 8. PARCC testing schedules posted; PARCC can be used as end-of-course measure, juniors will take NECAP assessments in October**

Rhode Island schools will administer PARCC assessments for the first time during the coming school year (2014-15). Students in grades 3 through high school will be taking the assessments in English language arts and mathematics. The assessments are

divided into two components: a *Performance-Based Assessment* (PBA) component, administered about 75 percent of the way through the school year, and an *End-of-Year* (EOY) component that will be administered closer to the end of the year. The length of the testing window differs depending on whether students are taking the assessment on a computer or using paper and pencil. There will be a 20-day window for each component to schedule computer-based testing and a 10-day window for paper and pencil. The computer-based window will be longer in order to provide schools sufficient time to arrange a schedule for students using electronic devices. Next month, RIDE will ask LEAs to complete a survey indicating the number of paper-pencil and the number of online assessments you will administer in each school during the coming school year.

The design of the PARCC assessments supports their use as end-of-course assessments. As such, there are two testing windows for PARCC assessments that might be used as an end-of-course measure. These assessments include English I, English II, algebra I, geometry, integrated mathematics I, and integrated mathematics II. The first testing window (December and January) aligns with courses that are completed in the first half of a school year. This first testing window will be abbreviated in the coming school year (2014-15), and assessments will be offered only in a paper-and-pencil version. The second window will be in the spring. Three PARCC assessments – English III, algebra II, and integrated mathematics III – will neither be required nor paid for by the state as part of the Rhode Island assessment program. LEAs may decide to use these assessments at the local level.

The NECAP reading and mathematics assessments in grade 11 will be administered to all juniors in October of 2014. These assessments will be used to inform graduation requirements and

for high-school accountability. Seniors may also take the NECAP assessment in October, as appropriate, to inform graduation requirements. The testing window will be slightly shorter next year, with the goal of returning results before January. It is important to note that, in the coming school year, juniors do *not* have to take the PARCC assessments, even if they are enrolled in an algebra I, geometry, integrated mathematics I, or integrated mathematics II courses, although they may choose to do so.

We have posted the complete testing windows for the coming school year on our website, at:

[www.ride.ri.gov/assessment-schedule](http://www.ride.ri.gov/assessment-schedule).

Please contact Phyllis Lynch ([phyllis.lynch@ride.ri.gov](mailto:phyllis.lynch@ride.ri.gov)) if you have any questions about the testing schedules for the coming school year.

***Reports to RIDE:***

**9. School calendars to be submitted to RIDE by May 16 –  
*Action Item***

This is a reminder that it is time for LEA data managers to submit 2014-15 calendars to RIDE. Data managers will be advised that calendars must be submitted using the e-ride system no later than Friday, May 16; RIDE no longer accepts hard copies of calendars. Please contact Mario Goncalves, at 222-8968 or [Mario.Goncalves@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Mario.Goncalves@ride.ri.gov), for assistance with this matter.

***Health and Safety:***

**10. Principals must submit reports to RIDE after each emergency drill**

This is a reminder that all emergency-drill information must be entered in eRIDE following the completion of each drill. This information is monitored by RIDE on a regular basis. The principal of each school is responsible for the successful implementation of the Rhode Island fire-safety statutes, including the timely and accurate reporting of emergency drills.

In accordance with state law (§16-21-4, §16-21-5), all schools (public and nonpublic) in Rhode Island are required to perform 15 emergency drills that include fire, lockdown, and evacuation drills. At least one drill shall be conducted each month, and at least one out of every four must be obstructed drills. As part of the required 15 emergency drills, each school must conduct two evacuation drills and two lockdown drills. One lockdown drill shall occur in September and one in January.

You can access the “Health and Safety of Pupils” statutes on the Rhode Island General Assembly website, at:

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/title16/16-21/16-21-4.HTM>

and

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/title16/16-21/16-21-5.HTM>

***School Finance:***

**11. RIDE updates calculations of education aid for Fiscal Year 2015**

As part of the funding-formula law, state education aid is based on data from one year prior to the year in which the state distributes the aid. Therefore, we must base Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 aid on enrollment and free- or reduced-price lunch data from FY 2014. To fulfill this mandate, we collected data on student enrollments and free- or reduced-price lunch status from the beginning of the current school year through last month. We then annualized this information to reflect a full year. We also adjusted the calculations to account for the results of the charter-public-school lotteries held last month. Remember that the funding formula spreads all changes over the remaining years of the transition: 4 years for those LEAs that currently receive insufficient state funding and 7 years for those LEAs that currently receive an excess of state funding. See the attached analysis (FY 2015 Formula Updates – April 2014) for the changes by LEA.

Please note that we have forwarded this data to the Governor's Office and to the General Assembly for their consideration. No changes will go into effect until the General Assembly passes, and Governor Chafee signs, the annual appropriations bill.

If you have any questions about these aid calculations, please contact Kristen Cole, at 222-4681 or [kristen.cole@ride.ri.gov](mailto:kristen.cole@ride.ri.gov).

**From the U.S. Department of Education**

**12. Education, Agriculture Secretaries encourage support for summer meal programs**

Please see this letter from Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Thomas J. Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture:

Dear Colleague:

Children are America's greatest treasure, and ensuring they have the proper nutrition to learn, grow up healthy, and reach their full potential is one of our most important duties as community members, educators, and leaders. Nearly 50 years ago, President Lyndon B. Johnson declared the War on Poverty, a set of initiatives that continues to expand educational opportunities, secure economic equality, and provide nutritious meals to those in need. Our nation has a long and impressive history of ensuring that its needy citizens, especially children, have enough food in order to thrive. Your leadership can help to ensure that those same children do not go hungry in your community this summer.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) summer meal programs that are available to schools include the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Seamless Summer Option of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). These programs operate in partnership with the federal government, state agencies, and local organizations to serve free meals to children age 18 years and younger. The USDA provides reimbursement for meals; state agencies administer the program; and local organizations, including schools, nonprofits, parks and recreation departments, libraries, and faith-based groups serve the meals. Summer meals programs are critical to children in need because we know that only a portion of students participate in summer meal programs compared with those who participate during the school year. During the 2012-13 school year,

approximately 21-million children were served free and reduced-price meals while only approximately 3.5-million children participated in a meal program during the summer of 2013.

We need your leadership and assistance to help feed hungry children this coming summer. There are many ways you can assist, but, specifically, you can:

*Provide children in your community with meals at your schools this summer.* Local schools are the best sites for summer feeding efforts. Children and parents are familiar with local schools, and schools are known for providing nutritious food in a safe environment. Even if your school will not be offering summer school, if it is located in a low-income area it can be a summer feeding site and fill that important meal gap for students so that they are ready to learn when they return to school in the fall.

*Ask teachers and staff in your schools to share information about nearby summer meal sites, whether the site is at your school or at other locations in your community.* School leaders can find local feeding sites by calling (866) 3-HUNGRY or (877) 8-HAMBRE or by visiting [www.whyhunger.org/findfood](http://www.whyhunger.org/findfood). Schools communicate regularly and effectively with the families of children in your community. You can help reach out and connect these families with summer meals before the school year ends and continue to make a difference in the lives of your students throughout the summer.

*Be a champion in your community.* As a recognized leader, you have many opportunities to meet with other

community leaders and organizations that have an interest in ensuring children have resources to succeed. Take the time to discuss summer meals programs and how others can get involved by becoming a sponsor or site that serves meals.

To learn more about the USDA summer meal programs visit:

[www.summerfood.usda.gov](http://www.summerfood.usda.gov).

In addition, the Food and Nutrition Service regional office staff is available to provide technical assistance and answer any questions you may have on USDA summer meal programs at the following link:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>.

Thank you, as always, for your dedication and commitment to our children. By working together, we can be sure our children have the food and nutrition needed to continue to grow and succeed.

**13. U.S. Department of Education announces new Investing in Innovation grants; applications due June 24**

The U.S. Department of Education has announced the start of the 2014 grant competition for the Investing in Innovation (i3) program's Scale-up and Validation categories. This competition will continue the U.S. Department of Education investments in promising strategies that can help close achievement gaps and improve educational outcomes for our neediest students.

The i3 program aims to develop and expand practices that accelerate student achievement and prepare students to succeed in college and in their careers. As in years past, the program includes three grant categories: Development, Validation and Scale-up. This year, school districts and nonprofit organizations, in partnership with districts or schools, are eligible to compete for nearly \$135 million across all three categories. The maximum grant amount available in each category is based on the evidence of effectiveness.

In March, the U.S. Department of Education announced the i3 Development competition for grants of up to \$3 million, and received nearly 400 applications. For this competition, Validation grants will provide up to \$12 million to fund projects with moderate evidence of effectiveness. Scale-up grants will provide up to \$20 million to fund projects with strong evidence of effectiveness and enable expansion across the country. All i3 projects conduct an independent evaluation to identify what works in education.

The Notices Inviting Applications are published in the Federal Register, and applications for the Scale-up and Validation grants are due **June 24**. To access the notices for the categories, visit:

*Scale-up*

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-04-23/pdf/2014-09263.pdf>

*Validation*

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-04-23/pdf/2014-09262.pdf>

To learn more about the Investing in Innovation Fund, visit:

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/index.html>.

**14. U.S. Department of Education to develop plan to strengthen teacher-preparation programs**

Please see this notice from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach:

Research confirms that the most important factor in a student's success in school is a strong teacher. However, almost two-thirds of new teachers report that their teacher-preparation program left them unprepared for the realities of the classroom. Moreover, for decades, institutions that prepare teachers have lacked the feedback needed to identify their strengths and weaknesses and had little information on where program graduates go to teach, how long they stay, and how they perform in the classroom.

Today, President Obama directed the U.S. Department of Education to lay out a plan to strengthen America's teacher-preparation programs for public discussion by this summer and to move forward on schedule to publish a final rule within the next year. The Administration will encourage and support states in developing systems that recognize excellence and provide all programs with information to help them improve while holding them accountable for how well they prepare teachers to succeed in today's classrooms and throughout their careers.

Specifically, the U.S. Department of Education plan will:

- build on state systems and efforts and the progress in the field to encourage all states to develop their own meaningful systems to identify high- and low-performing teacher-preparation programs across all kinds of programs, not just those based in colleges and universities;
- ask states to move away from current input-focused reporting requirements, streamline the current data requirements, incorporate more meaningful outcomes, and improve the availability of relevant information on teacher preparation; and
- rely on state-developed program ratings of preparation programs to determine program eligibility for TEACH grants, which are available to students who are planning to become teachers in a high-need field in a low-income school.

#### **15. Resources available on prevention of teen dating violence and sexual assault**

Please see this message from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach:

Every year, about 1 in 10 American teenagers experiences physical violence at the hands of a boyfriend or girlfriend, and many others are sexually and emotionally abused. The U.S. Department of Education is dedicated to working with students, families, educators, and communities to prevent abuse and support survivors. A new compilation of resources provides information to support schools and communities in their efforts to create safe, healthy learning environments and to identify, investigate, and remedy teen dating violence and sexual assault. (Note: This month is

National Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness Month; see [blog post](#).)

### **From other state agencies**

#### **16. Manufacturing Workforce Summit scheduled for May 29, pre-registration required**

On May 29, the Governor's Workforce Board, the Rhode Island Manufacturers Association, and the Rhode Island Manufacturing Extension Service will hold the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Manufacturing Workforce Summit: Engineering the Manufacturing Talent Pipeline. The summit will run from 8 to 10:30 a.m., at the Providence Marriott Downtown, 1 Orms St. The event is free, but pre-registration is required by **May 22**.

#### **17. Adult Education Professional Development Center, Broadband Rhode Island announce plan to improve adult digital literacy**

The Rhode Island Adult Education Professional Development Center and Broadband Rhode Island have announced the launch of an agreement to develop and implement a plan for long-term sustainability of the Broadband Rhode Island Digital Literacy Project to improve adult Internet usage across the state. As part of the federally funded initiative, Broadband Rhode Island created a digital literacy program for adults, including curriculum and instructor training and established a thriving network of more than 200 volunteer and professional digital literacy trainers whose efforts target the state's disadvantaged populations. To date,

these instructors delivered digital literacy training to almost 1,000 adults through libraries, public housing authorities, adult education organizations, and senior centers.

The Professional Development Center and Broadband Rhode Island have outlined plans for numerous activities throughout this year that are designed to strengthen the Digital Literacy Project. The two organizations will work in partnership to develop a sustainable digital literacy trainer network, through adult education organizations and libraries, that does not rely solely on volunteers.

The work plan for 2014 also includes development of a recognized standard for digital literacy outcomes and establishment of criteria for evaluating adult learners' readiness to apply digital literacy skills to tasks such as participating in distance learning and completing essential life skills tasks online.

For the complete news release, see:

[http://broadband.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Public/RIAEPDC\\_BBRI\\_final\\_2.pdf](http://broadband.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Public/RIAEPDC_BBRI_final_2.pdf)

### **From other organizations**

#### **18. Organization seeks host families for exchange students**

The Council for Educational Travel USA is seeking host families who would welcome exchange students who will be arriving in Rhode Island in August. Each exchange student will have a minimum of three years of English-language instruction, and they

will carry health and accident insurance. The Rhode Island coordinator is Michelle Blanding, at [angelsandchins@aol.com](mailto:angelsandchins@aol.com). More information about the program is available at [www.cetusa.org](http://www.cetusa.org).

**19. Farmers Insurance launches program to thank teachers, provide teachers with grants**

Farmers Insurance has launched a Thank a Million Teachers campaign to recognize and thank teachers across the nation for the difference they make in our children's lives in thousands of classrooms every day. There are two components to the program; the first is the ability to thank a deserving teacher and the second is the opportunity for those "thanked" to apply for a \$2,500 grant.

Information about the program is available here:

[www.thankamillionteachers.com](http://www.thankamillionteachers.com).

***RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:***

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/CommissionerDeborahAGist/FieldMemos.aspx>

**Commissioner's Field Memo Alert**  
**Tuesday, April 29, 2014**

**RIDE schedules webinars on ESEA Flexibility Request renewal application; seeks public comment – *Reminder***

As I noted to you in Friday's Field Memo, we are completing the process of developing our application for one-year renewal of our ESEA Flexibility Request, which allowed us to implement our current system of school accountability in 2012. It has been very important to all of us at RIDE that we develop our renewal request in consultation with you and your colleagues, as well as with other school leaders, teachers, and community members.

I want to remind you that we continue to seek input on our renewal application, and to that end we have scheduled two webinars for people in the education field and for the general public as well:

- **Today** (April 29), from 4:30-5:30 p.m.: [RSVP online](#)
- **Tomorrow** (April 30), from 4:30-5:30 p.m.: [RSVP online](#)

(The content will be the same for both, so those interested in participating need to RSVP for only one.)

I once again invite you and others on your team to participate in either webinar, and please feel free to share this invitation with others in your community. For those unable to participate, I am attaching to this Field Memo Alert the PowerPoint presentation that we will use during the webinars. As noted on the last slide, we have created an e-mail address specifically to receive comment on our renewal application. Please send any feedback or comments to us at:

[ESEA.flex@ride.ri.gov](mailto:ESEA.flex@ride.ri.gov)

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, March 27, 2015**

**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

1. Senate confirms Barbara Cottam as [Board Chair](#)
2. RIDE proposes revisions to [accountability system](#); will submit proposals to U.S. Department of Education on Tuesday

**From the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE)**

***Innovation Powered by Technology:***

3. Registration is open for the [Future Ready Summit](#) on **April 21 and 22**

***Health:***

4. Annual [School Health Report](#) forms to be posted **Monday** (March 30)

***Instruction:***

5. [Early Warning System](#) now integrated into the Instructional Support System

***Assessments:***

6. *Reminder:* Seats still available for NECAP Science [test-coordinator training](#) workshop

***Data Collection:***

7. *Reminder:* RIDE opens [career-technical data](#) collection for high schools, centers, programs; informational webinars scheduled

***Teacher Quality:***

8. RIDE schedules session on **April 13** to review [Title II, Part A](#) and Consolidated Resource Plan applications
9. RIDE works to maintain [induction](#) program; LEAs asked to complete survey on induction by **April 10 – Action Item**

**From the U.S. Department of Education**

10. Principals encouraged to participate in [President's Education Awards](#) Program
11. [Professional development at sea](#) offered to educators

**From other organizations**

12. [Principals' leadership institute](#) to be held in New York City in July
13. League of Women Voters seeks nominations for [civic-education awards](#)

**Today** (March 27): [Textbook](#) list due  
April 10: Induction survey due (see [below](#))  
April 24: [Student advisory council](#) elections

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## **Notes from Commissioner Gist**

### **1. Senate confirms Barbara Cottam as Board Chair**

Congratulations to Barbara Cottam, who received unanimous support from the Senate in the vote to confirm her as the new chair of the Board of Education. Barbara is certainly well known to many Rhode Islanders from her time in government (as press secretary to Governor Sundlun), in business (she is currently an executive vice-president and the head of corporate affairs for the Citizens Financial Group, based in Providence), and in education, particularly as a founding member of Rhode Island Kids Count. Barbara also serves on several boards of trustees, including Home & Hospice Care of Rhode Island, Crossroads Rhode Island, and La Salle Academy, as well as on the President's Council at Providence College. I know that Barbara will be fully devoted to improving our schools and to serving the needs of our students as she takes on the leadership of the Board of Education.

### **2. RIDE proposes revisions to accountability system; will submit proposals to U.S. Department of Education on Tuesday**

Over the past year, members of the RIDE team have worked closely with the members of a working group that we convened to

discuss the Rhode Island system of school classifications, accountability, and support for low-achieving schools. Based on the ideas that this working group, Accountability 3.0, developed, and taking into account feedback we have received from other educators in the field, parent groups, and groups representing students with disabilities and English learners, we have developed a set of proposed revisions to our system for school accountability and support. We are preparing to submit our proposed revisions to the U.S. Department of Education on Tuesday, as part of our request for continued flexibility under the provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Some of the key elements in our flexibility request include these components of our system of classifications:

**Proficiency:** Instead of receiving points or credit for percentages of students attaining proficiency and percentages of students attaining distinction, schools would receive various amounts of credit for the percentage of students at each level of achievement, with additional credit for improving achievement levels of students facing additional learning challenges (students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students).

**Closing Achievement Gaps:** Schools would receive credit for closing the achievement gap between the lowest-achieving quartile in the school and the top 50 percent of student achievement in the school (or, if the school achievement as a whole is especially low, the top 50 percent of achievement in Rhode Island). This requested change would help alleviate the problem of many schools still not being held accountable for gap-closing for various students groups because of low “n-sizes.” It would also respond to concerns educators and

others have raised regarding “blaming” various student groups for low school achievement – rather than focusing on the achievement and growth of all students. Additionally, it would respond to concerns about schools that may have “closed” achievement gaps only because of an overall decline in student performance in the reference group.

**Growth:** Rather than maintain our focus on the median growth of all students and of various identified student groups, our request would allow us to focus on the growth of students a growth percentile lower than 35 (i.e., 66 percent of students or more have made greater growth over the past academic year). Students below the 35<sup>th</sup> growth percentile are those most likely to lose academic ground over time.

Along with these proposed changes, it is important to note that we will continue to use graduation rates and participation rates as key components in our system of accountability and, most important, that we will continue to calculate and publicly report annual targets and progress toward those targets for all student groups. Schools that fail to meet any annual target for three consecutive years – including the participation-rate target of 95 percent – will receive an “alert” as part of their classification and will be ineligible for either of our highest classifications, Commended and Leading.

With approval of our flexibility request, we will have clearer pictures of how schools are improving over time and we will be able to more accurately measure gains of students who are approaching but have not yet achieved proficiency on our state assessments. Most important, our continued use of sophisticated diagnostic tools will provide better information regarding what

individual schools need to focus on in the short term to improve teaching and learning. We are confident that our request is responsive to the needs of our schools, supportive of our teachers and school leaders, and in the best interest of the students of Rhode Island.

The changes would go into effect for the school classifications beginning with the 2015-16 school year, and our request for flexibility covers a span of three school years. This afternoon, we presented a PowerPoint in these proposed revisions to our accountability system. We will post the webinar on our website early next week.

### **From RIDE**

#### ***Innovation Powered by Technology:***

### **3. Registration is open for the Future Ready Summit on April 21 and 22**

Last November, the U.S. Department of Education announced that, as part of the "[Future Ready](#)" initiative, there will be 12 Regional Summits this year on using technology and digital learning. Rhode Island will be the host state for the Northeast Regional Summit, which will take place at West Warwick High School (1 Webster Knight Dr.) on April 21, from 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and April 22, from 8:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

The conference will include panel discussions, breakout sessions, demonstrations of technology, sharing of successes and experiences across districts, and action planning. Speakers will include Richard Culatta, from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Technology; Tom Murray, the State and

District Digital Learning Policy and Advocacy Director at the Alliance for Excellent Education; and the keynote speaker, Michael B. Horn, co-author of *Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools*. So far, teams from nine Northeast states have registered to attend the conference.

All who signed the Future Ready pledge may attend the conference free of charge. Join the teams that have already registered for the Rhode Island Future Ready Summit before space is filled. Registration information is [here](#).

### ***Health:***

#### **4. Annual School Health Report forms to be posted Monday (March 30)**

The *Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs*, Section 2.5, require all LEAs and nonpublic-school authorities to submit to the Commissioner of Education and to the Director of Health on an annual basis a report pertaining to the school or district health program. The Annual School Health Report provides a standardized template to fulfill this reporting requirement and allows RIDE and the Department of Health to monitor school and district compliance with school health-related statutes, regulations, and protocols that ensure the health and safety of students and staff at all Rhode Island schools.

To ensure compliance with school health and safety statutes and regulations and to align with the beginning of each academic school year, this Annual School Health Report will apply to the coming academic year (2015-16).

The Annual School Health Report template will be available through eRIDE on **Monday** (March 30). You will receive an e-mail notification from RIDE when the report is open for completion and submission via eRIDE.

For a preview of the Annual School Health Report and for assistance in understanding what will be required, please see the [Annual School Health Report Tutorial](#) and [Guidance/Q&A document](#).

***Instruction:***

**5. Early Warning System now integrated into the Instructional Support System**

The Rhode Island Early Warning System is now available through the Instructional Support System platform. The Early Warning System (EWS) tool includes a set of indicators that enables educators and school teams to identify and intervene with students at risk of not graduating from high school on time. The EWS screens all students from grade 6 through grade 12 using six data points to help educators meet the global needs of their school and to ensure that all students are successful in graduating from high school. The existing EWS platform on RIDEmap will be available until May 1. After May 1, educators will be able to access the EWS only through the Instructional Support System. For more information on the Early Warning System, or to schedule an EWS training, please contact Cali Cornell ([cali.cornell@ride.ri.gov](mailto:cali.cornell@ride.ri.gov)).

***Assessments:***

**6. *Reminder:* Seats still available for NECAP Science test-coordinator training workshop**

To help prepare district and school test coordinators for the NECAP Science test, workshops have been scheduled for the following dates and times (*Note: Both workshops cover the same material, so there is no need to attend both workshops.*):

- April 14, at the Providence Marriott Downtown, 1 Orms St. (1 – 3 p.m.)
- April 15, at the Radisson Airport Hotel, 2081 Post Rd., Warwick (9 – 11 a.m.)

Registration for workshops can be done online by going to <http://iregister.measuredprogress.org>, selecting “New England Common Assessment Program” from the drop-down menu, clicking “Enter” and selecting a workshop, and then following the online directions. On-site, in-person registration will also be available on the day of each workshop 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start time.

Workshop attendance is strongly encouraged, as the latest information on NECAP testing policies and procedures as well as information about test security will be provided.

If you have any questions about these workshops, please contact Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley ([kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov](mailto:kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8494).

### ***Data Collection:***

- 7. *Reminder:* RIDE opens career-technical data collection for high schools, centers, programs; informational webinars scheduled**

The Career and Technical Education (CTE) data collection is required for any district that operated approved programs during the current school year. The list of approved programs that are required to submit data can be found on the RIDE website [here](#). If a program is undergoing review for the first time this school year, it will be required to submit this data collection for the coming school year (2015-16). To determine what career and technical education courses and programs must be reported by your school, if any, please refer to the RIDE-approved [program list](#).

The data in the collection include CTE-program and student-level information that will be used for reporting requirements and for further development of outcome metrics. Some data elements that directly relate to student outcomes in the program will need the input of school leadership, the CTE or program director, or instructor in the program. The data elements required for this collection are outlined in the published data-specification document found [here](#). The collection is now open, and the data are due by the end of this school year.

Webinars to answer program-related questions will be held on **Wednesday** (April 1), from 3 to 4 p.m. (to register for April 1 [click here](#)) and Tuesday, April 7, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. (to register for April 7 [click here](#)).

For program-related questions regarding the CTE data collection, please contact Paula Barney, at [paula.barney@ride.ri.gov](mailto:paula.barney@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8399. Data managers with any questions please enter a helpdesk ticket, at:

<https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

***Teacher Quality:***

## **8. RIDE schedules session on April 13 to review Title II, Part A and Consolidated Resource Plan applications**

RIDE will offer a Title II, Part A overview session on April 13 from 9 to 11 a.m., at the Rhode Island Foundation, 1 Union Station, Providence. This session will provide an opportunity to meet with RIDE staff members to receive guidance on the appropriate uses of teacher-quality funding and to review the annual Consolidated Resource Plan application and the Title II, Part A Monitoring application.

If you have any questions regarding this session, contact Mary Keenan at [mary.keenan@ride.ri.gov](mailto:mary.keenan@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8497.

## **9. RIDE works to maintain induction program; LEAs asked to complete survey on induction by April 10 – *Action Item***

RIDE, in partnership with the Northern Rhode Island Collaborative, is working to ensure that the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Induction Program continues as a support for all teachers entering the profession. We are excited about continuing the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Induction Model during the coming school year. As you may be aware, this model assists in accelerating beginning-teacher growth and development through classroom observations and through focused conversations among beginning teachers, coaches, and administrators. During the current school year, six school districts opted in to provide this benefit to their beginning teachers. The collaborative model replicates the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Induction Model of delivery which was implemented during our Race to the Top funding period. We are asking that you

complete a short survey regarding induction for your beginning teachers.

To complete the survey, please go to the following link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Q7GNZ33>

The survey will close on Friday, **April 10**.

By completing the survey questions indicating how you plan to move forward with supporting beginning teachers hired by your district, you will provide us with the important information to properly plan for beginning-teacher induction support during the coming school year. We realize that this is critically important work but also that induction is a costly investment. We continue to look for funding sources to help offset the cost of this model.

If you have any questions about induction or if you need more details, please contact Joseph Nasif, at [jnasif@nric-ri.org](mailto:jnasif@nric-ri.org), or Hilda Potrzeba, at [hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov](mailto:hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov).

### **From the U.S. Department of Education**

#### **10. Principals encouraged to nominate students for President's Education Awards Program**

Please see this message from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach, and please feel free to share this information with your principals:

Founded in 1983, the President's Education Awards Program honors graduating elementary-, middle-, and high-school students for their achievement and hard work. The program

has provided individual recognition from the President and the U.S. Secretary of Education to those students whose outstanding efforts have enabled them to meet challenging standards of excellence. Each year, thousands of elementary, middle, and high schools participate by recognizing deserving students. For information about applying for these awards, see:

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/presedaward/index.html>

### **From other organizations**

#### **11. Principals' leadership institute to be held in New York City in July**

Please see this notice from the National Principals Leadership Institute, and please feel free to share this notice with your leadership team:

Designing Schools for The Future will be the theme at the 18th Annual National Principals Leadership Institute. Imagine that it is 2040. How will our daily lives be different? Will technology lead to utopia or dystopia? What will it take to educate the next generation?

We selected inventors and innovators in diverse fields to describe their creative process. We will hear from artists, economists, entrepreneurs, futurists, medical researchers, technology wizards, and urban planners.

Using the insights offered by our speakers, on-stage interviews, and panels, institute participants will design a school for 2040, a school that will be radically different.

A number of presenters have already been confirmed, including: Google's Research Director Alfred Spector, IBM's Watson Program Leader Satya Nitta, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Innovation Director Tom Stritikus, futurists John Mahaffie and Lisa Bodell, innovators Farah Assir (New York Times), Caleb Harper (MIT CityFarm), Garthen Leslie (Quirky inventor), Chris Bruce (Sproutling), author Monica Martinez (Deeper Learning), SREB Executive Director Gene Bottoms, AASA Executive Director Dan Domenech (AASA), CUNY Vice Chancellor Frank Sanchez, and Jake Barton, designer of the 9/11 Memorial Museum.

The Institute will be held at the Walter Reade Theater, 165 W. 65th St., New York, N.Y., starting Saturday, **July 11**, at 8 a.m. and running through July 17.

Registration is available online at [www.npli.org](http://www.npli.org), and group scholarships are available.

## **12. League of Women Voters seeks nominations for civic-education awards**

Please see this message from the Rhode Island League of Women Voters of South Kingstown/Narragansett:

To honor Rhode Island's innovative teachers and their exceptional work in civic education, The Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Awards Committee is accepting nominations. Applying is fast and easy. Get details and apply online at <http://www.lwvri.org/wilson-award.htm>

A Grand Prize of \$1,000, a Jury Prize of \$500, and an Honorable Mention Prize of \$250 will be awarded to three individual teachers or teams of teachers for work that has already been accomplished and whose impact has already been assessed.

The deadline for applications is **April 30**.

Nominate a worthy teacher currently teaching in a Rhode Island school (prekindergarten through grade 12) or forward this message to colleagues and friends.

### **13. Professional development at sea offered to educators**

Please see this message from Oliver Hazard Perry RI:

Oliver Hazard Perry RI, in partnership with Salve Regina University, are pleased to once again offer at-sea professional development training for educators. During the week of August 16 through 22 participants will step aboard the brand new Tall Ship *Oliver Hazard Perry* and join the ship's crew in operating this huge, historically rigged ship. Through handling sail high in the rigging down to maintenance of the interior ship's systems, the communal effort for a successful voyage fosters qualities of teamwork, reliability, and risk-assessment in each participant, along with the thrill of an adventure at sea. Learn what it takes to be a good shipmate, which is no more or less than a good citizen of a greater community. Taking place within the ship's 24-hour watch rotation, the course promises to enhance communication skills through Process Communication Quality Relations Seminars©, to introduce teachers to effectively make films for use in the classroom,

and to extend the lessons of traditional seamanship to the contemporary workplace. Information is available at [www.ohpri.org/Salve\\_regina](http://www.ohpri.org/Salve_regina).

***RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:***

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/CommissionerDeborahAGist/FieldMemos.aspx>

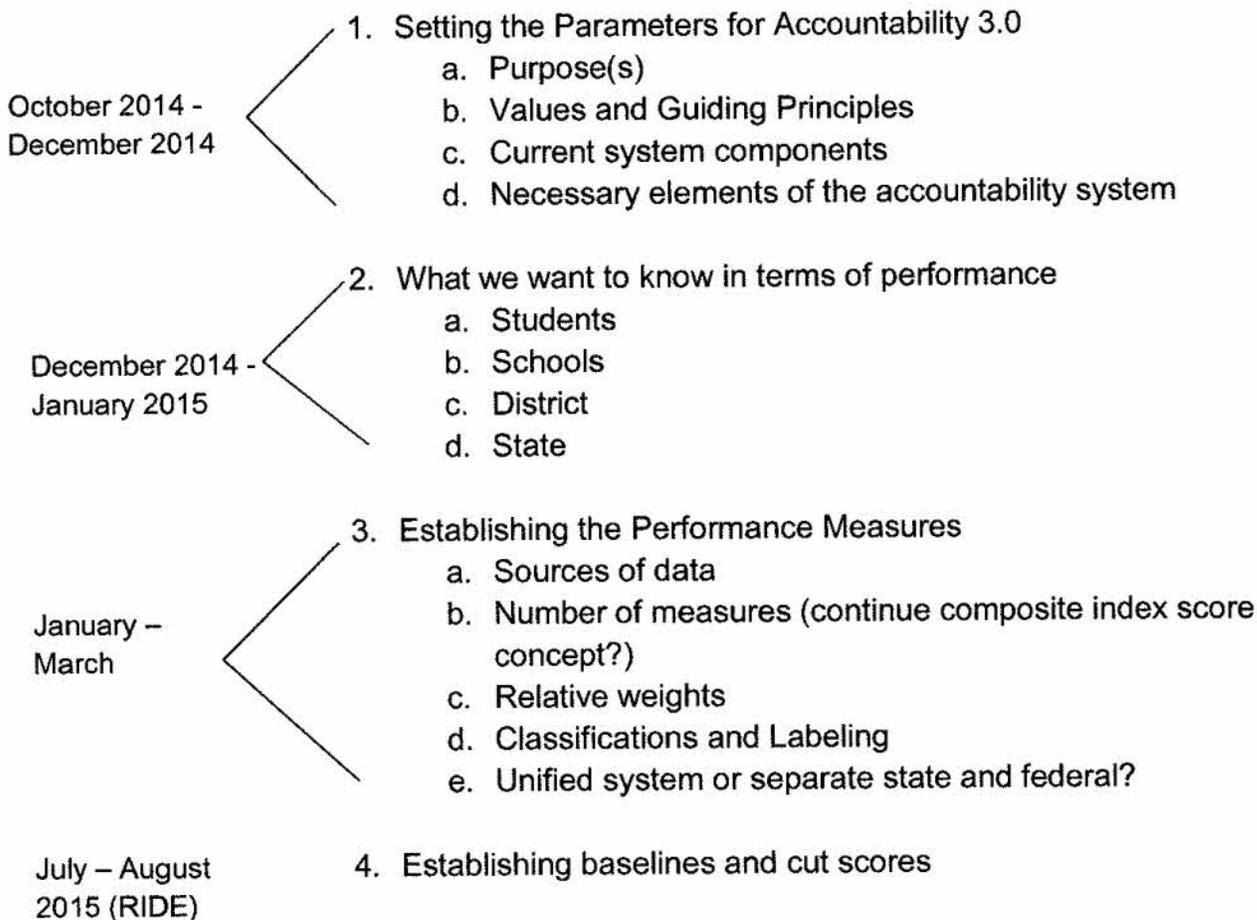
**Attachment 2: Comments on requests received from LEAs**

### Accountability 3.0 Work Group

<b># of Members</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Contact</b>
1	Barry Ricci	Superintendent	RISSA	<a href="mailto:barry.ricci@chariho.k12.ri.us">barry.ricci@chariho.k12.ri.us</a>
2	Susan Lusi	Superintendent	RISSA	<a href="mailto:Susan.Lusi@ppsd.org">Susan.Lusi@ppsd.org</a>
3	Jim Erinakes	Superintendent	RISSA	<a href="mailto:james_erinakes@ewg.k12.ri.us">james_erinakes@ewg.k12.ri.us</a>
4	Rosemary Grant	Public Charter School Leader	Highlander Institute	<a href="mailto:rgrant@highlandercharter.org">rgrant@highlandercharter.org</a>
5	Jan Bergandy	School Committee	RIASC	(b)(6)
6	Tim Duffy	School Committee	RIASC	<a href="mailto:Tduffy@ri-asc.org">Tduffy@ri-asc.org</a>
7	Bryan Byerlee	Principal - Elementary	RIASP	<a href="mailto:Bbyerlee@scituateri.net">Bbyerlee@scituateri.net</a>
8	Scott Sutherland	Principal - Secondary	RIASP	<a href="mailto:scott.sutherland@ppsd.org">scott.sutherland@ppsd.org</a>
9	Patricia D'Alfonso	Labor Rep	RIFTHP	<a href="mailto:Pdalfonso@ww-ps.com">Pdalfonso@ww-ps.com</a>
10	Val Lawson	Labor Rep	NEARI	<a href="mailto:Vlawson@nea.org">Vlawson@nea.org</a>
11	Patricia Page	Former Teacher of the Year	RIDE	<a href="mailto:ppage@egsd.net">ppage@egsd.net</a>
12	Mary Pendergast	SPED	State SPED Advisory Committee	<a href="mailto:Mpendergast@rideaf.ney">Mpendergast@rideaf.ney</a>
13	Terri Couto	ELL	State ELL Advisory Committee	<a href="mailto:CoutoT@bpsmail.org">CoutoT@bpsmail.org</a>
14	David Abbott	Commissioner/ Designee	RIDE	<a href="mailto:David.abbott@ride.ri.gov">David.abbott@ride.ri.gov</a>
15	David Byrd	Commissioner/ Designee	RI OPSE	<a href="mailto:Dbyrd@uri.edu">Dbyrd@uri.edu</a>

**Accountability 3.0**  
**Sequence and Timeline**  
October 15, 2014

There are several overlapping elements of a comprehensive accountability system. Our work team will be focused on the overarching goals and values of the complete system. As with any system of measurements, there will be technical and psychometric challenges that will need input from assessment specialists. Accordingly, our team will be supplemented by RIDE staff and outside experts in the field of assessment and measurement as our work progresses. I see our work unfolding roughly along the following sequence and timeline:



# Accountability 3.0 - Characteristics of Excellent Schools

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Listed below are characteristics of high performing schools, particularly schools that are high performing with many students who face challenges of poverty, disability and/or language learner status. These characteristics are based on various bodies of research.

**For each characteristic, consider the following three questions:**

1. Is this characteristic captured in some way by one or more of the currently proposed components in the system?
2. If no, is there an outcome measure that could be used to capture this characteristic for accountability?
3. If no, are there input measures or “soft” data that could be used as a diagnostic indicator to inform decisions that could drive school improvement?

## **Characteristics of excellent schools**

- High expectations for and a commitment to educating all students (Flowers, 2014).
- Learning that is personalized to the greatest possible extent and individual student learning should inform decision making for each student (Essentialschools.org, 2014).
- A caring, nurturing atmosphere characterized by respectful interactions between teachers and students (Knappel and Clements 2005).
- A climate that evidences high faculty morale and work ethic that extends above and beyond classroom instruction (Knappel and Clements, 2005).
- High levels of family and community outreach and involvement in academics as well as extra-curricular activities (Shannon and Bylsma, 2007).
- Student performance that is measured in multiple ways which involve authentic, mastery based completion of tasks and that are applicable to “real-world” skills and success (Essentialschools.org, 2014).

Initial contact

**Brophy, Colleen**

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**Subject:** HOLD: Accountability 3.0 Meeting  
**Location:** RIDE - Room 501  
**Start:** Mon 11/24/2014 4:00 PM  
**End:** Mon 11/24/2014 6:00 PM  
**Recurrence:** (none)  
**Organizer:** Abbott, David  
**Categories:** Green Category

Colleagues:

For those of you who have volunteered or agreed to serve on our Accountability 3.0 working group, thank you! For those of you who were "nominated" to serve, welcome! As most of you know at this point, the Commissioner has asked me to chair a committee that we are calling "Accountability 3.0." I have been tasked with creating the blueprint for our next generation accountability system that will be based on the new PARCC assessments. NCLB was generation one, our ESEA waiver was generation two, and this will be our third. Unlike the last two times we developed an accountability structure, this time we would like the process to be more iterative with a broad range of participants. As you will see from the attached white paper, we have assembled this work group to be broadly representative of those constituencies most directly impacted by school classification and accountability.

In addition to the white paper, I have also attached two very short policy papers that should help to frame the task before us. I have also included a draft timeline for our work. I expect that we will meet every other week in the late afternoon for several weeks. It is my intention to agree upon a fixed time and day for meetings at our first meeting. In order to schedule that first meeting, please indicate your preference from the choices below for a 90 minute block for our first meeting by responding with your availability to my administrative assistant Colleen Brophy ([colleen.brophy@ride.ri.gov](mailto:colleen.brophy@ride.ri.gov)):

**Monday November 24<sup>th</sup> 4:00 – 6:00 pm**

**Tuesday November 25<sup>th</sup> 3:00 – 6:00 pm**

Once we have received everyone's reply, Colleen will send out an invite for this initial meeting. Should you have any questions in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
DVA

David V. Abbott  
Deputy Commissioner/General Counsel  
Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
255 Westminster Street  
Providence, RI 02903  
[david.abbott@ride.ri.gov](mailto:david.abbott@ride.ri.gov)

**Accountability 3.0  
Work Plan**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Notes</b>
January 2	Finalize Materials For Ed. Eval Group	Agenda Guiding Principles Version 2 Summary of last meeting Framing solutions to some challenges
January 5	Accountability 3.0 Advisory Meeting	Focus on CCR, gap closing/equity and use of growth scores
January 12 2-3pm	Technical Meeting Growth	Discussion about the changes in the growth metric and exploring implications for use in educator evaluation
January 13 4-5pm	Policy/Planning Meeting	Meeting among directors and staff to frame some of the big ideas in our accountability planning
January 20	Accountability 3.0 Advisory Meeting	Bring some impact data using NECAP files to test out some of the approaches to gap closing/equity and growth. Finalize list of CCR
January 26 1-3pm	Technical Meeting PARCC Transition Issues	Determine process for calculating participation rates and factoring in assessments over the next few years. Also noted was that some states are thinking about beginning using PARCC Level 3 as their accountability proficient and moving up to Level 4 over time.
February 2	Accountability 3.0 Advisory Meeting	
February 6	Finalize metrics for gap closing and use of growth	Lock down methodology within the index and its connections to use in educator evaluation system
February 16	Accountability 3.0 Advisory Meeting	
February 20	First draft of revised SEA overview, Principles 1 and 3	
March 2	Accountability 3.0 Advisory Meeting	
March 13	Outreach section completed	
March 16	Accountability 3.0 Advisory Meeting	
March 23	All sections finalized	Colleen will be in charge of version control for the final submission
March 26 9-11am	Review Meeting	We will review the application in its entirety and identify edits and materials needed for final submission
March 30	Accountability 3.0 Advisory Meeting	
March 31	Submit Waiver	

## Notes from Accountability 3.0 Workgroup Meeting Jan. 20 2015

In Attendance: Rose Mary Grant, Bryan Byerlee, Charles DePascale, Mary Ann Snider, Andrew Milligan, Pat D'Alfosno, Terri Couto, David Ryrd, Jan Bergandy, Sue Lusi, Tim Duffee

### Item 1

The team briefly revisited the components of our accountability system, both one's we have discussed changing, and those we have decided to leave unchanged or have not yet discussed:

- Absolute proficiency: discussed changing this measure to reflect credit for improvement even below the level of proficiency, through an indexing system
- Distinction: not yet discussed, might be altered in high school model because of CCR
- Gap closing: major changes here – no longer looking at subgroups but rather at the bottom 25% of performers within a given school. This group is compared against the statewide performance and its demographic composition will be published along with performance results.
- Progress towards 2017 targets: currently suspended, but not yet discussed further
- Growth metric (K-8): instead of looking at the median student in a school, instead this metric will analyze the share of a student population with growth scores below 35 SGP, representative of students that are losing academic ground.
- Scale-Score Improvement (HS): not yet discussed, currently suspended
- Graduation rates (HS): not discussed
- College and Career Readiness (HS): not discussed but would introduce credit for achievements of students that carry relevance beyond their secondary experience

### Item 2

The team engaged in a discussion of research-based characteristics of high performing schools and the relationships between these characteristics and the proposals made to accountability thus far. To frame the discussion the team revisited the idea that accountability measures outcomes (“products”) rather than inputs (“process”) and that measures included would need to hold up to high levels of scrutiny due to the high-stakes decisions made using these measures. As such, all the measures should be verifiable, statistically valid and reliable.

Characteristics:

- High expectations for and a commitment to educating all
  - It was agreed that this characteristic is supported by the absolute performance, growth and gap closure metrics
- Learning that is personalized to the greatest possible extent and individual student learning should inform decision making for each student
  - It was agreed that this characteristic is supported by the growth metric, gaps, graduation rates, and CCR

- A caring, nurturing atmosphere characterized by respectful interactions between teachers and students
  - This characteristic generated a great deal of discussion points. The state currently lacks a survey tool to use to collect information on climate/culture. All agreed that these measures impact student performance in most or all metrics. All agreed that these data are very valuable and should be attended to in some way, particularly for schools that are struggling. Outstanding questions were: 1) What have other states done in their waivers with these measures? 2) What might the inclusion of student/alumni surveys in teacher/school evaluation look like for this metric? 3) What role might this play in the diagnostic tool that supports identified priority and focus schools?
  - Ultimately, general consensus was that climate/culture is about understanding the process that supports outcomes, rather than an outcome per se. Further, that none of the current metrics prohibited or dis-incentivized caring, nurturing environment
- A climate that evidences high faculty morale and work ethic that extended above and beyond classroom instruction
  - Possibility of including an attendance metric for students and/or teachers
  - Chronic absenteeism might be most appropriate in both cases
- High levels of family and community outreach and involvement in academics as well as extra-curricular activities
  - Do high performing schools/districts benefit from strong community engagement or generate it? How could a measure tease out the difference? Is this something that could be captured in the diagnostic tool?
- Student performance that is measured in multiple ways that involve authentic, mastery based completion of tasks that are applicable to “real-world” skills and success
  - Supported by graduation and CCR metrics

A brief comment was made at the conclusion of this portion of the discussion that some of the hard-to-collect data was collected through school visits conducted by the charter school office. Are there elements of accountability that could be worked in through this method? What is the feasibility of schools visits at all schools?

Finally, a general consensus was reached that none of the current metrics run counter towards the characteristics of excellent schools. However, a point was also brought up that decisions made after a schools identification should be based on broader metrics and more data to insure greater quality in high-stakes decision-making.

### **Item 3**

The team discussed how to account for the “degree of difficulty” problem for schools with higher levels of challenges such as poverty, disability, and/or English learner status. It was agreed that schools confronted with a higher degree of difficulty should still be held to the same standards. It was also mentioned that poverty is not an excuse for low achievement but it is a factor and should not be ignored.

A suggestion for accounting for “degree of difficulty” without lowering expectations was through the use of “bonus points” in the absolute performance metric, where students with low SES, IEP, or ELL status could generate a higher maximum score, similar to the model used in Louisiana.

#### **Item 4**

The group began discussing the naming conventions for school classification. We also discussed what the appropriate number of classifications should be. A point was raised that since we already have a continuous scale from 20-100, why not just assign the number to the school. The idea is that a school labeled “Typical” at 55 has less incentive to improve by 5 points than a “Typical” school at 65 points, because the latter has the chance of reaching “Leading.” Shouldn’t all improvement be recognized?

It was explained that our Federal guidelines require, at minimum 3 classifications: Priority, Focus, and Commended.

A question was raised as to whether the warning status was useful. A general consensus emerged that it was certainly helpful as an indicator that a school needed to make a change, but was the name appropriate? It was mentioned that “Warning” builds urgency that could help motivate a community. It was also suggested that it may be possible in publications to denote Warning status instead with an asterisk and explanation of the particular measure that put a school into warning.

The number of bands between the lowest and highest performing schools was discussed. There was a general consensus that a total of 4-6 labels was typical of most states and seemed generally reasonable. A suggestion to combine typical and leading was made but no clear alternative label was put forward. A request was made to conduct further research of what other states are doing and what labels they are using?

After this agenda item the meeting was adjourned.

## Guiding Principles

**RI's accountability system should...**

**1) ...be diagnostic and supportive**

- The system should be useful in driving decision-making around school improvement efforts. It should inform families such that they understand whether their school is adequately preparing students to graduate college and career ready and facilitate the support of struggling schools.

**2)...be transparent and trustworthy**

- The system should be presented in a way that is understandable to all audiences. It should be valid, reliable and apply fairly to all schools. Standards and expectations should be clear and rigorous while motivating school communities to meet aspirational goals for improvement. Changes in ratings should reflect real-world changes in educational conditions, rather than statistical artifacts.

**3) ...value absolute performance as well as growth**

- The system should value overall proficiency in addition to a strong pattern of growth, thereby acknowledging that students coming in below grade-level might not achieve proficiency within a single year but may nevertheless achieve above average growth and narrow the proficiency gap.

**4)...emphasize equity among all student groups**

- The system should account for gaps between groups of students, particularly those groups of students that require extra support. It should recognize and reward schools providing equitable education among all groups of students.

**5)...recognize challenges in educational environments**

- The system should reflect that unique challenges of poverty, disability, language acquisition and other environmental circumstances increase the difficulty in achieving equitable outcomes for some students. It should recognize that schools with greater challenges must work harder to achieve outcomes equal to schools with fewer challenges while never compromising high expectations for all students.

# **Accountability 3.0 Advisory Group**

**March 9, 2015**

## **Agenda**

- Review prior recommendations/agreements
- Gap Closing Metric: analysis of impact data
- Growth Metric: confirm approach
- Naming Conventions: discuss options

## Recommendations Made

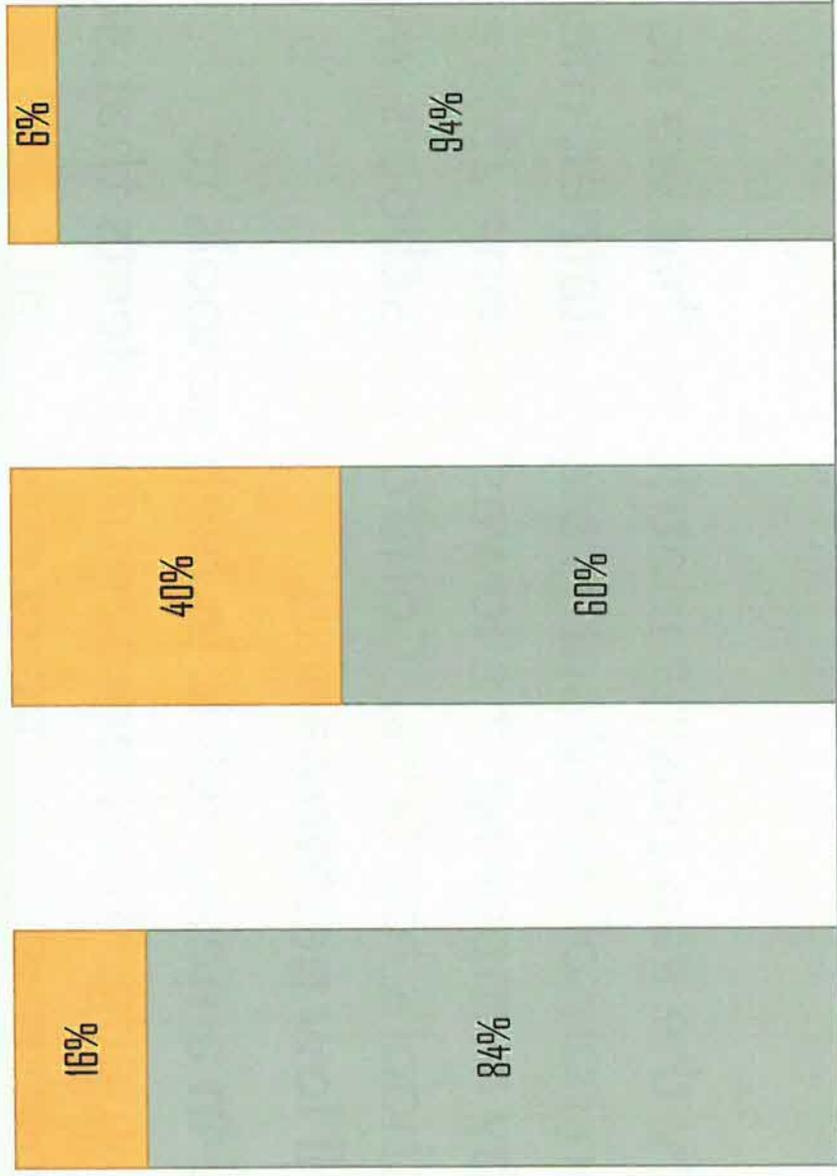
- Move toward using rolling averages to mitigate yearly “bounce” particularly noted in small schools
- Modify the proficiency metric so that partial credit is given to students reaching performance levels 2 and 3 as well as levels 4 and 5
- Introduce weighting so that schools receive additional credit for increasing performance of students living in poverty, SwD, and ELs

## **Recommendations Made**

- **Modify the gap closing metric so that we no longer rely on consolidated subgroups. Rather, measure gaps by comparing the lowest scoring 25% against the school's top 50%. Control for schools with overall low performance.**
- **Phase-in a new metric in high schools to acknowledge the number of students that acquire at least one post-secondary credential.**

### Share of IEP Students Statewide Math

■ Non IEP ■ IEP



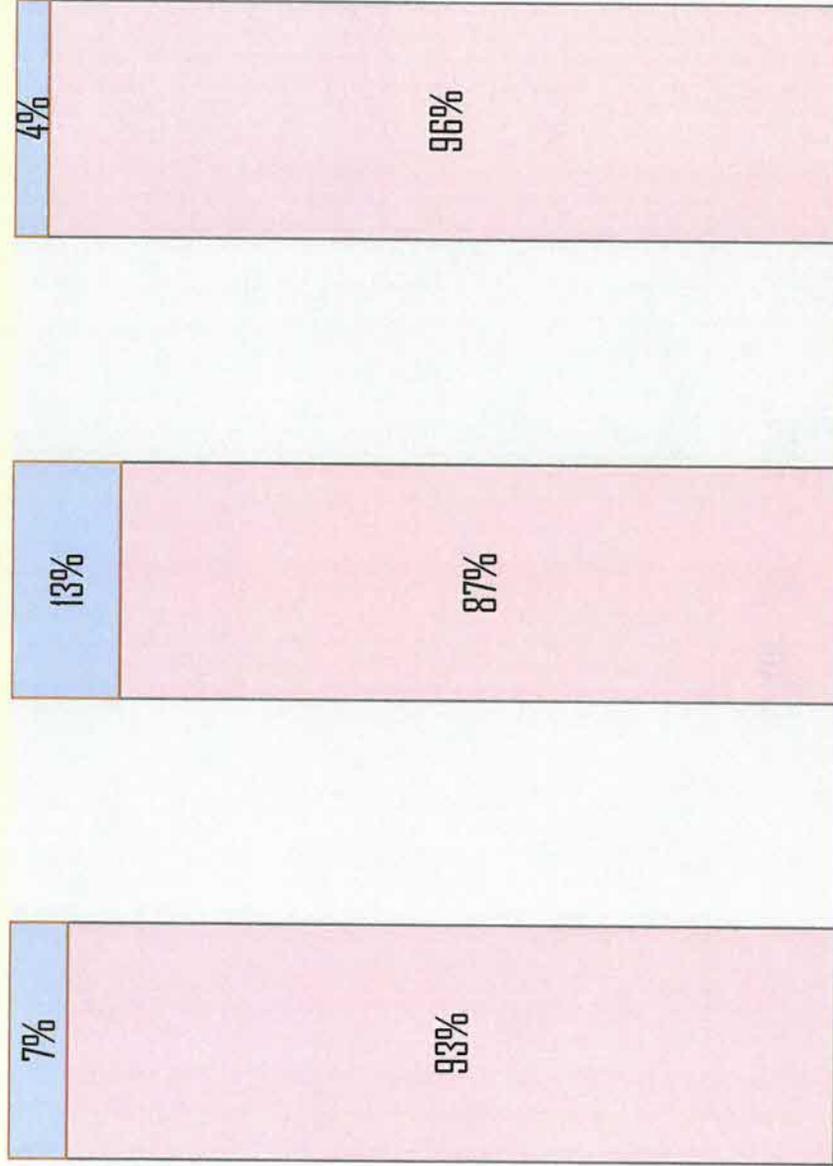
Top Half

Bottom Quartile

State

### Share of ELL Students Statewide Math

Non ELL   ELL



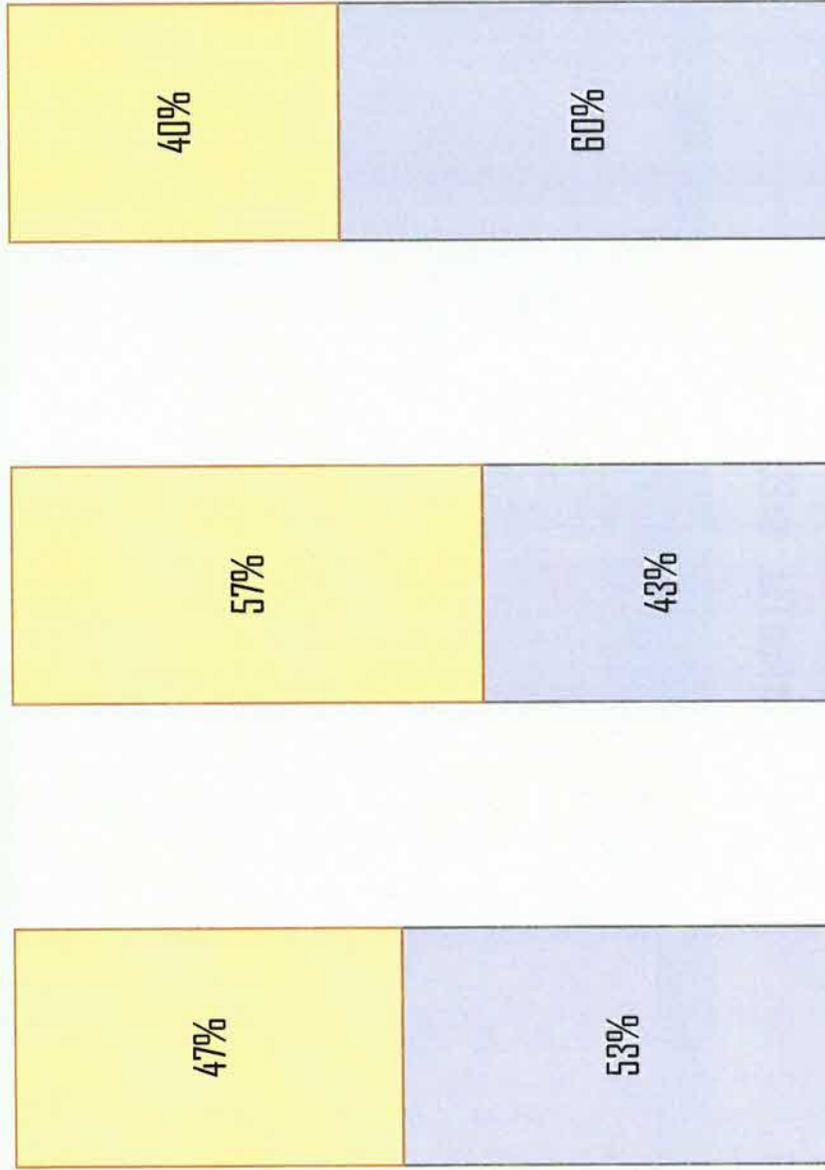
State

Bottom Quartile

Top Half

### Share of FRPL Students Statewide Math

□ Non FRPL   □ FRPL



Top Half

Bottom Quartile

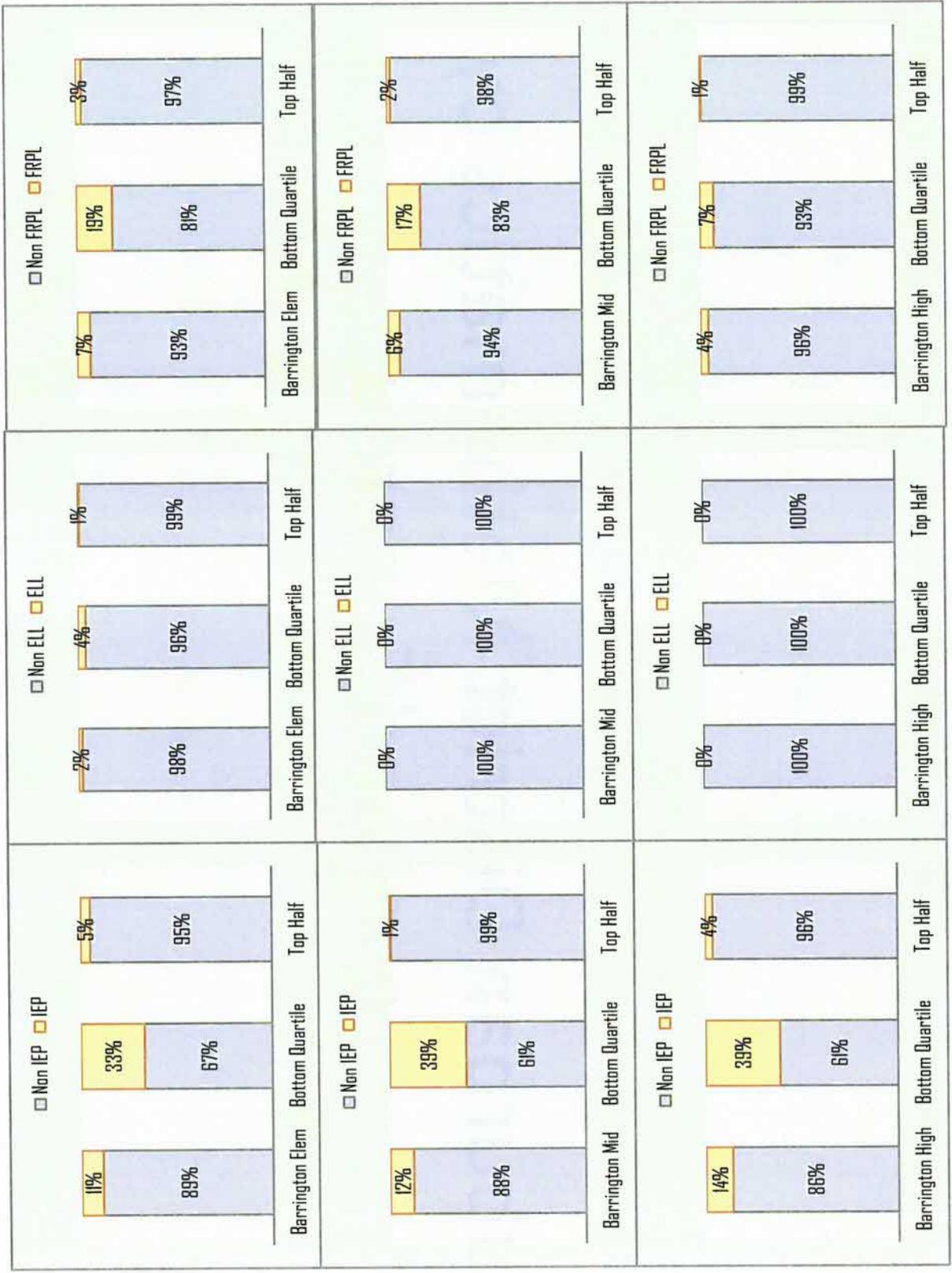
State

# Suburban District Mathematics by Level and Subgroup

# FRPL

# ELL

# IEP



Elem

Mid

High

# Urban Ring District Mathematics

## by Level and Subgroup

# FRPL

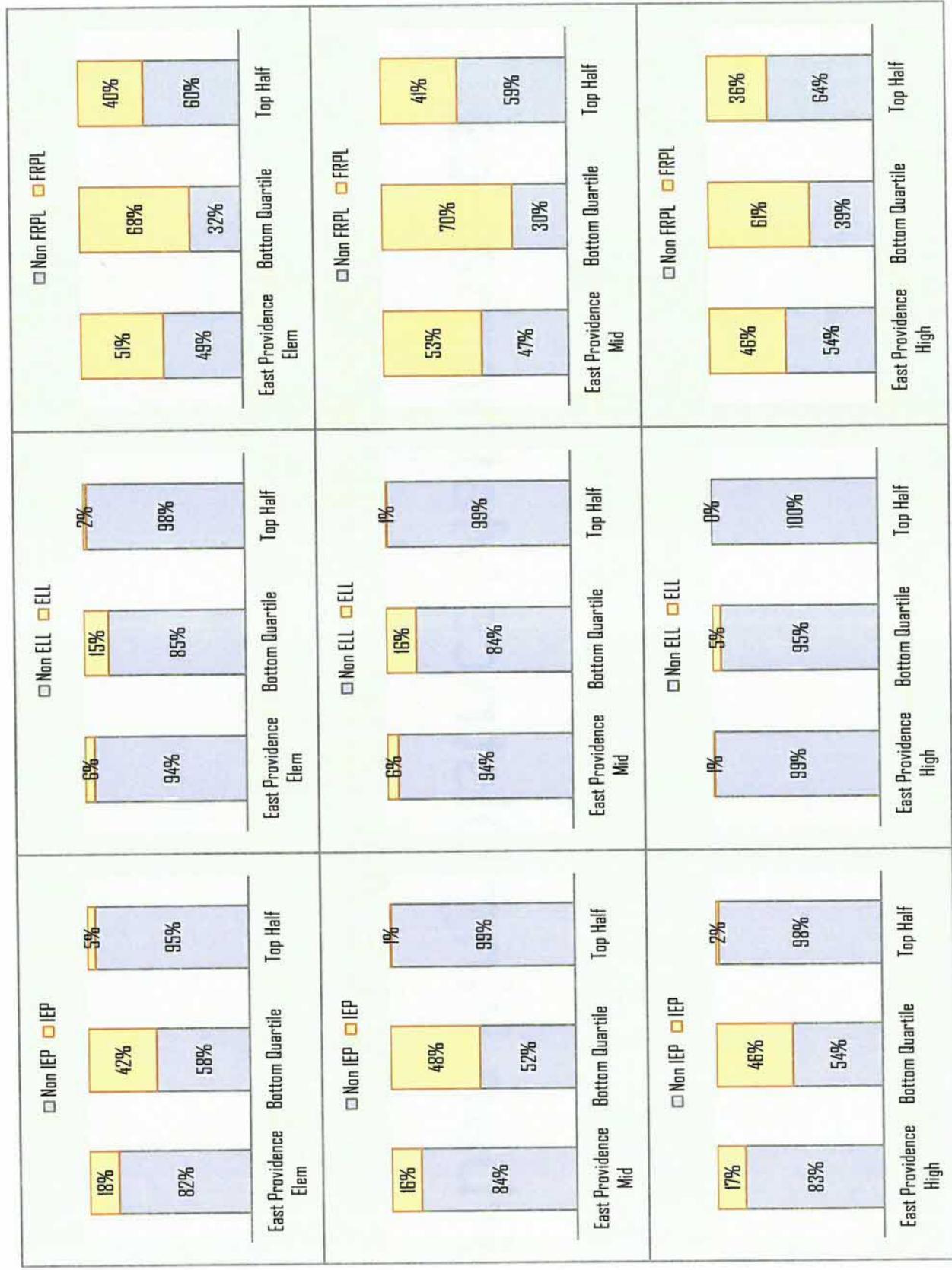
# ELL

# IEP

Elem

Mid

High



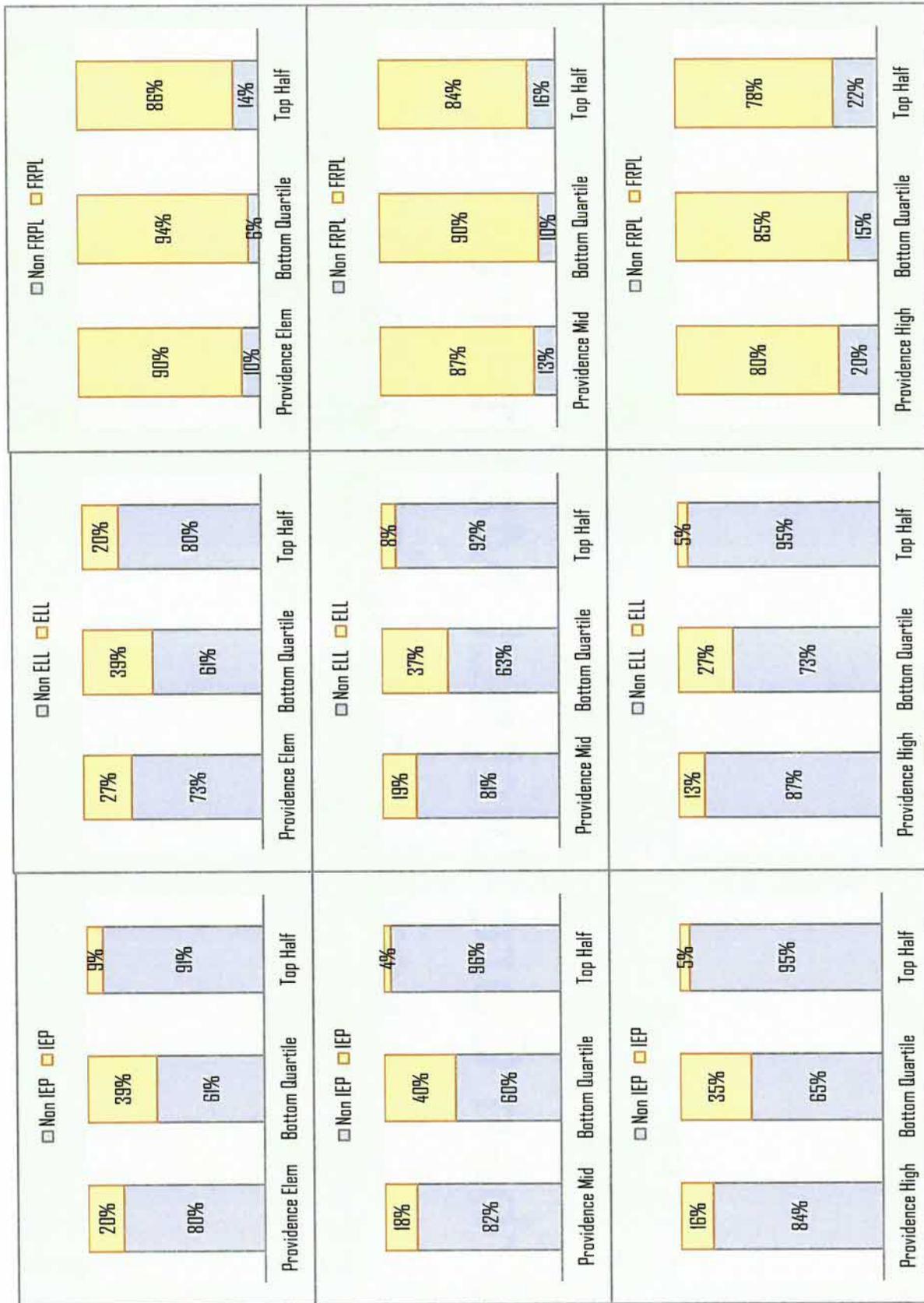
# Urban Core District Mathematics

## by Level and Subgroup

# FRPL

# ELL

# IEP



Elem

Mid

High

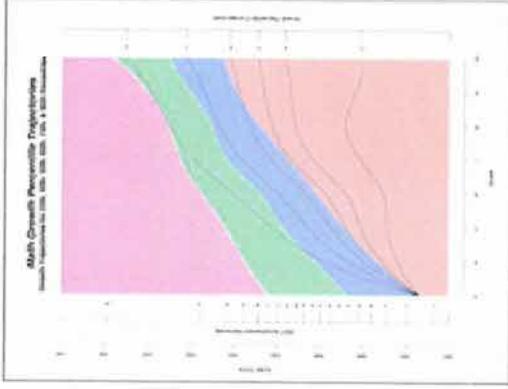
## **Growth Metric**

- Student Growth is calculated using Student Growth Percentiles (SGP)
  - Student’s current state assessment scores are compared to previous scores (Reading and Math)
- SGP are reported on a 1-99 “percentile” scale
  - Approximately 1% of students at each point
  - Statewide median is 50
- Students at all achievement levels can achieve high growth scores
  - Growth is calculated relative to other students with a similar academic history

# Growth Metric

Current System	Proposed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focused on median growth for identified subgroups<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– All Students</li><li>– Minority/Poverty</li><li>– IEP/ELL</li></ul></li><li>• Points awarded based on level of median growth<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– &lt;35 = 5 points</li><li>– 35-45 = 10 points</li><li>– 45-55 = 15 points</li><li>– 55-65 = 20 points</li><li>– &gt;65 = 25 points</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focused on percentage of students in the school with growth scores below 35<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– SGP of 35 is representative of students losing academic ground over time</li></ul></li><li>• Increased points awarded for smaller percentages</li></ul>

# Why 35?



- Across several states and different tests, students with an SGP below 35 tend to lose ground over time
  - Moving further from grade level performance targets each year
- Represents “low” growth relative to students with similar academic history
  - 65% of students with similar academic history performed better on the current state assessment

## Relationship between Grade 5 SGP and Grade 4 Performance (Achievement Levels)

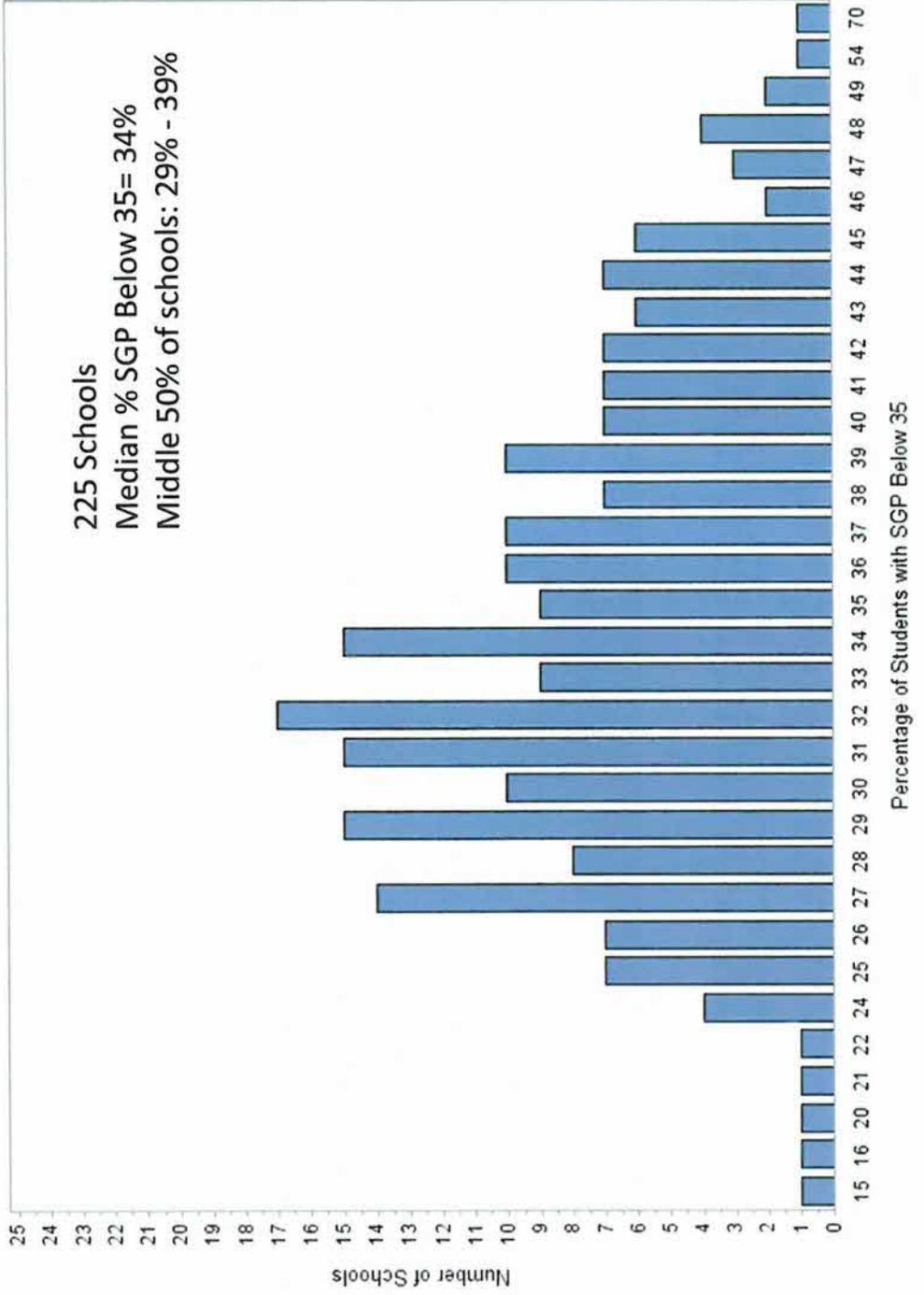
		Student Growth Percentile				
	N	Minimum	25 %ile	Median	75 %ile	Maximum
Proficient with Distinction	2,101	1	25	50	75	99
Proficient	4,090	1	25	50	75	99
Partially Proficient	1,721	1	25	50	75	99
Substantially Below Proficient	1,651	1	25	50	75	99

# Relationship between 2014 SGP and Subgroup Flags

	Student Growth Percentile					
	N	Minimum	25 %ile	Median	75 %ile	Maximum
All Students	29,608	1	25	50	75	99
Minority	10,990	1	25	50	75	99
IEP	4,789	1	20	43	71	99
Poverty	14,544	1	23	47.5	73	99
ELL	2,421	1	24	51	75	99
1 "flag"	7,561	1	23	48	74	99
2 "flags"	7,386	1	23	48	73	99
3 "flags"	2,917	1	24	49	74	99
4 "flags"	415	1	20	43	70	99

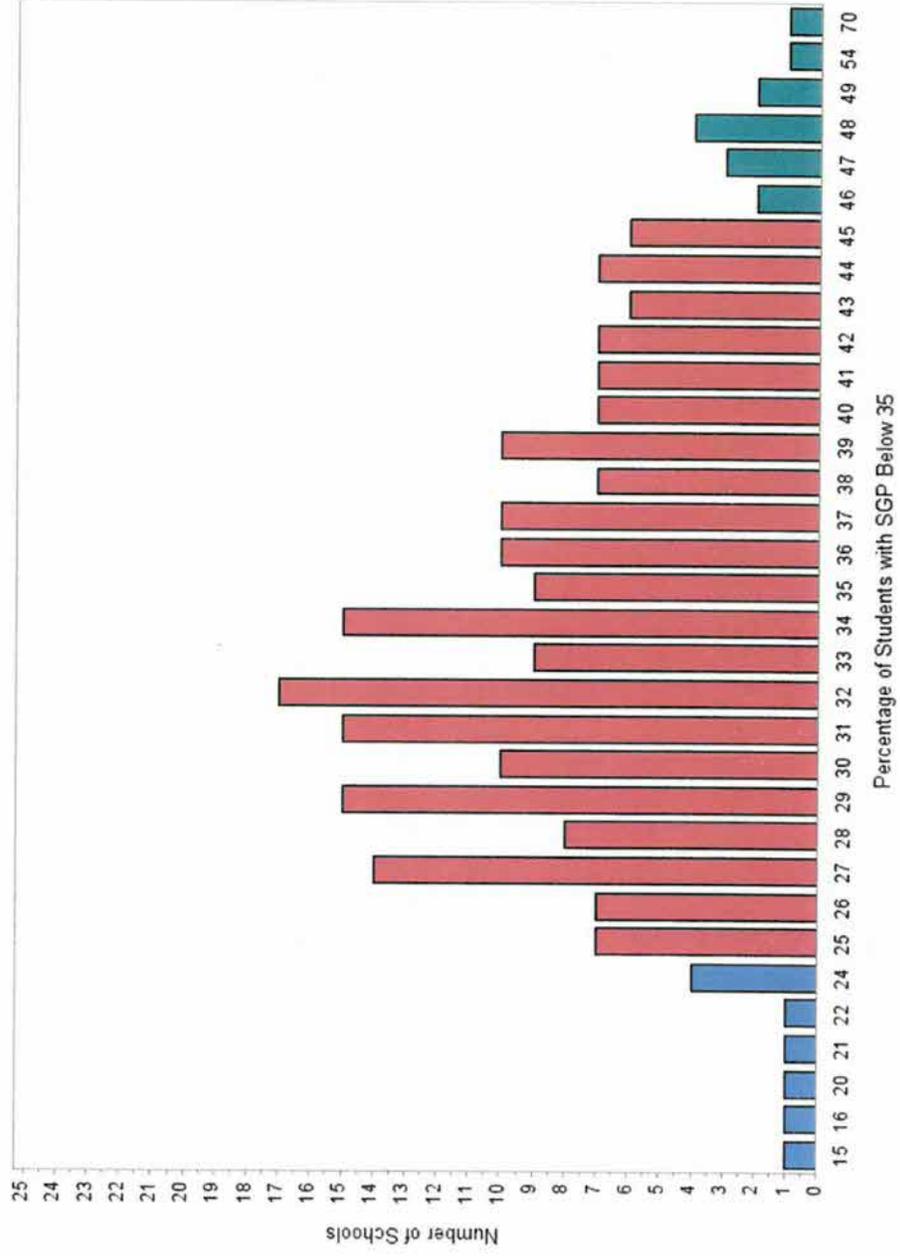
# 2014 Distribution of Schools

## SGP: Combined Reading and Mathematics



# Large “middle” group centered around 35

**SGP: Combined Reading and Mathematics**



## Naming Conventions

- Some states (LA, FL,) have A-F grades
- Delaware ranks schools from 0-100
- Massachusetts has Levels 1-5
- Georgia: Priority, Focus, Alert, Reward
- Hawaii: Reward, Continuous Improvement, Focus, and Priority
- Colorado: Accredited with Distinction, Accredited, Accredited with Improvement Plan, Priority Improvement Plan, and Turnaround Plan
- New York: Good Standing, Focus, Local Assistance Plan, Priority
- Michigan: Color coded based on %age of points earned (e.g. lime green if 85% of total points are earned)

## RIDE OOT District Superintendent Focus Group Summary

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014, the Rhode Island Department of Education Office of Transformation (OOT) arranged for two consultants from EDI, Tom DeWire and Duncan Robb, to interview a small focus group of Rhode Island school district superintendents in order to hear reactions and suggestions regarding OOT's continuing support of turnaround schools. Specifically, EDI focused on OOT's use of facilitated and monitoring routines, which are intended to model and encourage data-based decision-making at schools and districts. A summary of the findings from the focus group are as follows:

- Frustration remains around the definition of success and the likelihood for schools to actually exit turnaround status, though relationships with superintendents had improved
- Superintendents find great value in both the facilitated and monitoring routines
- Fewer principals are participating in monitoring routines, but this could be a good thing
- Suggestions for improvement centered around convening turnaround practitioners and emphasizing OOT's role as the evaluator

### SUPERINTENDENTS ARE CONFUSED ABOUT SUCCESS, THOUGH RELATIONSHIPS IMPROVE

While some superintendents noted improvement in their understanding of what constitutes success, there was still general consensus that success for turnaround schools has been a "moving target" for the last several years. Superintendents cited specific examples when they expected status to change, but were told it would not. Some felt that the requirements for schools to be removed from turnaround status are too challenging.

Regarding OOT's turnaround routines specifically, superintendents were concerned that the deliverables required for the routines change too frequently and are hard to keep straight. Nevertheless, they unanimously indicated that their relationships with RIDE and OOT had only improved since turnaround efforts began.

### THE FACILITATED ROUTINES ARE WELL-REGARDED

The focus group participants universally felt that RIDE's facilitated routines add value to their turnaround efforts. In fact, some superintendents mentioned that they carry out similar routines between the district office and all schools in the district. They described that while the preparation for the facilitated routine seemed intensive at first, staff is now very much on board. Others appreciated that the routines "force the issue" and make them determine the interventions that they will focus on in schools. Further, they agreed that the plans were useful for day-to-day work at the districts and at some schools (but not all). The top strengths were the focus on linking outcome data to adult behavior and the skill of most facilitators to bring the conversation back to students and not just process metrics.

Superintendents did feel that the process for preparation could be more clear and consistent. At least one felt that they were always unsure of what was due when and where the correct document template could be found. Another mentioned that more consistent facilitators would be appreciated.

### **MONITORING ROUTINES ARE USEFUL, BUT QUESTIONS AROUND PRINCIPAL ENGAGEMENT**

Superintendents also felt that the monitoring routines were a good use of time, and enabled mostly-honest conversations about concrete next steps. However, some were curious about lagging principal participation and, upon reflection, whether this was a bad thing; superintendents mentioned that the conversation was usually more honest and constructive for them without the principal present.

### **SUPERINTENDENTS SUGGESTED MORE CONVENING AND “TOUGH LOVE”**

Two main suggestions arose from the focus group. First, many superintendents asked for more opportunities for turnaround teachers and leaders to convene around problems of practice, solutions, and successes. They felt that there was an opportunity for a stronger community to form around already-strong turnaround efforts. While there was no clear consensus on the venue or frequency, they did feel that both school administrators and teachers should be included.

Second, some superintendents noted a tension between OOT’s dual capacities as both a facilitator and an evaluator and worried that OOT’s role as a critical friend has become less “critical” and more “friend.” They challenged OOT to be willing to ask tougher questions in order to move districts along in the work. They appreciated that OOT facilitators do not want to embarrass district staff in front of school teams, but called for a harder edge nonetheless, either during the routine or immediately following. Some also called for more accountability to bring adult behavior data to the table, which they thought would further enhance the discussion.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

From this feedback, we believe that RIDE and OOT could make some modifications in order to make an already strong process even better:

- Quickly decide how PARCC results will be used and clearly articulate this to routine participants. This was one of the first questions asked of Stephen Osborn during the opening of the focus group and is the most applicable way to address concerns around the definition of success at this time.
- Make any final changes to the routine process and deliverables, then allow participants to become used to the consistent process.
- Implement online, collaborative reporting documents to allow schools, districts, and OST to work from the same source material.
- Clearly define the role of the principal (or lack thereof) in the monitoring routine.
- Heed the call for a more scrutinizing critical friend. Superintendents generally felt confident in their relationship with OOT and are ready for a harder push during the routines.

**Attachment 3: Notice and information provided to the public regarding the request**

**Attachment 4: Evidence that the State has formally adopted college-and-career-ready content standards consistent with the State's standards adoption process**

Attachment 4: Evidence that the State has formally adopted college-and career-ready content standards consistent with the State's standards adoption process

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BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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**Providence Public Library**  
**150 Empire St.**  
**Providence, RI 02908**  
**Thursday, July 1, 2010 4:00 p.m.**

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MINUTES

Attending: R. Flanders, K. Forbes, A. Beretta, B. Shimberg, C. Callahan,  
A. Cano-Morales, F. Caprio.

The meeting convened at 4:05 p.m.

Commissioner's Report

Adult Education Update – Commissioner Gist told the Board that the overall goal of adult education is to ensure all Rhode Island adults have the skills and credentials they need for upward mobility (college and career), engaged citizenship and leading strong families and communities. Located in public libraries across the state, the Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative began over 12 years ago offering programming to address the literacy needs and barriers of children and their families. As a high performing adult education provider, RIFLI has adjusted to the needs in the community and now offers ESL, citizenship and college/career transition programming. They are a leader in the use of technology to support adult learning and are Rhode Island's representative for the National Learner Web project. Strong adult education programs such as RIFLI will be necessary as the next set of adult education reforms is instituted. These will include alignment of adult secondary and postsecondary education policies that adhere to the nationally benchmarked college and career readiness standards as well as expansion of adult education that is contextualized and support career pathways for youth and adults in Rhode Island critical and emerging sectors.

RTTT Update – The Commissioner told the group that we should receive news on Rhode Island's Race to the Top application by the second or third week of July; and that interviews will be scheduled during the second week of August.

Graduation Requirements - The 2008 Board of Regents High School Regulations say that, "Commencing with the graduating class of 2012, local educational agencies without full approval will no longer be authorized to grant diplomas; all diplomas granted within the State of Rhode Island's public schools must then be Regents' approved diplomas." Under these regulations approximately 3000 – 4500 students may be denied local diplomas. The Commissioner told the group that she would like to create a Board of Regents subcommittee to develop a solution that will, first of all, mitigate the student impact in 2012; and secondly will compel continue efforts of

implementation and maintain BOR authority. She explained that there are a number of options available to mitigate the implications of the 2008 Regulations, and urged the Board to form an ad hoc committee to fully examine all of the options. Chairman Flanders asked that Regent Callahan chair the committee as an extension of her original work on the High School Regulations.

Summer Program Update – The Commissioner reported that on Wednesday, she had visited some summer learning sites with a group of middle-school students who participate in YMCA programs. They visited the Joslin Recreation Center: YMCA on the Move; Roger Williams Park Zoo; the Pawtucket Library: Teen Zone; RISD Museum of Art; and the Jaswell's Farm: Farm to School Program. They also enjoyed lunch at the Galego Court Community; one of the summer food service programs, funded through the USDA and administered by the Department of Education to provide free, nutritious meals for children in schools, parks, playgrounds, and other sites across the state. Commissioner Gist emphasized that there are a lot of learning opportunities across Rhode Island where, at little or no cost, families and students can have fun and learn this summer.

One year anniversary – Commissioner Gist remarked that this week marks the end of the first year of her Commissionership. She thanked the Regents for the opportunity to come to Rhode Island and thanked Rhode Island for welcoming her.

#### Public Remarks

Karisa Tashjian, Rhode Island Family Literacy program thanked the Regents for holding the meeting at the Providence Public Library and the Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative Center. She said that fifteen adult immigrants attend the program where they have been studying ESL and career awareness twice a week over the past year. Additionally RIFLI ESL and citizenship preparation programs are held in the Cranston, East Providence, Pawtucket, Providence and West Warwick libraries.

Zoila Sanchez, RIFL – spoke to the Regents about her participation in the center's ESL program. She said that education is very important to her and she is grateful for the opportunity to learn English.

Melisa Pimentel, RIFL – Told the members of the Board that she had come to the United States one year ago and had to wait four months to get into the RIFL program. She said that her primary goal is to learn English so that she will be able to attend college, however at the center she has access to a lot of other services as well.

Carolyn Sheehan, Director, Blackstone Academy Charter School and Vice Pres. League of Charter Schools – Ms. Sheehan thanked the department for their work with the Charter Schools that are up for renewal and/or extensions of their charters on tonight's agenda. She also told the Regents that while she recognizes the importance of developing and adopting performance standards, she is concerned that tonight's vote is premature. She urged the Regents to delay the vote until the standards are developed so that everyone knows what the criteria for performance is. She also asked that the charter schools be included in that developmental work.

Rose May Grant, Principal Highlander Charter School – urged the Regents to give the Highlander Charter School a five year renewal.

Jim Gannaury, Highlander Board member and foster grandparent – thanked the Regents for reconsidering the original proposal to grant Highlander a one year renewal. He said that he understands the Commissioner’s goal to ensure that Rhode Island charter schools are the best schools (academically) in the state, however expressed his concern that by relying solely on state testing, some kids will be excluded from having the opportunity to have a choice in the school they attend.

Stephen Panikoff, Director Kingston Hill Academy – expressed his agreement that the state goal should be to increase student achievement and graduation rates, however disagrees with the time frame of the establishment of performance criteria.

Julie Nora, Director International Charter School – disagrees with the “order of things”. She said that it is premature to vote on the renewal or extension of any charters until the performance criteria is developed. Additionally, the school was looking forward to celebrating the granting of a five year charter rather than a two.

William Shuey, International Charter School – spoke to the Regents about the physical facility; for bonding purposes, the stability of a school is important; and a five year charter is more stable than a two year charter.

David Bourne, Cuffee Charter School – announced that he is retiring from Cuffee this year and introduced the new head of school. He told the Regents that he supports the development of performance criteria to hold charter schools accountable, but asks that the Regents put the criteria in place before voting on any extensions or reauthorization.

Heidi Borrell/Jennifer Rodriguez, Young Voices - Urged the Regents not to rely solely on test scores when reauthorizing charter schools. Rather, to look at climate and culture, as well. Need to put policies in place for ALL schools – not just charter schools; and need to protect choices for families.

Mena Perreira, Young Voices – A “concrete” process of evaluation and performance criteria needs to be put in place before any extensions are granted.

Stephen Day, parent of former Highlander student (now in college) – talked about his daughter’s experience at Highlander. He told the group that she never would have “made it” to college if it hadn’t been for Highlander.

Travis Zellner, Rhode Island School for the Deaf – Spoke on the agenda item to return the authority of the Rhode Island School for the Deaf to the Board of Trustees. He told the Regents that the Trustees have been working hard to find good Trustees to fill the two vacant seats. The Board is committed to bringing the school back to where it should be.

Steve Florio, Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing – requested that the Regents take this opportunity to establish a common structure with the School for the Deaf Trustees by scheduling joint meetings twice a year, maybe April and October.

John Wolfe, Highlander teacher – spoke about the huge challenges at Highlander and the need for the Regents to “do the right thing”. Urged the

Regents to fix the failures of the system, but not based solely on test scores; vote to give Highlander a five year reauthorization.

Approval of Executive Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting of May, 5, 2010; Minutes of the Board of Regents Special Work Session on Charter Schools of June 1, 2010; Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting of June 3, 2010; Minutes of Board of Regents Work Session on the Evaluation of the Commissioner of June 11, 2010; Executive Minutes of Board of Regents Work Session on the Evaluation of the Commissioner of June 11, 2010; Minutes of Board of Regents Work Session of June 17, 2010; and the Minutes of the Board of Regents Special Work Session on Highlander Charter School of June 22, 2010.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the Executive Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting of May, 5, 2010; Minutes of the Board of Regents Special Work Session on Charter Schools of June 1, 2010; Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting of June 3, 2010; Minutes of Board of Regents Work Session on the Evaluation of the Commissioner of June 11, 2010; Executive Minutes of Board of Regents Work Session on the Evaluation of the Commissioner of June 11, 2010; Minutes of Board of Regents Work Session of June 17, 2010; and the Minutes of the Board of Regents Special Work Session on Highlander Charter School of June 22, 2010.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval to Return the Authority of the School for the Deaf to the Board of Trustees

Commissioner Gist reminded the Board that this agenda item was discussed at their June 17 work session. She then reviewed the history of the action - in October, 2009, the Rhode Island Board of Regents passed a resolution to exercise its authority related to the supervision, administration and control of the school for the deaf and its operation by assigning the direct supervision of the current school Director and assistants to the RIDE Office for Diverse Learners Director; and asked that the Regents now return the authority of the School for the Deaf to the Board of Trustees. RIDE staff member, Ken Swanson updated the group on the progress of filling the last two seats on the Board of Trustees.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Return of Authority of the School for the Deaf to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Appeals

Regent Amy Beretta presented each of these appeals and read the decisions, as follows:

Student M. Doe v. Bristol-Warren School Department

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, in the Matter of Student M. Doe v. the Bristol-Warren School Department, the Decision of the Commissioner is Upheld.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Jean Campbell v. Cranston School Committee

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, in the Matter of Jean Campbell v. Cranston School Committee, the Decision of the Commissioner is Upheld.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Gabrielle Hart v. Newport School Committee

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, in the Matter of Gabrielle Hart v. Newport School Committee, the Decision of the Commissioner is Upheld.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Bernard McCrink v. Providence School Board

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, in the Matter of Bernard McCrink v. Providence School Board, the Decision of the Commissioner is Upheld.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Paul Perrino v. Providence School Board

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, in the Matter of Paul Perrino v. Providence School Board, the Decision of the Commissioner is Upheld.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Cranston School District & Chariho Regional School District v. RI DE

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, in the Matter of the Cranston School District & Chariho Regional School District v. RIDE, the Decision of the Commissioner is Upheld.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Extension of Charter for Highlander Charter School

Ms. Gist made opening remarks on the proposal to extend the Highlander Charter School charter for three years and to include a performance management plan that sets expectations and student achievement benchmarks for each academic year – 2010 through 2013. For the record, Ms. Gist

emphasized that at no time did she ever suggest that Highlander not be reauthorized at all. Rather, she said that she had concerns about their test scores and was asking for an opportunity for the Department and Regents to take a closer look. The Commissioner then invited Jennifer Smith to come to the table to update the group on the process. Ms. Smith talked about the vision for charter schools and the establishment of clear and concise measurable objectives. The group then talked about timeline (a draft of the performance measures will be ready in the Fall) and the development process (which will include a review of what other states are doing and input from Rhode Island charter schools).

Regent Caprio addressed the group, saying that this recommendation represents a compromise for both the Regents/Department and the Highlander Charter Schools. He urged passage of the motion.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Grants a three year extension of the Charter for Highlander Charter School. This extension will include a performance management plan that sets expectations and student achievement benchmarks for each academic year – 2010 through 2013. Highlander Charter School's performance will be reviewed each school year. Following the review in 2013, if requirements of the performance management plan have been met, an additional extension of the charter (five years) shall be considered.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

#### Approval of Extension of Charters for Paul Cuffee/Kingston Hill/International Charter Schools

The Commissioner told the Regents that this agenda item is being presented to them for approval to ensure that there is clarity on the expectations for the reauthorization of charter schools. All of these schools are up for reauthorization next summer. The Regents discussed the possibility of holding off this vote until after the performance agreements have been developed.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Grants a two year extension of the Charters for Paul Cuffee/Kingston Hill/International Charter School. This extension will include a performance management plan that sets expectations and student achievement benchmarks for each academic year – 2010 through 2013. Each school's performance will be reviewed annually. Following the review in 2013, if the achievement benchmarks articulated within the performance

management plan have been achieved, an additional extension of the charter (five years) shall be considered.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

#### Approval of the Common Core

Commissioner Gist reminded the Regents that during the two work sessions held on June 17 and 24, RIDE staff presented information on the common core standards, as follows:

- The Common Core State Standards were developed as a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers. 48 states, 2 territories and the District of Columbia are part of this state led consortium.
- These standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators and education experts. They are aligned with college and work expectations and internationally benchmarked.
- After reviewing the final version of the standards, RIDE is confident that these standards maintain the high expectations that have been set for our students through the GLE/GSE's.
- RIDE is developing a detailed implementation plan to ensure that all schools are fully implementing a curriculum that is aligned with the common core standards prior to the first assessment based on the common core standards during the 2014-2015 school year.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Adopt the Common Core State Standards, as presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

#### Agenda for Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Board of Regents will be a work session and is scheduled on July 22, 2010 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Shepard Building, Room 501. Additional information about the agenda is available in the Office of the Commissioner of Education, Shepard Building, 255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903. The Shepard Building has been deemed accessible to those with disabilities by the State Building Commissioner. Individuals requesting interpreter services for the hearing impaired or needing other accommodations, please call 401-222-8468 or RI Relay 1-800-745-5555 at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Attachment 5: Memorandum of understanding or letter from a State network of institutions of higher education (IHEs) certifying that meeting the State's standards corresponds to being college – and career-ready without the need for remedial coursework at the postsecondary level.



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
Shepard Building  
255 Westminster Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Deborah A. Gist  
Commissioner

April 7, 2011

The Honorable Lincoln D. Chafee  
Governor  
R.I. State House  
Smith Street  
Providence, R.I. 02903

Dear Governor Chafee,

Last year leaders from 25 states, including Rhode Island, formed the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) state consortium to create a next-generation assessment system. I am writing to ask for your affirmation of Rhode Island's continued participation in PARCC. Please know that Regents Chairman Caruolo has endorsed this request.

A fundamental goal of the PARCC states is to *build their collective capacity to dramatically increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for success in college and the workplace*. When PARCC formed, the states recognized that there would be changes in political leadership over the four-year project period. As a result, when a key transition occurs in a PARCC state, state leadership must affirm in writing the state's continued commitment to participate in the Partnership.

In order to meet the requirements of NCLB states are required to test all students annually in grades 3-8 and once in high school in mathematics and reading or language arts. Currently the NECAP consortium develops our state assessment to meet these requirements and it is our intention that the PARCC consortium will in the future. After the fall 2013 administration the NECAP consortium will no longer be administering the Mathematics, Reading, and Writing assessments as the other NECAP states are also members of a consortium. Without the other NECAP states, Rhode Island would not be able fund the continued administration of the NECAP assessments. As a member of a consortium we will be able leverage our resources and funding to benefit all of the states. We will be able to provide computer based assessments, through-course assessments, and additional challenging performance tasks and innovative computer-enhanced items that as a single state would not be possible. In addition, we will be able to benefit from the experience and knowledge of our partner states.

Telephone (401)222-4600 Fax (401)222-6178 TTY (800)745-5555 Voice (800)745-6575 Website: [www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov)

The Board of Regents does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, race, color, religion, national origin, or disability.

There are two consortia that received funding to build new assessment systems, PARCC and Smarter Balanced. Although our partners in the other NECAP states are members of the Smarter Balanced consortium, I believe that PARCC will better support Rhode Island's goal in our strategic plan to implement a state assessment system that is nationally and internationally benchmarked and aligned to the Common Core State Standards. PARCC is particularly attentive to the importance of higher education involvement in the establishment of test designs and understanding achievement level implications for college placement. In addition, PARCC recognizes the important relationship between instruction and assessment. Through this Partnership we will develop a high quality and rigorous assessment that incorporates technology and innovative items. We will be able to provide educators, students, and families with timely and actionable information regarding student performance and whether a student is on track to reach college and career readiness. Further, Rhode Island districts and schools will be able to benchmark their progress against that of other states and similar districts across the country. The Partnership plans to provide teachers with optional resources to support curriculum development, lesson planning, and formative assessment.

Finally, Rhode Island is a Governing State, which means that I sit on the PARCC Governing Board and have decision making authority on behalf of the Partnership on major policies and operational procedures. Each Governing State also designates lead staff to coordinate the state's participation in PARCC, including by serving on committees and as a part of working groups that will conduct the major assessment design and development activities. Through the PARCC grant, Governing States receive funding for a staff person devoted to PARCC activities. I am confident that our role as a governing state in PARCC and the PARCC's assessments themselves will yield significant advantages for educators, families, and most of all, students in our state.

Please contact me should you need any further information as you make your decision regarding the endorsement of PARCC.

Sincerely,



Deborah A. Gist  
Commissioner

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**  
**For**  
**Race To The Top – Comprehensive Assessment Systems Grant**

**PARTNERSHIP FOR ASSESSMENT OF READINESS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREERS MEMBERS**

*JUNE 3, 2010*

**I. Parties**

This Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) is made and effective as of this 29th day of March 2011, (the “Effective Date”) by and between the State of Rhode Island and all other member states of the Partnership For Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (“Consortium” or “PARCC”) who have also executed this MOU.

**II. Scope of MOU**

This MOU constitutes an understanding between the Consortium member states to participate in the Consortium. This document describes the purpose and goals of the Consortium, presents its background, explains its organizational and governance structure, and defines the terms, responsibilities and benefits of participation in the Consortium.

**III. Background – Comprehensive Assessment Systems Grant**

On April 9, 2010, the Department of Education (“ED”) announced its intent to provide grant funding to consortia of States for two grant categories under the Race to the Top Fund Assessment Program: (a) Comprehensive Assessment Systems grants, and (b) High School Course Assessment grants. 75 Fed. Reg. 18171 (April 9, 2010) (“Notice”).

The Comprehensive Assessment Systems grant will support the development of new assessment systems that measure student knowledge and skills against a common set of college- and career-ready standards in mathematics and English language arts in a way that covers the full range of those standards, elicits complex student demonstrations or applications of knowledge and skills as appropriate, and provides an accurate measure of student achievement across the full performance continuum and an accurate measure of student growth over a full academic year or course.

**IV. Purpose and Goals**

The states that are signatories to this MOU are members of a consortium (Partnership For Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) that have organized themselves to apply for and carry out the objectives of the Comprehensive Assessment Systems grant program.

Consortium states have identified the following major purposes and uses for the assessment system results:

- To measure and document students' college and career readiness by the end of high school and progress toward this target. Students meeting the college and career readiness standards will be eligible for placement into entry-level credit-bearing, rather than remedial, courses in public 2- and 4-year postsecondary institutions in all participating states.
- To provide assessments and results that:
  - Are comparable across states at the student level;
  - Meet internationally rigorous benchmarks;
  - Allow valid measures of student longitudinal growth; and
  - Serve as a signal for good instructional practices.
- To support multiple levels and forms of accountability including:
  - Decisions about promotion and graduation for individual students;
  - Teacher and leader evaluations;
  - School accountability determinations;
  - Determinations of principal and teacher professional development and support needs; and
  - Teaching, learning, and program improvement.
- Assesses all students, including English learners and students with disabilities.

To further these goals, States that join the Consortium by signing this MOU mutually agree to support the work of the Consortium as described in the PARCC application for funding under the Race to the Top Assessment Program.

## **V. Definitions**

This MOU incorporates and adopts the terms defined in the Department of Education's Notice, which is appended hereto as Addendum 1.

## **VI. Key Deadlines**

The Consortium has established key deadlines and action items for all Consortium states, as specified in Table (A)(1)(b)(v) and Section (A)(1) of its proposal. The following milestones represent major junctures during the grant period when the direction of the Consortium's work will be clarified, when the Consortium must make key decisions, and when member states must make additional commitments to the Consortium and its work.

- A. The Consortium shall develop procedures for the administration of its duties, set forth in By-Laws, which will be adopted at the first meeting of the Governing Board.
- B. The Consortium shall adopt common assessment administration procedures no later than the spring of 2011.

- C. The Consortium shall adopt a common set of item release policies no later than the spring of 2011.
- D. The Consortium shall adopt a test security policy no later than the spring of 2011.
- E. The Consortium shall adopt a common definition of “English learner” and common policies and procedures for student participation and accommodations for English learners no later than the spring of 2011.
- F. The Consortium shall adopt common policies and procedures for student participation and accommodations for students with disabilities no later than the spring of 2011.
- G. Each Consortium state shall adopt a common set of college- and career-ready standards no later than December 31, 2011.
- H. The Consortium shall adopt a common set of common performance level descriptors no later than the summer of 2014.
- I. The Consortium shall adopt a common set of achievement standards no later than the summer of 2015.

## **VII. Consortium Membership**

### **A. Membership Types and Responsibilities**

1. **Governing State:** A State becomes a Governing State if it meets the eligibility criteria in this section.
  - a. The eligibility criteria for a Governing State are as follows:
    - (i) A Governing State may not be a member of any other consortium that has applied for or receives grant funding from the Department of Education under the Race to the Top Fund Assessment Program for the Comprehensive Course Assessment Systems grant category;
    - (ii) A Governing State must be committed to statewide implementation and administration of the assessment system developed by the Consortium no later than the 2014-2015 school year, subject to availability of funds;
    - (iii) A Governing State must be committed to using the assessment results in its accountability system, including for school accountability determinations;

teacher and leader evaluations; and teaching, learning and program improvement;

- (iv) A Governing State must provide staff to the Consortium to support the activities of the Consortium as follows:
- Coordinate the state's overall participation in all aspects of the project, including:
    - ongoing communication within the state education agency, with local school systems, teachers and school leaders, higher education leaders;
    - communication to keep the state board of education, governor's office and appropriate legislative leaders and committees informed of the consortium's activities and progress on a regular basis;
    - participation by local schools and education agencies in pilot tests and field test of system components; and
    - identification of barriers to implementation.
  - Participate in the management of the assessment development process on behalf of the Consortium;
  - Represent the chief state school officer when necessary in Governing Board meetings and calls;
  - Participate on Design Committees that will:
    - Develop the overall assessment design for the Consortium;
    - Develop content and test specifications;
    - Develop and review Requests for Proposals (RFPs);
    - Manage contract(s) for assessment system development;
    - Recommend common achievement levels;
    - Recommend common assessment policies; and
    - Other tasks as needed.
- (v) A Governing State must identify and address the legal, statutory, regulatory and policy barriers it must change in order for the State to adopt and implement

the Consortium's assessment system components by the 2014-15 school year.

- b. A Governing State has the following additional rights and responsibilities:
- (i) A Governing State has authority to participate with other Governing States to determine and/or to modify the major policies and operational procedures of the Consortium, including the Consortium's work plan and theory of action;
  - (ii) A Governing State has authority to participate with other Governing States to provide direction to the Project Management Partner, the Fiscal Agent, and to any other contractors or advisors retained by or on behalf of the Consortium that are compensated with Grant funds;
  - (iii) A Governing State has authority to participate with other Governing States to approve the design of the assessment system that will be developed by the Consortium;
  - (iv) A Governing State must participate in the work of the Consortium's design and assessment committees;
  - (v) A Governing State must participate in pilot and field testing of the assessment systems and tools developed by the Consortium, in accordance with the Consortium's work plan;
  - (vi) A Governing State must develop a plan for the statewide implementation of the Consortium's assessment system by 2014-2015, including removing or resolving statutory, regulatory and policy barriers to implementation, and securing funding for implementation;
  - (vii) A Governing State may receive funding from the Consortium to defray the costs associated with staff time devoted to governance of the Consortium, if such funding is included in the Consortium budget;
  - (viii) A Governing State may receive funding from the Consortium to defray the costs associated with intra-State communications and engagements, if such funding is included in the Consortium budget.

- (ix) A Governing State has authority to vote upon significant grant fund expenditures and disbursements (including awards of contracts and subgrants) made to and/or executed by the Fiscal Agent, Governing States, the Project Management Partner, and other contractors or subgrantees.

2. **Fiscal Agent:** The Fiscal Agent will be one of the Governing States in the Consortium.

- (i) The Fiscal Agent will serve as the “Applicant” state for purposes of the grant application, applying as the member of the Consortium on behalf of the Consortium, pursuant to the Application Requirements of the Notice (Addendum 1) and 34 C.F.R. 75.128.
- (ii) The Fiscal Agent shall have a fiduciary responsibility to the Consortium to manage and account for the grant funds provided by the Federal Government under the Race to the Top Fund Assessment Program Comprehensive Assessment Systems grants, including related administrative functions, subject to the direction and approval of the Governing Board regarding the expenditure and disbursement of all grant funds, and shall have no greater decision-making authority regarding the expenditure and disbursement of grant funds than any other Governing State;
- (iii) The Fiscal Agent shall issue RFPs in order to procure goods and services on behalf of the Consortium;
- (iv) The Fiscal Agent has the authority, with the Governing Board’s approval, to designate another Governing State as the issuing entity of RFPs for procurements on behalf of the Consortium;
- (v) The Fiscal Agent shall enter into a contract or subgrant with the organization selected to serve as the Consortium’s Project Management Partner;
- (vi) The Fiscal Agent may receive funding from the Consortium in the form of disbursements from Grant funding, as authorized by the Governing Board, to cover the costs associated with carrying out its

responsibilities as a Fiscal Agent, if such funding is included in the Consortium budget;

- (vii) The Fiscal Agent may enter into significant contracts for services to assist the grantee to fulfill its obligation to the Federal Government to manage and account for grant funds;
- (viii) Consortium member states will identify and report to the Fiscal Agent, and the Fiscal Agent will report to the Department of Education, pursuant to program requirement 11 identified in the Notice for Comprehensive Assessment System grantees, any current assessment requirements in Title I of the ESEA that would need to be waived in order for member States to fully implement the assessment system developed by the Consortium.

### **3. Participating State**

a. The eligibility criteria for a Participating State are as follows:

- (i) A Participating State commits to support and assist with the Consortium's execution of the program described in the PARCC application for a Race to the Top Fund Assessment Program grant, consistent with the rights and responsibilities detailed below, but does not at this time make the commitments of a Governing State;
- (ii) A Participating State may be a member of more than one consortium that applies for or receives grant funds from ED for the Race to the Top Fund Assessment Program for the Comprehensive Assessment Systems grant category.

b. The rights and responsibilities of a Participating State are as follows:

- (i) A Participating State is encouraged to provide staff to participate on the Design Committees, Advisory Committees, Working Groups or other similar groups established by the Governing Board;
- (ii) A Participating State shall review and provide feedback to the Design Committees and to the Governing Board regarding the design plans,

strategies and policies of the Consortium as they are being developed;

- (iii) A Participating State must participate in pilot and field testing of the assessment systems and tools developed by the Consortium, in accordance with the Consortium's work plan; and
- (iv) A Participating State is not eligible to receive reimbursement for the costs it may incur to participate in certain activities of the Consortium.

**4. Proposed Project Management Partner:**

Consistent with the requirements of ED's Notice, the PARCC Governing States are conducting a competitive procurement to select the consortium Project Management Partner. The PARCC Governing Board will direct and oversee the work of the organization selected to be the Project Management Partner.

**B. Recommitment to the Consortium**

In the event that that the governor or chief state school officer is replaced in a Consortium state, the successor in that office shall affirm in writing to the Governing Board Chair the State's continued commitment to participation in the Consortium and to the binding commitments made by that official's predecessor within five (5) months of taking office.

**C. Application Process For New Members**

- 1. A State that wishes to join the Consortium after submission of the grant application may apply for membership in the Consortium at any time, provided that the State meets the prevailing eligibility requirements associated with its desired membership classification in the Consortium. The state's Governor, Chief State School Officer, and President of the State Board of Education (if applicable) must sign a MOU with all of the commitments contained herein, and the appropriate state higher education leaders must sign a letter making the same commitments as those made by higher education leaders in the states that have signed this MOU.
- 2. A State that joins the Consortium after the grant application is submitted to the Department of Education is not authorized to re-open settled issues, nor may it participate in the review of proposals for Requests for Proposals that have already been issued.

**D. Membership Opt-Out Process**

At any time, a State may withdraw from the Consortium by providing written notice to the chair of the Governing Board, signed by the individuals holding the same positions that signed the MOU, at least ten (10) days prior to the effective date of the withdrawal, including an explanation of reasons for the withdrawal.

## **VIII. Consortium Governance**

This section of the MOU details the process by which the Consortium shall conduct its business.

### **A. Governing Board**

1. The Governing Board shall be comprised of the chief state school officer or designee from each Governing State;
2. The Governing Board shall make decisions regarding major policy, design, operational and organizational aspects of the Consortium's work, including:
  - a. Overall design of the assessment system;
  - b. Common achievement levels;
  - c. Consortium procurement strategy;
  - d. Modifications to governance structure and decision-making process;
  - e. Policies and decisions regarding control and ownership of intellectual property developed or acquired by the Consortium (including without limitation, test specifications and blue prints, test forms, item banks, psychometric information, and other measurement theories/practices), provided that such policies and decisions:
    - (i) will provide equivalent rights to such intellectual property to all states participating in the Consortium, regardless of membership type;
    - (ii) will preserve the Consortium's flexibility to acquire intellectual property to the assessment systems as the Consortium may deem necessary and consistent with "best value" procurement principles, and with due regard for the Notice requirements regarding broad availability of such intellectual property except as otherwise protected by law or agreement as proprietary information.

3. The Governing Board shall form Design, Advisory and other committees, groups and teams (“committees”) as it deems necessary and appropriate to carry out the Consortium’s work, including those identified in the PARCC grant application.
  - a. The Governing Board will define the charter for each committee, to include objectives, timeline, and anticipated work product, and will specify which design and policy decisions (if any) may be made by the committee and which must be elevated to the Governing Board for decision;
  - b. When a committee is being formed, the Governing Board shall seek nominations for members from all states in the Consortium;
  - c. Design Committees that were formed during the proposal development stage shall continue with their initial membership, though additional members may be added at the discretion of the Governing Board;
  - d. In forming committees, the Governing Board will seek to maximize involvement across the Consortium, while keeping groups to manageable sizes in light of time and budget constraints;
  - e. Committees shall share drafts of their work products, when appropriate, with all PARCC states for review and feedback; and
  - f. Committees shall make decisions by consensus; but where consensus does not exist the committee shall provide the options developed to the Governing Board for decision (except as the charter for a committee may otherwise provide).
4. The Governing Board shall be chaired by a chief state school officer from one Governing State.
  - a. The Governing Board Chair shall serve a one-year term, which may be renewed.
  - b. The Governing States shall nominate candidates to serve as the Governing Board Chair, and the Governing Board Chair shall be selected by majority vote.
  - c. The Governing Board Chair shall have the following responsibilities:
    - (i) To provide leadership to the Governing Board to ensure that it operates in an efficient, effective, and

orderly manner. The tasks related to these responsibilities include:

- (a) Ensure that the appropriate policies and procedures are in place for the effective management of the Governing Board and the Consortium;
  - (b) Assist in managing the affairs of the Governing Board, including chairing meetings of the Governing Board and ensure that each meeting has a set agenda, is planned effectively and is conducted according to the Consortium's policies and procedures and addresses the matters identified on the meeting agenda;
  - (c) Represent the Governing Board, and act as a spokesperson for the Governing Board if and when necessary;
  - (d) Ensure that the Governing Board is managed effectively by, among other actions, supervising the Project Management Partner; and
  - (e) Serve as in a leadership capacity by encouraging the work of the Consortium, and assist in resolving any conflicts.
5. The Consortium shall adhere to the timeline provided in the grant application for making major decisions regarding the Consortium's work plan.
    - a. The timeline shall be updated and distributed by the Project Management Partner to all Consortium states on a quarterly basis.
  6. Participating States may provide input for Governing Board decisions, as described below.
  7. Governing Board decisions shall be made by consensus; where consensus is not achieved among Governing States, decisions shall be made by a vote of the Governing States. Each State has one vote. Votes of a supermajority of the Governing States are necessary for a decision to be reached.
    - a. The supermajority of the Governing States is currently defined as a majority of Governing States plus one additional State;
    - b. The Governing Board shall, from time to time as necessary, including as milestones are reached and additional States become

Governing States, evaluate the need to revise the votes that are required to reach a decision, and may revise the definition of supermajority, as appropriate. The Governing Board shall make the decision to revise the definition of supermajority by consensus, or if consensus is not achieved, by a vote of the supermajority as currently defined at the time of the vote.

8. The Governing Board shall meet quarterly to consider issues identified by the Board Chair, including but not limited to major policy decisions of the Consortium.

**B. Design Committees**

1. One or more Design Committees will be formed by the Governing Board to develop plans for key areas of Consortium work, such as recommending the assessment system design and development process, to oversee the assessment development work performed by one or more vendors, to recommend achievement levels and other assessment policies, and address other issues as needed. These committees will be comprised of state assessment directors and other key representatives from Governing States and Participating States.
2. Design Committees shall provide recommendations to the Governing Board regarding major decisions on issues such as those identified above, or as otherwise established in their charters.
  - a. Recommendations are made on a consensus basis, with input from the Participating States.
  - b. Where consensus is not achieved by a Design Committee, the Committee shall provide alternative recommendations to the Governing Board, and describe the strengths and weaknesses of each recommendation.
  - c. Design Committees, with support from the Project Management Partner, shall make and keep records of decisions on behalf of the Consortium regarding assessment policies, operational matters and other aspects of the Consortium's work if a Design Committee's charter authorizes it to make decisions without input from or involvement of the Governing Board.
  - d. Decisions reserved to Design Committees by their charters shall be made by consensus; but where consensus is not achieved decisions shall be made by a vote of Governing States on each Design Committee. Each Governing State on the committee has one vote. Votes of a majority of the Governing States on a Design Committee, plus one, are necessary for a decision to be reached.

3. The selection of successful bidders in response to RFPs issued on behalf of the Consortium shall be made in accordance with the procurement laws and regulations of the State that issues the RFP, as described more fully in Addendum 3 of this MOU.
  - a. To the extent permitted by the procurement laws and regulations of the issuing State, appropriate staff of the Design Committees who were involved in the development of the RFP shall review the proposals, shall provide feedback to the issuing State on the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal, and shall identify the proposal believed to represent the best value for the Consortium members, including the rationale for this conclusion.

**C. General Assembly of All Consortium States**

1. There shall be two convenings of all Consortium states per year, for the purpose of reviewing the progress of the Consortium's work, discussing and providing input into upcoming decisions of the Governing Board and Design Committees, and addressing other issues of concern to the Consortium states.
  - a. A leadership team (comprised of chief state school officers, and other officials from the state education agency, state board of education, governor's office, higher education leaders and others as appropriate) from each state shall be invited to participate in one annual meeting.
  - b. Chief state school officers or their designees only shall be invited to the second annual convening.
2. In addition to the two annual convenings, Participating States shall also have the opportunity to provide input and advice to the Governing Board and to the Design Committees through a variety of means, including:
  - a. Participation in conference calls and/or webinars;
  - b. Written responses to draft documents; and
  - c. Participation in Google groups that allow for quick response to documents under development.

**IX. Benefits of Participation**

Participation in the Consortium offers a number of benefits. For example, member States will have opportunities for:

- A. Possible coordinated cooperative purchase discounts;

- B. Possible discount software license agreements;
- C. Access to a cooperative environment and knowledge-base to facilitate information-sharing for educational, administrative, planning, policy and decision-making purposes;
- D. Shared expertise that can stimulate the development of higher quality assessments in an efficient and cost-effective manner;
- E. Cooperation in the development of improved instructional materials, professional development and teacher preparation programs aligned to the States' standards and assessments; and
- F. Obtaining comparable data that will enable policymakers and teachers to compare educational outcomes and to identify effective instructional practices and strategies.

**X. Binding Commitments and Assurances**

**A. Binding Assurances Common To All States – Participating and Governing**

Each State that joins the Consortium, whether as a Participating State or a Governing State, hereby certifies and represents that it:

- 1. Has all requisite power and authority necessary to execute this MOU;
- 2. Is familiar with the Consortium's Comprehensive Assessment Systems grant application under the ED's Race to the Top Fund Assessment Program and is supportive of and will work to implement the Consortium's plan, as defined by the Consortium and consistent with Addendum 1 (Notice);
- 3. Will cooperate fully with the Consortium and will carry out all of the responsibilities associated with its selected membership classification;
- 4. Will, as a condition of continued membership in the Consortium, adopt a common set of college- and career-ready standards no later than December 31, 2011, and common achievement standards no later than the 2014-2015 school year;
- 5. Will, as a condition of continued membership in the Consortium, ensure that the summative components of the assessment system (in both mathematics and English language arts) will be fully implemented statewide no later than the 2014-2015 school year, subject to the availability of funds;
- 6. Will conduct periodic reviews of its State laws, regulations and policies to identify any barriers to implementing the proposed assessment system and

address any such barriers prior to full implementation of the summative assessment components of the system:

- a. The State will take the necessary steps to accomplish implementation as described in Addendum 2 of this MOU.
7. Will use the Consortium-developed assessment systems to meet the assessment requirements in Title I of the ESEA;
8. Will actively promote collaboration and alignment between the State and its public elementary and secondary education systems and their public Institutions of Higher Education (“IHE”) or systems of IHEs. The State will endeavor to:
  - a. Maintain the commitments from participating public IHEs or IHE systems to participate in the design and development of the Consortium’s high school summative assessments;
  - b. Obtain commitments from additional public IHEs or IHE systems to participate in the design and development of the Consortium’s high school summative assessments;
  - c. Involve participating public IHEs or IHE systems in the Consortium’s research-based process to establish common achievement standards on the new assessments that signal students’ preparation for entry level, credit-bearing coursework; and
  - d. Obtain commitments from public IHEs or IHE systems to use the assessment in all partnership states’ postsecondary institutions, along with any other placement requirement established by the IHE or IHE system, as an indicator of students’ readiness for placement in non-remedial, credit-bearing college-level coursework.
9. Will provide the required assurances regarding accountability, transparency, reporting, procurement and other assurances and certifications; and
10. Consents to be bound by every statement and assurance in the grant application.

B. Additional Binding Assurances By Governing States

In addition to the assurances and commitments required of all States in the Consortium, a Governing State is bound by the following additional assurances and commitments:

1. Provide personnel to the Consortium in sufficient number and qualifications and for sufficient time to support the activities of the Consortium as described in Section VII (A)(1)(a)(iv) of this MOU.

#### **XI. Financial Arrangements**

This MOU does not constitute a financial commitment on the part of the Parties. Any financial arrangements associated with the Consortium will be covered by separate project agreements between the Consortium members and other entities, and subject to ordinary budgetary and administrative procedures. It is understood that the ability of the Parties to carry out their obligations is subject to the availability of funds and personnel through their respective funding procedures.

#### **XII. Personal Property**

Title to any personal property, such as computers, computer equipment, office supplies, and office equipment furnished by a State to the Consortium under this MOU shall remain with the State furnishing the same. All parties agree to exercise due care in handling such property. However, each party agrees to be responsible for any damage to its property which occurs in the performance of its duties under this MOU, and to waive any claim against the other party for such damage, whether arising through negligence or otherwise.

#### **XIII. Liability and Risk of Loss**

- A. To the extent permitted by law, with regard to activities undertaken pursuant to this MOU, none of the parties to this MOU shall make any claim against one another or their respective instrumentalities, agents or employees for any injury to or death of its own employees, or for damage to or loss of its own property, whether such injury, death, damage or loss arises through negligence or otherwise.
- B. To the extent permitted by law, if a risk of damage or loss is not dealt with expressly in this MOU, such party's liability to another party, whether or not arising as the result of alleged breach of the MOU, shall be limited to direct damages only and shall not include loss of revenue or profits or other indirect or consequential damages.

#### **XIV. Resolution of Conflicts**

Conflicts which may arise regarding the interpretation of the clauses of this MOU will be resolved by the Governing Board, and that decision will be considered final and not subject to further appeal or to review by any outside court or other tribunal.

#### **XV. Modifications**

The content of this MOU may be reviewed periodically or amended at any time as agreed upon by vote of the Governing Board.

## **XVI. Duration, Renewal, Termination**

- A. This MOU will take effect upon execution of this MOU by at least five States as “Governing States” and will have a duration through calendar year 2015, unless otherwise extended by agreement of the Governing Board.
- B. This MOU may be terminated by decision of the Governing Board, or by withdrawal or termination of a sufficient number of Governing States so that there are fewer than five Governing States.
- C. Any member State of the Consortium may be involuntarily terminated by the Governing Board as a member for breach of any term of this MOU, or for breach of any term or condition that may be imposed by the Department of Education, the Consortium Governing Board, or of any applicable bylaws or regulations.

## **XVII. Points of Contact**

Communications with the State regarding this MOU should be directed to:

*Name:* Mary Ann Snider, Chief  
Educator Excellence and Instructional Effectiveness

*Mailing Address:* 255 Westminster Street Providence, RI 02840

*Telephone:* (401)222-8492

*Fax:* (401) 222-3605

*E-mail:* [maryann.snider@ride.ri.gov](mailto:maryann.snider@ride.ri.gov)

Or hereafter to such other individual as may be designated by the State in writing transmitted to the Chair of the Governing Board and/or to the PARCC Project Management Partner.

## **XVIII. Signatures and Intent To Join in the Consortium**

The State of *Rhode Island* hereby joins the Consortium as a *Governing State*, and agrees to be bound by all of the assurances and commitments associated with the *Governing State* membership classification. Further, the State of *Rhode Island* agrees to perform the duties and carry out the responsibilities associated with the *Governing State* membership classification.

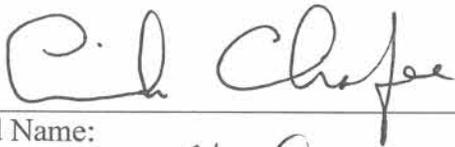
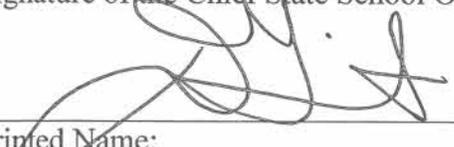
*Signatures required:*

- Each State’s Governor;
- Each State’s chief school officer; and
- If applicable, the president of the State board of education.

Addenda:

- **Addendum 1:** Department of Education Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 2010.
- **Addendum 2:** Each State describes the process it plans to follow to ensure that it will be able to implement the assessment systems developed by the Consortium by the 2014-2015 school year, pursuant to Assurance 6 in Section X of this MOU.
- **Addendum 3:** Signature of each State's chief procurement official confirming that the State is able to participate in the Consortium's procurement process.

STATE SIGNATURE BLOCK

State of:	
Signature of the Governor: 	
Printed Name: Lincoln Chafee	Date: 4/8/11
Signature of the Chief State School Officer: 	
Printed Name: DEBORAH COIST	Date: 4/7/11
Signature of the State Board of Education President (if applicable): 	
Printed Name: GEORGE CARUOLO	Date: 4/7/11

Attachment 10: A copy of the guidelines that the SEA has developed and adopted for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
Shepard Building  
255 Westminster Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Deborah A. Gist  
Commissioner

April 7, 2011

The Honorable Lincoln D. Chafee  
Governor  
R.I. State House  
Smith Street  
Providence, R.I. 02903

Dear Governor Chafee,

Last year leaders from 25 states, including Rhode Island, formed the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) state consortium to create a next-generation assessment system. I am writing to ask for your affirmation of Rhode Island's continued participation in PARCC. Please know that Regents Chairman Caruolo has endorsed this request.

A fundamental goal of the PARCC states is to *build their collective capacity to dramatically increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for success in college and the workplace*. When PARCC formed, the states recognized that there would be changes in political leadership over the four-year project period. As a result, when a key transition occurs in a PARCC state, state leadership must affirm in writing the state's continued commitment to participate in the Partnership.

In order to meet the requirements of NCLB states are required to test all students annually in grades 3-8 and once in high school in mathematics and reading or language arts. Currently the NECAP consortium develops our state assessment to meet these requirements and it is our intention that the PARCC consortium will in the future. After the fall 2013 administration the NECAP consortium will no longer be administering the Mathematics, Reading, and Writing assessments as the other NECAP states are also members of a consortium. Without the other NECAP states, Rhode Island would not be able fund the continued administration of the NECAP assessments. As a member of a consortium we will be able leverage our resources and funding to benefit all of the states. We will be able to provide computer based assessments, through-course assessments, and additional challenging performance tasks and innovative computer-enhanced items that as a single state would not be possible. In addition, we will be able to benefit from the experience and knowledge of our partner states.

Telephone (401)222-4600 Fax (401)222-6178 TTY (800)745-5555 Voice (800)745-6575 Website: [www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov)

The Board of Regents does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, race, color, religion, national origin, or disability.

There are two consortia that received funding to build new assessment systems, PARCC and Smarter Balanced. Although our partners in the other NECAP states are members of the Smarter Balanced consortium, I believe that PARCC will better support Rhode Island's goal in our strategic plan to implement a state assessment system that is nationally and internationally benchmarked and aligned to the Common Core State Standards. PARCC is particularly attentive to the importance of higher education involvement in the establishment of test designs and understanding achievement level implications for college placement. In addition, PARCC recognizes the important relationship between instruction and assessment. Through this Partnership we will develop a high quality and rigorous assessment that incorporates technology and innovative items. We will be able to provide educators, students, and families with timely and actionable information regarding student performance and whether a student is on track to reach college and career readiness. Further, Rhode Island districts and schools will be able to benchmark their progress against that of other states and similar districts across the country. The Partnership plans to provide teachers with optional resources to support curriculum development, lesson planning, and formative assessment.

Finally, Rhode Island is a Governing State, which means that I sit on the PARCC Governing Board and have decision making authority on behalf of the Partnership on major policies and operational procedures. Each Governing State also designates lead staff to coordinate the state's participation in PARCC, including by serving on committees and as a part of working groups that will conduct the major assessment design and development activities. Through the PARCC grant, Governing States receive funding for a staff person devoted to PARCC activities. I am confident that our role as a governing state in PARCC and the PARCC's assessments themselves will yield significant advantages for educators, families, and most of all, students in our state.

Please contact me should you need any further information as you make your decision regarding the endorsement of PARCC.

Sincerely,



Deborah A. Gist  
Commissioner

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**  
**For**  
**Race To The Top – Comprehensive Assessment Systems Grant**

**PARTNERSHIP FOR ASSESSMENT OF READINESS FOR COLLEGE AND  
CAREERS MEMBERS**

*JUNE 3, 2010*

**I. Parties**

This Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) is made and effective as of this 29th day of March 2011, (the “Effective Date”) by and between the State of Rhode Island and all other member states of the Partnership For Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (“Consortium” or “PARCC”) who have also executed this MOU.

**II. Scope of MOU**

This MOU constitutes an understanding between the Consortium member states to participate in the Consortium. This document describes the purpose and goals of the Consortium, presents its background, explains its organizational and governance structure, and defines the terms, responsibilities and benefits of participation in the Consortium.

**III. Background – Comprehensive Assessment Systems Grant**

On April 9, 2010, the Department of Education (“ED”) announced its intent to provide grant funding to consortia of States for two grant categories under the Race to the Top Fund Assessment Program: (a) Comprehensive Assessment Systems grants, and (b) High School Course Assessment grants. 75 Fed. Reg. 18171 (April 9, 2010) (“Notice”).

The Comprehensive Assessment Systems grant will support the development of new assessment systems that measure student knowledge and skills against a common set of college- and career-ready standards in mathematics and English language arts in a way that covers the full range of those standards, elicits complex student demonstrations or applications of knowledge and skills as appropriate, and provides an accurate measure of student achievement across the full performance continuum and an accurate measure of student growth over a full academic year or course.

**IV. Purpose and Goals**

The states that are signatories to this MOU are members of a consortium (Partnership For Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) that have organized themselves to apply for and carry out the objectives of the Comprehensive Assessment Systems grant program.

Consortium states have identified the following major purposes and uses for the assessment system results:

- To measure and document students' college and career readiness by the end of high school and progress toward this target. Students meeting the college and career readiness standards will be eligible for placement into entry-level credit-bearing, rather than remedial, courses in public 2- and 4-year postsecondary institutions in all participating states.
- To provide assessments and results that:
  - Are comparable across states at the student level;
  - Meet internationally rigorous benchmarks;
  - Allow valid measures of student longitudinal growth; and
  - Serve as a signal for good instructional practices.
- To support multiple levels and forms of accountability including:
  - Decisions about promotion and graduation for individual students;
  - Teacher and leader evaluations;
  - School accountability determinations;
  - Determinations of principal and teacher professional development and support needs; and
  - Teaching, learning, and program improvement.
- Assesses all students, including English learners and students with disabilities.

To further these goals, States that join the Consortium by signing this MOU mutually agree to support the work of the Consortium as described in the PARCC application for funding under the Race to the Top Assessment Program.

## **V. Definitions**

This MOU incorporates and adopts the terms defined in the Department of Education's Notice, which is appended hereto as Addendum 1.

## **VI. Key Deadlines**

The Consortium has established key deadlines and action items for all Consortium states, as specified in Table (A)(1)(b)(v) and Section (A)(1) of its proposal. The following milestones represent major junctures during the grant period when the direction of the Consortium's work will be clarified, when the Consortium must make key decisions, and when member states must make additional commitments to the Consortium and its work.

- A. The Consortium shall develop procedures for the administration of its duties, set forth in By-Laws, which will be adopted at the first meeting of the Governing Board.
- B. The Consortium shall adopt common assessment administration procedures no later than the spring of 2011.

- C. The Consortium shall adopt a common set of item release policies no later than the spring of 2011.
- D. The Consortium shall adopt a test security policy no later than the spring of 2011.
- E. The Consortium shall adopt a common definition of “English learner” and common policies and procedures for student participation and accommodations for English learners no later than the spring of 2011.
- F. The Consortium shall adopt common policies and procedures for student participation and accommodations for students with disabilities no later than the spring of 2011.
- G. Each Consortium state shall adopt a common set of college- and career-ready standards no later than December 31, 2011.
- H. The Consortium shall adopt a common set of common performance level descriptors no later than the summer of 2014.
- I. The Consortium shall adopt a common set of achievement standards no later than the summer of 2015.

## **VII. Consortium Membership**

### **A. Membership Types and Responsibilities**

1. **Governing State:** A State becomes a Governing State if it meets the eligibility criteria in this section.
  - a. The eligibility criteria for a Governing State are as follows:
    - (i) A Governing State may not be a member of any other consortium that has applied for or receives grant funding from the Department of Education under the Race to the Top Fund Assessment Program for the Comprehensive Course Assessment Systems grant category;
    - (ii) A Governing State must be committed to statewide implementation and administration of the assessment system developed by the Consortium no later than the 2014-2015 school year, subject to availability of funds;
    - (iii) A Governing State must be committed to using the assessment results in its accountability system, including for school accountability determinations;

teacher and leader evaluations; and teaching, learning and program improvement;

- (iv) A Governing State must provide staff to the Consortium to support the activities of the Consortium as follows:
- Coordinate the state's overall participation in all aspects of the project, including:
    - ongoing communication within the state education agency, with local school systems, teachers and school leaders, higher education leaders;
    - communication to keep the state board of education, governor's office and appropriate legislative leaders and committees informed of the consortium's activities and progress on a regular basis;
    - participation by local schools and education agencies in pilot tests and field test of system components; and
    - identification of barriers to implementation.
  - Participate in the management of the assessment development process on behalf of the Consortium;
  - Represent the chief state school officer when necessary in Governing Board meetings and calls;
  - Participate on Design Committees that will:
    - Develop the overall assessment design for the Consortium;
    - Develop content and test specifications;
    - Develop and review Requests for Proposals (RFPs);
    - Manage contract(s) for assessment system development;
    - Recommend common achievement levels;
    - Recommend common assessment policies; and
    - Other tasks as needed.
- (v) A Governing State must identify and address the legal, statutory, regulatory and policy barriers it must change in order for the State to adopt and implement

the Consortium's assessment system components by the 2014-15 school year.

- b. A Governing State has the following additional rights and responsibilities:
- (i) A Governing State has authority to participate with other Governing States to determine and/or to modify the major policies and operational procedures of the Consortium, including the Consortium's work plan and theory of action;
  - (ii) A Governing State has authority to participate with other Governing States to provide direction to the Project Management Partner, the Fiscal Agent, and to any other contractors or advisors retained by or on behalf of the Consortium that are compensated with Grant funds;
  - (iii) A Governing State has authority to participate with other Governing States to approve the design of the assessment system that will be developed by the Consortium;
  - (iv) A Governing State must participate in the work of the Consortium's design and assessment committees;
  - (v) A Governing State must participate in pilot and field testing of the assessment systems and tools developed by the Consortium, in accordance with the Consortium's work plan;
  - (vi) A Governing State must develop a plan for the statewide implementation of the Consortium's assessment system by 2014-2015, including removing or resolving statutory, regulatory and policy barriers to implementation, and securing funding for implementation;
  - (vii) A Governing State may receive funding from the Consortium to defray the costs associated with staff time devoted to governance of the Consortium, if such funding is included in the Consortium budget;
  - (viii) A Governing State may receive funding from the Consortium to defray the costs associated with intra-State communications and engagements, if such funding is included in the Consortium budget.

- (ix) A Governing State has authority to vote upon significant grant fund expenditures and disbursements (including awards of contracts and subgrants) made to and/or executed by the Fiscal Agent, Governing States, the Project Management Partner, and other contractors or subgrantees.

2. **Fiscal Agent:** The Fiscal Agent will be one of the Governing States in the Consortium.

- (i) The Fiscal Agent will serve as the “Applicant” state for purposes of the grant application, applying as the member of the Consortium on behalf of the Consortium, pursuant to the Application Requirements of the Notice (Addendum 1) and 34 C.F.R. 75.128.
- (ii) The Fiscal Agent shall have a fiduciary responsibility to the Consortium to manage and account for the grant funds provided by the Federal Government under the Race to the Top Fund Assessment Program Comprehensive Assessment Systems grants, including related administrative functions, subject to the direction and approval of the Governing Board regarding the expenditure and disbursement of all grant funds, and shall have no greater decision-making authority regarding the expenditure and disbursement of grant funds than any other Governing State;
- (iii) The Fiscal Agent shall issue RFPs in order to procure goods and services on behalf of the Consortium;
- (iv) The Fiscal Agent has the authority, with the Governing Board’s approval, to designate another Governing State as the issuing entity of RFPs for procurements on behalf of the Consortium;
- (v) The Fiscal Agent shall enter into a contract or subgrant with the organization selected to serve as the Consortium’s Project Management Partner;
- (vi) The Fiscal Agent may receive funding from the Consortium in the form of disbursements from Grant funding, as authorized by the Governing Board, to cover the costs associated with carrying out its

responsibilities as a Fiscal Agent, if such funding is included in the Consortium budget;

- (vii) The Fiscal Agent may enter into significant contracts for services to assist the grantee to fulfill its obligation to the Federal Government to manage and account for grant funds;
- (viii) Consortium member states will identify and report to the Fiscal Agent, and the Fiscal Agent will report to the Department of Education, pursuant to program requirement 11 identified in the Notice for Comprehensive Assessment System grantees, any current assessment requirements in Title I of the ESEA that would need to be waived in order for member States to fully implement the assessment system developed by the Consortium.

### **3. Participating State**

a. The eligibility criteria for a Participating State are as follows:

- (i) A Participating State commits to support and assist with the Consortium's execution of the program described in the PARCC application for a Race to the Top Fund Assessment Program grant, consistent with the rights and responsibilities detailed below, but does not at this time make the commitments of a Governing State;
- (ii) A Participating State may be a member of more than one consortium that applies for or receives grant funds from ED for the Race to the Top Fund Assessment Program for the Comprehensive Assessment Systems grant category.

b. The rights and responsibilities of a Participating State are as follows:

- (i) A Participating State is encouraged to provide staff to participate on the Design Committees, Advisory Committees, Working Groups or other similar groups established by the Governing Board;
- (ii) A Participating State shall review and provide feedback to the Design Committees and to the Governing Board regarding the design plans,

strategies and policies of the Consortium as they are being developed;

- (iii) A Participating State must participate in pilot and field testing of the assessment systems and tools developed by the Consortium, in accordance with the Consortium's work plan; and
- (iv) A Participating State is not eligible to receive reimbursement for the costs it may incur to participate in certain activities of the Consortium.

**4. Proposed Project Management Partner:**

Consistent with the requirements of ED's Notice, the PARCC Governing States are conducting a competitive procurement to select the consortium Project Management Partner. The PARCC Governing Board will direct and oversee the work of the organization selected to be the Project Management Partner.

**B. Recommitment to the Consortium**

In the event that that the governor or chief state school officer is replaced in a Consortium state, the successor in that office shall affirm in writing to the Governing Board Chair the State's continued commitment to participation in the Consortium and to the binding commitments made by that official's predecessor within five (5) months of taking office.

**C. Application Process For New Members**

- 1. A State that wishes to join the Consortium after submission of the grant application may apply for membership in the Consortium at any time, provided that the State meets the prevailing eligibility requirements associated with its desired membership classification in the Consortium. The state's Governor, Chief State School Officer, and President of the State Board of Education (if applicable) must sign a MOU with all of the commitments contained herein, and the appropriate state higher education leaders must sign a letter making the same commitments as those made by higher education leaders in the states that have signed this MOU.
- 2. A State that joins the Consortium after the grant application is submitted to the Department of Education is not authorized to re-open settled issues, nor may it participate in the review of proposals for Requests for Proposals that have already been issued.

**D. Membership Opt-Out Process**

At any time, a State may withdraw from the Consortium by providing written notice to the chair of the Governing Board, signed by the individuals holding the same positions that signed the MOU, at least ten (10) days prior to the effective date of the withdrawal, including an explanation of reasons for the withdrawal.

## **VIII. Consortium Governance**

This section of the MOU details the process by which the Consortium shall conduct its business.

### **A. Governing Board**

1. The Governing Board shall be comprised of the chief state school officer or designee from each Governing State;
2. The Governing Board shall make decisions regarding major policy, design, operational and organizational aspects of the Consortium's work, including:
  - a. Overall design of the assessment system;
  - b. Common achievement levels;
  - c. Consortium procurement strategy;
  - d. Modifications to governance structure and decision-making process;
  - e. Policies and decisions regarding control and ownership of intellectual property developed or acquired by the Consortium (including without limitation, test specifications and blue prints, test forms, item banks, psychometric information, and other measurement theories/practices), provided that such policies and decisions:
    - (i) will provide equivalent rights to such intellectual property to all states participating in the Consortium, regardless of membership type;
    - (ii) will preserve the Consortium's flexibility to acquire intellectual property to the assessment systems as the Consortium may deem necessary and consistent with "best value" procurement principles, and with due regard for the Notice requirements regarding broad availability of such intellectual property except as otherwise protected by law or agreement as proprietary information.

3. The Governing Board shall form Design, Advisory and other committees, groups and teams (“committees”) as it deems necessary and appropriate to carry out the Consortium’s work, including those identified in the PARCC grant application.
  - a. The Governing Board will define the charter for each committee, to include objectives, timeline, and anticipated work product, and will specify which design and policy decisions (if any) may be made by the committee and which must be elevated to the Governing Board for decision;
  - b. When a committee is being formed, the Governing Board shall seek nominations for members from all states in the Consortium;
  - c. Design Committees that were formed during the proposal development stage shall continue with their initial membership, though additional members may be added at the discretion of the Governing Board;
  - d. In forming committees, the Governing Board will seek to maximize involvement across the Consortium, while keeping groups to manageable sizes in light of time and budget constraints;
  - e. Committees shall share drafts of their work products, when appropriate, with all PARCC states for review and feedback; and
  - f. Committees shall make decisions by consensus; but where consensus does not exist the committee shall provide the options developed to the Governing Board for decision (except as the charter for a committee may otherwise provide).
4. The Governing Board shall be chaired by a chief state school officer from one Governing State.
  - a. The Governing Board Chair shall serve a one-year term, which may be renewed.
  - b. The Governing States shall nominate candidates to serve as the Governing Board Chair, and the Governing Board Chair shall be selected by majority vote.
  - c. The Governing Board Chair shall have the following responsibilities:
    - (i) To provide leadership to the Governing Board to ensure that it operates in an efficient, effective, and

orderly manner. The tasks related to these responsibilities include:

- (a) Ensure that the appropriate policies and procedures are in place for the effective management of the Governing Board and the Consortium;
  - (b) Assist in managing the affairs of the Governing Board, including chairing meetings of the Governing Board and ensure that each meeting has a set agenda, is planned effectively and is conducted according to the Consortium's policies and procedures and addresses the matters identified on the meeting agenda;
  - (c) Represent the Governing Board, and act as a spokesperson for the Governing Board if and when necessary;
  - (d) Ensure that the Governing Board is managed effectively by, among other actions, supervising the Project Management Partner; and
  - (e) Serve as in a leadership capacity by encouraging the work of the Consortium, and assist in resolving any conflicts.
5. The Consortium shall adhere to the timeline provided in the grant application for making major decisions regarding the Consortium's work plan.
    - a. The timeline shall be updated and distributed by the Project Management Partner to all Consortium states on a quarterly basis.
  6. Participating States may provide input for Governing Board decisions, as described below.
  7. Governing Board decisions shall be made by consensus; where consensus is not achieved among Governing States, decisions shall be made by a vote of the Governing States. Each State has one vote. Votes of a supermajority of the Governing States are necessary for a decision to be reached.
    - a. The supermajority of the Governing States is currently defined as a majority of Governing States plus one additional State;
    - b. The Governing Board shall, from time to time as necessary, including as milestones are reached and additional States become

Governing States, evaluate the need to revise the votes that are required to reach a decision, and may revise the definition of supermajority, as appropriate. The Governing Board shall make the decision to revise the definition of supermajority by consensus, or if consensus is not achieved, by a vote of the supermajority as currently defined at the time of the vote.

8. The Governing Board shall meet quarterly to consider issues identified by the Board Chair, including but not limited to major policy decisions of the Consortium.

**B. Design Committees**

1. One or more Design Committees will be formed by the Governing Board to develop plans for key areas of Consortium work, such as recommending the assessment system design and development process, to oversee the assessment development work performed by one or more vendors, to recommend achievement levels and other assessment policies, and address other issues as needed. These committees will be comprised of state assessment directors and other key representatives from Governing States and Participating States.
2. Design Committees shall provide recommendations to the Governing Board regarding major decisions on issues such as those identified above, or as otherwise established in their charters.
  - a. Recommendations are made on a consensus basis, with input from the Participating States.
  - b. Where consensus is not achieved by a Design Committee, the Committee shall provide alternative recommendations to the Governing Board, and describe the strengths and weaknesses of each recommendation.
  - c. Design Committees, with support from the Project Management Partner, shall make and keep records of decisions on behalf of the Consortium regarding assessment policies, operational matters and other aspects of the Consortium's work if a Design Committee's charter authorizes it to make decisions without input from or involvement of the Governing Board.
  - d. Decisions reserved to Design Committees by their charters shall be made by consensus; but where consensus is not achieved decisions shall be made by a vote of Governing States on each Design Committee. Each Governing State on the committee has one vote. Votes of a majority of the Governing States on a Design Committee, plus one, are necessary for a decision to be reached.

3. The selection of successful bidders in response to RFPs issued on behalf of the Consortium shall be made in accordance with the procurement laws and regulations of the State that issues the RFP, as described more fully in Addendum 3 of this MOU.
  - a. To the extent permitted by the procurement laws and regulations of the issuing State, appropriate staff of the Design Committees who were involved in the development of the RFP shall review the proposals, shall provide feedback to the issuing State on the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal, and shall identify the proposal believed to represent the best value for the Consortium members, including the rationale for this conclusion.

**C. General Assembly of All Consortium States**

1. There shall be two convenings of all Consortium states per year, for the purpose of reviewing the progress of the Consortium's work, discussing and providing input into upcoming decisions of the Governing Board and Design Committees, and addressing other issues of concern to the Consortium states.
  - a. A leadership team (comprised of chief state school officers, and other officials from the state education agency, state board of education, governor's office, higher education leaders and others as appropriate) from each state shall be invited to participate in one annual meeting.
  - b. Chief state school officers or their designees only shall be invited to the second annual convening.
2. In addition to the two annual convenings, Participating States shall also have the opportunity to provide input and advice to the Governing Board and to the Design Committees through a variety of means, including:
  - a. Participation in conference calls and/or webinars;
  - b. Written responses to draft documents; and
  - c. Participation in Google groups that allow for quick response to documents under development.

**IX. Benefits of Participation**

Participation in the Consortium offers a number of benefits. For example, member States will have opportunities for:

- A. Possible coordinated cooperative purchase discounts;

- B. Possible discount software license agreements;
- C. Access to a cooperative environment and knowledge-base to facilitate information-sharing for educational, administrative, planning, policy and decision-making purposes;
- D. Shared expertise that can stimulate the development of higher quality assessments in an efficient and cost-effective manner;
- E. Cooperation in the development of improved instructional materials, professional development and teacher preparation programs aligned to the States' standards and assessments; and
- F. Obtaining comparable data that will enable policymakers and teachers to compare educational outcomes and to identify effective instructional practices and strategies.

**X. Binding Commitments and Assurances**

**A. Binding Assurances Common To All States – Participating and Governing**

Each State that joins the Consortium, whether as a Participating State or a Governing State, hereby certifies and represents that it:

- 1. Has all requisite power and authority necessary to execute this MOU;
- 2. Is familiar with the Consortium's Comprehensive Assessment Systems grant application under the ED's Race to the Top Fund Assessment Program and is supportive of and will work to implement the Consortium's plan, as defined by the Consortium and consistent with Addendum 1 (Notice);
- 3. Will cooperate fully with the Consortium and will carry out all of the responsibilities associated with its selected membership classification;
- 4. Will, as a condition of continued membership in the Consortium, adopt a common set of college- and career-ready standards no later than December 31, 2011, and common achievement standards no later than the 2014-2015 school year;
- 5. Will, as a condition of continued membership in the Consortium, ensure that the summative components of the assessment system (in both mathematics and English language arts) will be fully implemented statewide no later than the 2014-2015 school year, subject to the availability of funds;
- 6. Will conduct periodic reviews of its State laws, regulations and policies to identify any barriers to implementing the proposed assessment system and

address any such barriers prior to full implementation of the summative assessment components of the system:

- a. The State will take the necessary steps to accomplish implementation as described in Addendum 2 of this MOU.
7. Will use the Consortium-developed assessment systems to meet the assessment requirements in Title I of the ESEA;
8. Will actively promote collaboration and alignment between the State and its public elementary and secondary education systems and their public Institutions of Higher Education (“IHE”) or systems of IHEs. The State will endeavor to:
  - a. Maintain the commitments from participating public IHEs or IHE systems to participate in the design and development of the Consortium’s high school summative assessments;
  - b. Obtain commitments from additional public IHEs or IHE systems to participate in the design and development of the Consortium’s high school summative assessments;
  - c. Involve participating public IHEs or IHE systems in the Consortium’s research-based process to establish common achievement standards on the new assessments that signal students’ preparation for entry level, credit-bearing coursework; and
  - d. Obtain commitments from public IHEs or IHE systems to use the assessment in all partnership states’ postsecondary institutions, along with any other placement requirement established by the IHE or IHE system, as an indicator of students’ readiness for placement in non-remedial, credit-bearing college-level coursework.
9. Will provide the required assurances regarding accountability, transparency, reporting, procurement and other assurances and certifications; and
10. Consents to be bound by every statement and assurance in the grant application.

B. Additional Binding Assurances By Governing States

In addition to the assurances and commitments required of all States in the Consortium, a Governing State is bound by the following additional assurances and commitments:

1. Provide personnel to the Consortium in sufficient number and qualifications and for sufficient time to support the activities of the Consortium as described in Section VII (A)(1)(a)(iv) of this MOU.

#### **XI. Financial Arrangements**

This MOU does not constitute a financial commitment on the part of the Parties. Any financial arrangements associated with the Consortium will be covered by separate project agreements between the Consortium members and other entities, and subject to ordinary budgetary and administrative procedures. It is understood that the ability of the Parties to carry out their obligations is subject to the availability of funds and personnel through their respective funding procedures.

#### **XII. Personal Property**

Title to any personal property, such as computers, computer equipment, office supplies, and office equipment furnished by a State to the Consortium under this MOU shall remain with the State furnishing the same. All parties agree to exercise due care in handling such property. However, each party agrees to be responsible for any damage to its property which occurs in the performance of its duties under this MOU, and to waive any claim against the other party for such damage, whether arising through negligence or otherwise.

#### **XIII. Liability and Risk of Loss**

- A. To the extent permitted by law, with regard to activities undertaken pursuant to this MOU, none of the parties to this MOU shall make any claim against one another or their respective instrumentalities, agents or employees for any injury to or death of its own employees, or for damage to or loss of its own property, whether such injury, death, damage or loss arises through negligence or otherwise.
- B. To the extent permitted by law, if a risk of damage or loss is not dealt with expressly in this MOU, such party's liability to another party, whether or not arising as the result of alleged breach of the MOU, shall be limited to direct damages only and shall not include loss of revenue or profits or other indirect or consequential damages.

#### **XIV. Resolution of Conflicts**

Conflicts which may arise regarding the interpretation of the clauses of this MOU will be resolved by the Governing Board, and that decision will be considered final and not subject to further appeal or to review by any outside court or other tribunal.

#### **XV. Modifications**

The content of this MOU may be reviewed periodically or amended at any time as agreed upon by vote of the Governing Board.

## **XVI. Duration, Renewal, Termination**

- A. This MOU will take effect upon execution of this MOU by at least five States as “Governing States” and will have a duration through calendar year 2015, unless otherwise extended by agreement of the Governing Board.
- B. This MOU may be terminated by decision of the Governing Board, or by withdrawal or termination of a sufficient number of Governing States so that there are fewer than five Governing States.
- C. Any member State of the Consortium may be involuntarily terminated by the Governing Board as a member for breach of any term of this MOU, or for breach of any term or condition that may be imposed by the Department of Education, the Consortium Governing Board, or of any applicable bylaws or regulations.

## **XVII. Points of Contact**

Communications with the State regarding this MOU should be directed to:

*Name: Mary Ann Snider, Chief*  
Educator Excellence and Instructional Effectiveness

*Mailing Address: 255 Westminster Street Providence, RI 02840*

*Telephone: (401)222-8492*

*Fax: (401) 222-3605*

*E-mail: [maryann.snider@ride.ri.gov](mailto:maryann.snider@ride.ri.gov)*

Or hereafter to such other individual as may be designated by the State in writing transmitted to the Chair of the Governing Board and/or to the PARCC Project Management Partner.

## **XVIII. Signatures and Intent To Join in the Consortium**

The State of *Rhode Island* hereby joins the Consortium as a *Governing State*, and agrees to be bound by all of the assurances and commitments associated with the *Governing State* membership classification. Further, the State of *Rhode Island* agrees to perform the duties and carry out the responsibilities associated with the *Governing State* membership classification.

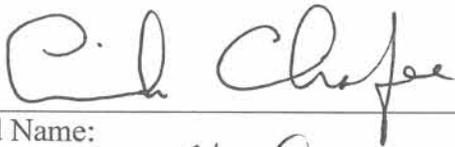
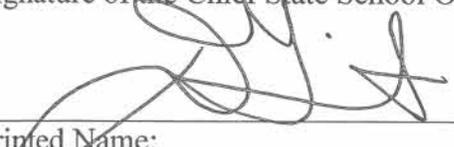
*Signatures required:*

- Each State’s Governor;
- Each State’s chief school officer; and
- If applicable, the president of the State board of education.

Addenda:

- **Addendum 1:** Department of Education Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 2010.
- **Addendum 2:** Each State describes the process it plans to follow to ensure that it will be able to implement the assessment systems developed by the Consortium by the 2014-2015 school year, pursuant to Assurance 6 in Section X of this MOU.
- **Addendum 3:** Signature of each State's chief procurement official confirming that the State is able to participate in the Consortium's procurement process.

STATE SIGNATURE BLOCK

State of:	
Signature of the Governor: 	
Printed Name: Lincoln Chafee	Date: 4/8/11
Signature of the Chief State School Officer: 	
Printed Name: DEBORAH COIST	Date: 4/7/11
Signature of the State Board of Education President (if applicable): 	
Printed Name: GEORGE CARUOLO	Date: 4/7/11

Attachment 11: Evidence that the SEA has adopted all of the guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems

# BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Minutes of December 3, 2009

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A Meeting of the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education was held at the Lincoln High School, 135 Old River Rd., Lincoln, RI, and convened at 4:05 p.m.  
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## In Attendance:

Robert Flanders, Anna Cano-Morales, Patrick Guida, Colleen Callahan, Betsy Shimberg, Amy Beretta.

Regent Angus Davis arrived at 4:40 p.m.

## Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Gist updated the Board on the School for the Deaf and said that a full report would be given at the December 17 work session.

## Public Remarks

John Welsh, CEO of Innovative Health Care Plans, spoke to the group about the "PAL" health initiative and urged board members to support his proposal along with the RI School Committee Association. He said that under the PAL plan, Rhode Island would save \$14 million. A copy of his remarks is attached.

Amanda Pereira and Gollone Moore, representing Young Voices, thanked the Regents for including some of their suggestions for changes to the educator evaluation standards and urged the Regents to re-consider issues related to the enforcement of the regulations and how student and parent input is actually going to be used.

Note: The next group of speakers came to the meeting to urge the Board of Regents to support the Hope High School students and faculty by not allowing the Providence Public School District to change the current schedule to a traditional seven period schedule. The names of the students, parents and faculty members that spoke are as follows: Marianne Davidson, Valerie Klein, William Buchanan, Jennifer Sanchez, Yariel Pearson, Angela Aup, Dorcus Metcalf, Rachel Moran, Laura Travis, Megan Thoma, Robin Maguire, Laura Maxwell and Clifton Boyle. Their written remarks are attached. Chairman Flanders urged the members of the group to bring their concerns to the Superintendent and Providence School Committee and told them that the Commissioner would monitor the situation and follow up with the Superintendent.

Mary Ryan, parent/home educator, addressed the Regents on her concerns about the proposed strategic plan. She specifically expressed concern that the plan does not appear to include any reference to parent involvement.

## Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Flanders reported that he and the Commissioner had attended the Governor's press conference to celebrate the bill signing for several education-related laws that will continue the advancement of education reform in Rhode Island. He commented that these bills will lead to more learning time for students, better training for teachers, and opportunities for early college entry and completion.

## Approval of Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting of November 5, 2009; November 5, 2009, Executive Session; and November 19, 2009, Work Session

Chairman Flanders presented the minutes of the November 5, 2009 meeting; the November 5, 2009, Executive Session; and the November 19, 2009, work session for approval.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the Minutes of the November 5, 2009 meeting; the November 5, 2009 Executive Session; and the November 19, 2009 work session, as attached.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Appeals

Chairman of the Board of Regents Appeals Committee, Amy Beretta, presented each of the three appeals for approval, as follows:

William Hicks v. The Cumberland School Committee, 2007

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, in the Matter of William Hicks v. the Cumberland School Committee, the Commissioner's decision [12/17/07] is clearly not "patently arbitrary, capricious or unfair" and should therefore not be disturbed by us.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

William Hicks v. The Cumberland School Committee, 2008

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, in the matter of William Hicks v. the Cumberland School Committee, the Commissioner's decision [2/17/08] is clearly not "patently arbitrary, capricious or unfair" and should therefore not be disturbed by us.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Student S. Doe v. Warwick School Department

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, in the Matter of Student S. Doe v. Warwick School Department, the Commissioner's decision is clearly not "patently arbitrary, capricious or unfair" and should therefore not be disturbed by us.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of FY 2010 Revised Budget and FY 2011 Budget

Commissioner Gist presented the FY 2011 and FY 2010 revised budgets, as attached, for approval. She reminded the Regents that the budgets were reviewed in detail and discussed at the November 19 work session. She then highlighted the details of the proposal as follows:

- The FY 2011 budget submission provides an overall \$ (b)(4) increase over the FY 2010 enacted budget.
- The budget level funds education aid, but requests that the professional development fund that was eliminated last year be restored if funding becomes available.
- The budget includes a nominal increase for the Central Falls school district (\$ (b)(4)), an increase in charter school aid to accommodate growth in grade levels at new and existing schools and other data updates (\$7.3M), and an increase in school construction aid for recently completed projects (\$ (b)(4)).
- The FY 2011 budget reduces the Department's budget by \$1.0M and allows for modest increases in the budgets for the Metropolitan Career & Technical Center, the Rhode Island School for the Deaf, and the William M. Davies Jr. Career-Technical High School which will allow these state-operated schools to, at best, maintain current services.
- The FY 2010 revised budget provides a decrease of \$4.8M when compared to the FY 2010 enacted budget. The budget reduces the Department and state schools \$ (b)(4) school construction aid \$ (b)(4), and other select programs \$ (b)(4).

MOVED AND SECONDED: That the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves and Transmits the Regents' FY 2011 and FY 2010 Revised Budget Proposals, as attached.

VOTE: Approved 6 – 1 [Regent Callahan vote against the motion]

Approval of Table of Organization

Commissioner Gist reminded the Board that the Table of Organization is being presented for approval tonight to coincide with the submission of the FY 2010 revised and FY 2011 budgets. She said that the organization is being restructured to reflect the priorities of the strategic plan and to account for the current constraint on resources. Staffing of this structure will require the recruitment of staff with specific expertise and the transfer of staff from one office to another. Staff can expect to be assigned to work on specific projects outside of the confines of their offices.

Major changes include: within the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, a center for accountability and quality assurance will be created to build capacity for data analysis and transformation; create a division focused on accelerating school performance to ensure that all schools and programs are accelerating student achievement and closing achievement gaps; and create a division of educator excellence and instructional effectiveness which will work to ensure that all educators will be effective and committed to accelerating student performance and that all students have access to rigorous curricula aligned to internationally benchmarked standards. This organization will work with all districts, state schools in need of support, private and nonpublic schools.

MOVED AND SECONDED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the Table of Organization, as presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Educator Code of Responsibility

Commissioner Gist reminded the members of the Board that on August 8<sup>th</sup>, the Regents approved the Educator Code of Professional Responsibility and the RI Educator Evaluation System Standards for public comment and that two public hearings were then held where we heard from more than 55 students, parents, educators, and community members. The Code of Professional Responsibility applies equally to all certified educators, whether life certified or just beginning their careers. It literally codifies existing requirements for holding an educator certificate, as more generally expressed in the 1896 law requiring all teachers to "cultivate in the minds of all children the principles of morality and virtue." She emphasized to the group that Rhode Island is long overdue in providing all educators with a clearer set of standards of professional practice. Once approved, the Code becomes effective immediately. The manner in which it may be used by RIDE and by employers will be the subject of continued work over the next few months. Guidance will be provided to districts and a work session will be scheduled in the spring to discuss the protocols and procedures for the uses of this document.

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education adopts the Rhode Island Educator Code of Professional Responsibility, as presented, and that said code be added to all certification and licensing requirements.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

#### Approval of Educator Evaluation Standards

Next, the Commissioner presented the Educator Evaluation Standards for approval. She reminded the Board that the evaluation standards are exactly that – standards - and that their use should be considered similar to the manner in which the Program Approval Standards are used to gauge the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. The Board discussed at length all of the suggested changes at the November 19<sup>th</sup> work session. The Department will develop timelines and guidance documents, including rubrics and model processes, at the agency level, as needed to ensure the timely adherence of district practice to these standards. The group discussed in detail Standard 1.3 – “This standard established four broad areas of performance that should provide the focus for all educator evaluation. Testimony and research all support the need to place student improvement as the primary measure of effectiveness.” A sentence added to standard 1.3: “An educator’s overall evaluation of effectiveness is primarily determined by evidence of impact on student growth.” Regents expressed their concern about the wording of the added sentence. The discussion involved the use of “student growth” versus student achievement.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Amendment to Standard 1.3 of the Board of Regents document, “Annotated Changes to RI Educator Evaluation System Standards” to read as follows: “An educator’s overall evaluation of effectiveness is primarily determined by evidence of impact on student growth and academic achievement.”

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education adopts the Rhode Island Educator Evaluation System Standards, as amended.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

#### DISCUSSION ITEMS

##### Strategic Plan Update

Commissioner Gist reported on the progress of the strategic plan, as follows:

- The Strategic Plan has been posted on the web-site for public comment starting November 23, 2009 and will end at the end of this month.
- The Department has received comments from members of the Board of Regents as well as superintendents and internal RIDE staff. These comments have been helpful to clarify and improve the plan.
- We will be adding an additional strategy under Educator Excellence that attends to the role of the state in professional development. This will be under Objective 3.
- The completed Strategic Plan will be brought to the Board of Regents for approval in January 2010.

##### Race to the Top Update

Commissioner Gist reminded the members of the Board that Race to the Top funds are a \$4.3 billion education reform fund that is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The funds will be distributed in two phases – Phase I applications will be due in early 2010 and awarded in April, 2010. Phase II will be due in late spring 2010 and awarded in September. Rhode Island’s application will propose initiatives and strategies as part of a 3-tier plan -- 1) Standards and systems to support and guide every educator in RI and to build statewide capacity; 2) Opportunities for additional resources,

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tools, and training to enhance innovation and quality; 3) Deep interventions to turn around RI's struggling schools. She also reported that there have been great turnouts at

the community forums – 100 to 140 people at each of the three. We have heard strong ideas about what it means to be effective as a teacher or principal; that communities want to be involved; more user-friendly data systems equal better communication; and better direction around assessment is desired.

As per RIGL 42-46-5 (a)(1) and (2), the meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m. into Executive Session.

The meeting reconvened to open session at 5:55 p.m.

Chairman Flanders reported that during Executive Session there were no votes taken.

MOVED AND SECONDED: That the minutes of the Executive Session be sealed.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Adjournment

With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

