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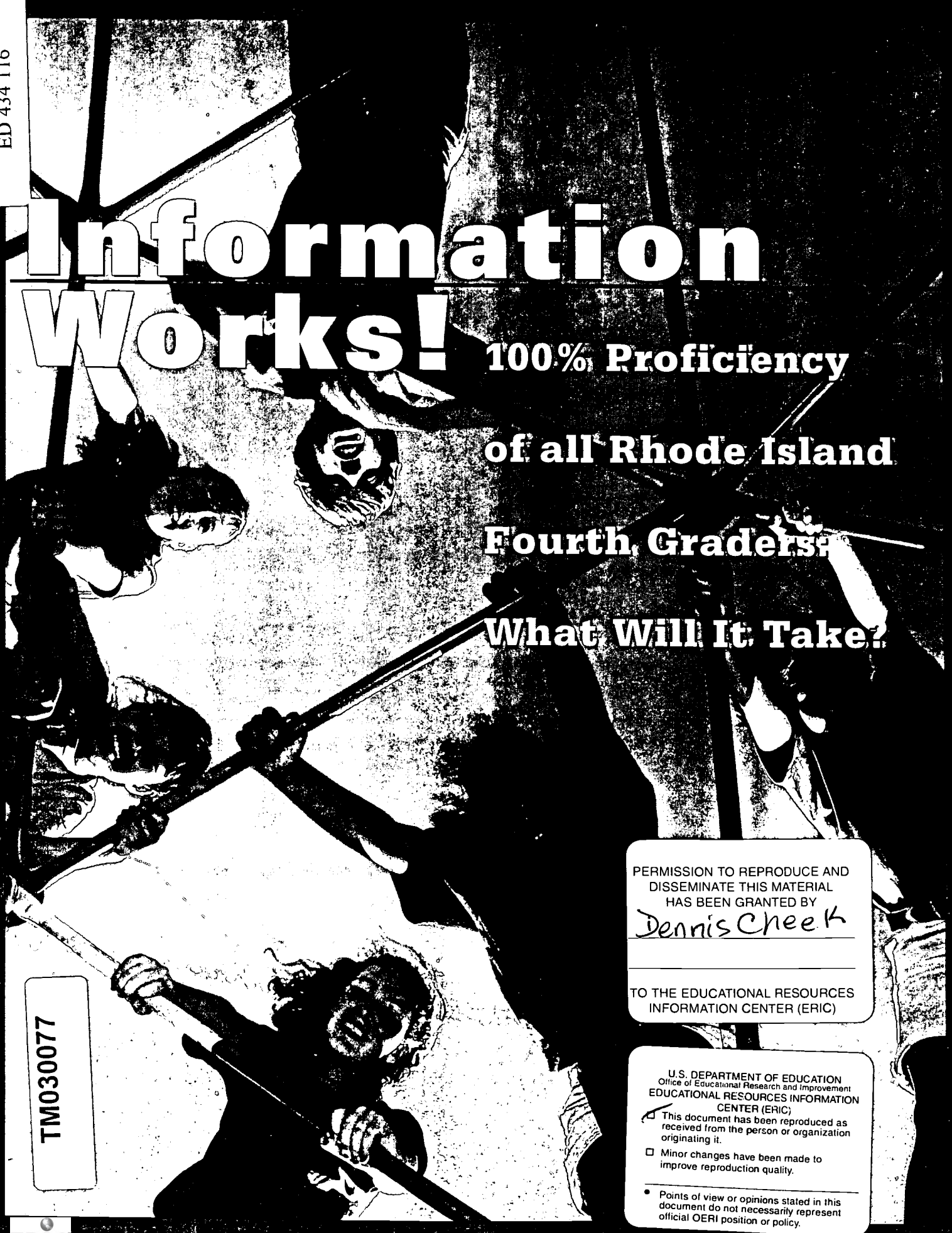
ABSTRACT

This second annual report on public K-12 education in Rhode Island focuses on fourth graders, an age group that represents the most vulnerable portion of the school population. As the percentage of proficient fourth graders increases, the secondary schools will find it easier to raise their levels of proficiency. Rhode Island administers a School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) Survey to yield information about the key dimensions of school functioning. The SALT Survey consists of versions for elementary, middle, and high schools with different forms for parents, teachers, students, and administrators. This report presents information from the SALT survey and some additional sources to paint a portrait of what education actually looks like in Rhode Island's schools. Data are grouped into discussions of: responsive schools; student assessment; community support networks; and well-prepared, well-supported teachers. An analysis of information about Rhode Island schools suggests that three things are necessary to achieve 100% proficiency for all fourth graders: (1) taking care of the multiple needs that influence children's ability to perform in school; (2) giving teachers and students the opportunities they need to teach and learn commensurate with established standards; and (3) focusing first and foremost on reading. (Contains 2 tables and 11 graphs.) (SLD)

Information Works!

100% Proficiency of all Rhode Island Fourth Graders: What Will It Take?



Information Works!

100% Proficiency of all Rhode Island fourth graders: What will it take?

A Statewide Analysis
◇1999◇

May 1999

Dear Citizens of Rhode Island:

This fall the children of the new millennium will enter Rhode Island public schools. The report before you paints a portrait of the kinds of experiences and challenges that will accompany these children's journey toward growth, learning, and a successful adult life in a democratic society. Unless and until we change our system of education to be more inclusive, better equipped for the challenges, and more successful at helping all children to learn and achieve at high levels, we will continue to see the same distressing patterns that this report highlights.

I am pleased to report that there are welcome signs of incremental positive change in our state. They include more focused funding targeted to results, clear standards for student and school achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics, an emerging but shaky policy consensus about what should be done, and an unprecedented level of energy and activity to promote change in schools.

This second annual report on public K-12 education in the Ocean State focuses our attention on today's fourth graders. We use fourth graders for our focus because they represent the most vulnerable portion of our school population. They are also the children on whom we can have the most impact. Decisions we make now as a state and society will profoundly affect the future that these children will either enjoy or regret. Our state's economy will be better or worse in the future dependent upon the choices we make now in investing our resources wisely in the next generation. A quality education *is* a lasting personal treasure that expands opportunities throughout life. As you read this report, with its many charts, tables, and graphs that presents a data-rich portrait of our children and our schools, ask yourself, how we can change our system in ways that will ensure that all children receive this lasting treasure – a gift beyond price – the door opening experience of a *quality* education? I will share with you some of my thoughts at the end of this report . . . .

Sincerely,

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

This letter is continued with conclusions at the end of the report.

100% Proficiency of all Rhode Island fourth graders: What will it take?

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100% Proficiency of all Rhode Island fourth graders: What will it take?

Introduction

Why Focus on the 4th Grade?

Nationally, more and more states are requiring 12th graders to pass exit exams in order to receive a diploma. Nineteen states mandate such tests currently and seven more have laws that will go into effect in the near future. The press and the public appear to be concerned about the poor quality of the education of the students coming out of the nation's high schools. But if the schools have not been providing the students with adequate "opportunities to learn" that have prepared them to meet the standards of these tests, the consequences of high-stakes exit exams are overly punitive to the students.

Rhode Island Looks Upstream

While recognizing the critical importance of secondary education, this year's Information Works! analysis focuses on the young children who will become high school students themselves one day. If fourth graders do not demonstrate proficiency in literacy and numeracy, schools have many opportunities to help them to meet standards. As the percentage of proficient 4th graders increases, so will the secondary schools find it easier to increase their levels of proficiency when those students pass through the system. Only when all students have had adequate opportunity to meet high standards throughout their education, then, perhaps, exit exams might make sense. For now they do not.

This is not to say that secondary schools in the state of RI do not have challenges equal to or greater than the challenges to elementary education. Many of our secondary schools are overly impersonal in their structure; some are committed to using and defending teaching strategies that produce limited success among a broad range of students.

The 4th grade is no more important than any other grade or age group. But to extract meaningful information from our ever-growing "mountain" of data specific to RI, we must formulate specific, answerable questions that help us mine the rich information ore, one vein at a time.

Rhode Island Needs

I. Some Good News to Sustain Us Along the Long Journey to Proficiency

RI Has Public Policy Agreement

Before we plunge into statistics that can paint a daunting picture of the challenge to RI education, note first that much foundation work has already been done to build systems that support schools and children. With representation from a broad group of stakeholders, the Governor's Goals 2000 panel developed what is now the Rhode Island Comprehensive Education Strategy (CES). Significant portions of the CES have been written into legislation called Article 31. At the heart of the CES and Article 31 is a strategy known nationally as the "standards movement" which employs standards, assessments and accountability for results. The experience of other states shows that this strategy has a significant effect on the improvement of student achievement.

The Governor's Office, the Legislature, the Board of Regents as well as representatives from elementary, secondary and post-secondary education, business, parents and the community agree on the strategy and direction for Rhode Island's schools. Agreement among the breadth of stakeholders has not always been the case, and experience has demonstrated how powerful we can be working together towards common goals.

The Children's Cabinet

The schools can not, by themselves, overcome the challenges presented by those children who, with their families, find themselves at risk of being overwhelmed by personal, financial or social problems. In 1991 the Legislature passed and the Governor signed into law the creation of a Children's Cabinet "to address all issues, especially those that cross departmental lines, and relate to children's needs and services." Partnering on this Cabinet are representatives from the executive and legislative branches of the government, as well as the directors of all agencies that deal directly with children or children's issues.

In the early 1990's, the Children's Cabinet focused on children's health issues and the formation of a flexible, responsive network that could deliver high quality services to the state's children—a daunting task in its own right. Out of this initial effort grew, among other initiatives, the nationally recognized RIte Care, a Medicaid managed care program which provides health insurance for children whose families' incomes are up to 250% of poverty (or 2.5 times that of families who are "officially" in poverty). This program includes children above the poverty line because the "working poor," those with low-wage jobs, are the most likely to be uninsured. RIte Care has already made a marked improvement in the quality of health of RI's children.

Cross-agency Collaboration Around School Success

In 1994 the Children's Cabinet reshaped their goals to recognize schools as the primary interface between children and state agencies. Their new guiding goals were:

- All children enter school ready to learn;
- All youth leave school ready to lead productive lives; and
- All children and youth are safe in their homes, neighborhoods and schools.

Since that time the Children's Cabinet has continued to develop its work with more collaboration around improving educational performance. Their conclusions about reducing juvenile justice, for example, focus on school success as the most effective prevention against anti-social behaviors.

The Cabinet is to be commended for its breadth of vision and for identifying education as the turnkey institution for improving the well-being and long-term self-determination of children. Thus, the Children's Cabinet is already well underway to laying the foundation for an edifice of support that will help children fulfill the goals of the CES and Article 31. The task is huge, but RI is actively facing the challenge.

RI Has Unusually High Quality and Extensive Information

RI public education has entered a new era in which high quality data is regularly collected from a variety of sources. Different stakeholders are analyzing the data in ways that shed considerable new light on RI's challenges, progress and opportunities. For example, the document at hand assembles a portrait of what we know about 4th grade education, using information gathered from student assessments, the 1998 SALT Survey, RI Kids Count Report for 1999 (www.rikidscount.org), the Providence Demography Initiative as well as other government information-gathering initiatives. For the first time, public policy and decision-making about education-from pre-school to graduation-can move beyond anecdotal understandings to using concrete details about children, schools and districts throughout the state. Therefore, any shortcomings noted in this report should be seen as opportunities for sustained and focused action rather than criticism or condemnation.

The SALT Survey

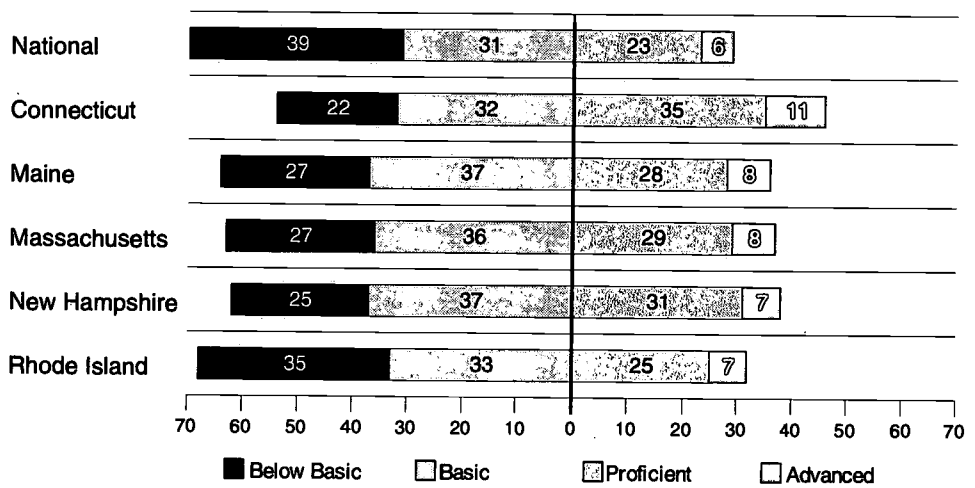
The SALT Survey generates an unusual bank of information because it gathers a wealth of details about how and how well different aspects of school communities function. It is perhaps the most comprehensive set of surveys administered in American schools. Consisting of three distinct versions for elementary, middle and high schools, with different forms for parents, students, teachers and administrators, the SALT survey provides descriptions of what people want to see occur at their schools, as well as how frequently various practices do occur. According to Lynn Olson, project editor of Education Week's Quality Counts '99, it provides an "incredibly rich data base" for educators to mine. The SALT Survey instruments have evolved over the past 15 years under the direction of Dr. Robert Felner and his research team, now located at the National Center for Public Education and Social Policy at the University of Rhode Island. The remainder of this report uses selected individual items and some combined items to paint a richer portrait of what education actually looks like in RI schools. A full set of charts, tables and graphs of all SALT Survey results at the state, district and school levels for this year and last year is available through the InfoWorks website at: infoworks.ride.uri.edu.

Rhode Island Needs

II. Responsive, Effective, Exciting Schools

Where Are We Now?

New England and U.S. 1998
National Assessment for Educational Progress Scores in Reading



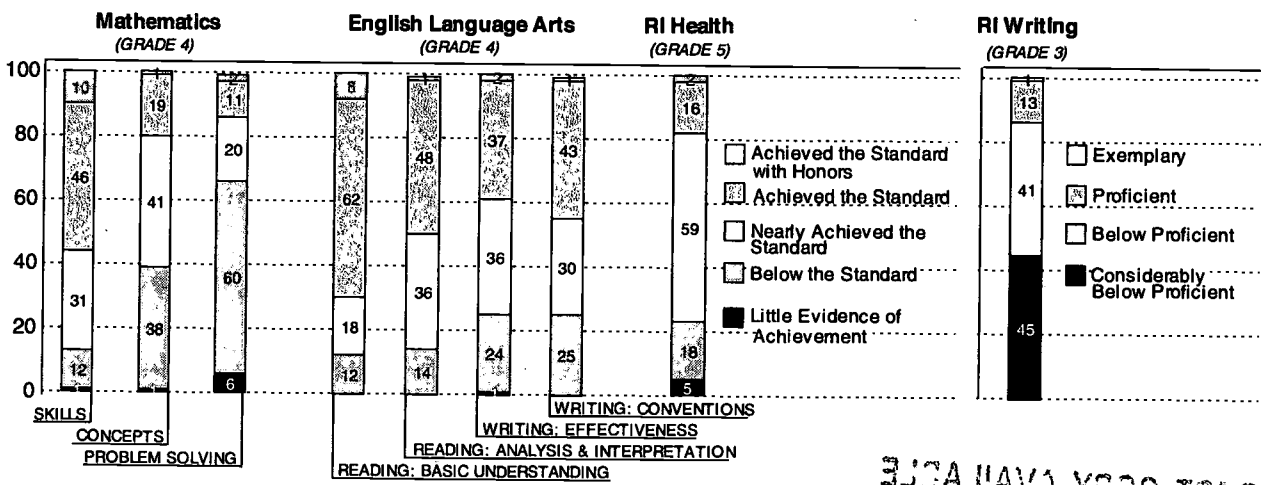
Data Source: National Assessment for Educational Progress

Profile of Rhode Island Public Schools

The Numbers 1997–98	
Students	153,342
Teachers	10,656
Schools	320
Districts *	36
Area Career & Technical Schools	8
State Operated Schools	3
Charter Schools	1

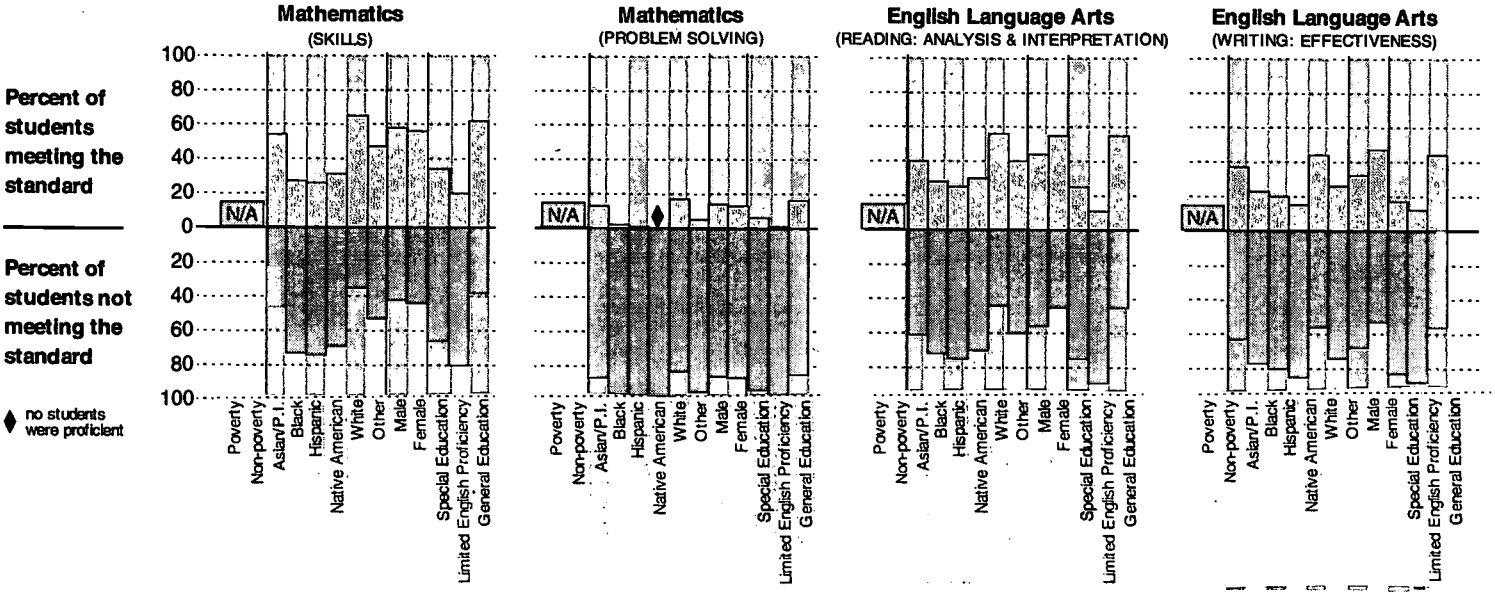
* Including 4 regionalized districts and the State-operated district of Central Falls.

Rhode Island
Current 4th Grade Academic Achievement



Data Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education &
The National Center on Public Education & Social Policy

Rhode Island
Current 4th Grade Academic Achievement Disaggregation



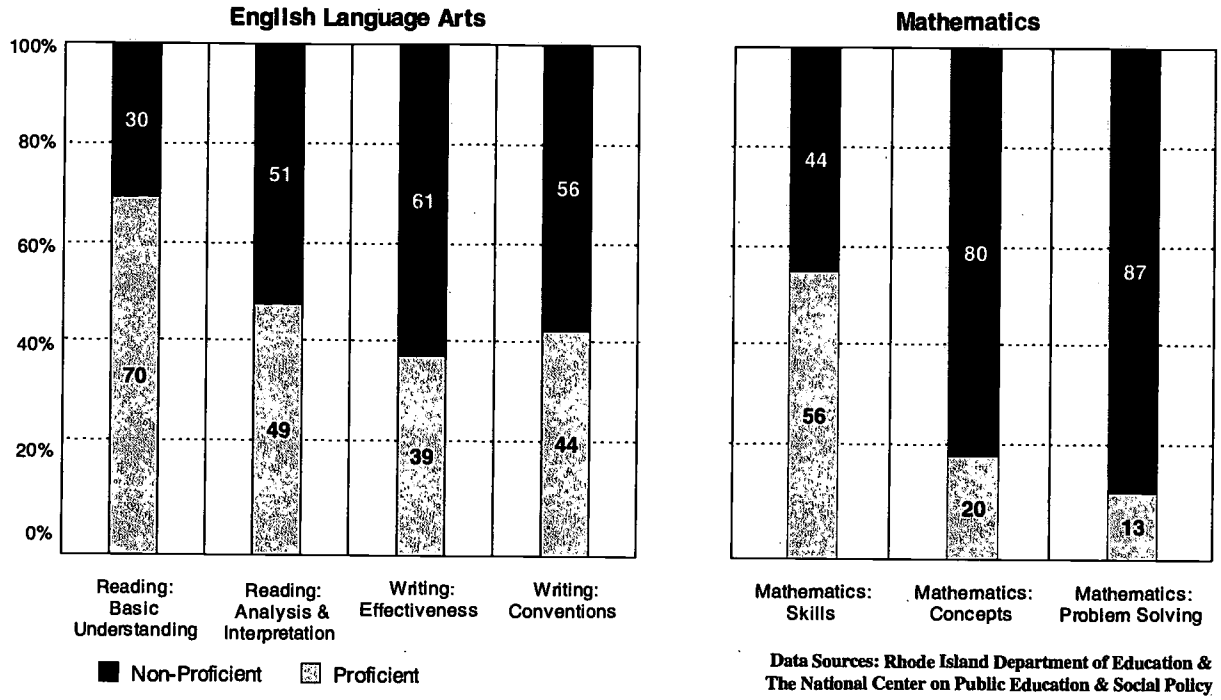
Data Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education & The National Center on Public Education & Social Policy

In Search of Excellence

Rhode Island has always been a state proud of its culture of local control of public schools and fiercely protective of it. Because the state in the past has not had a strong guiding role in the lives of the schools, the schools are quite different from one another in both character, which is fine, and in the quality of the education which they deliver, which is less than ideal.

In order to achieve the state's goal of 100% proficiency of all students in literacy and numeracy, the state must help schools – all schools – identify strategies, methods and programs that will address the needs of their students. For a wide variety of reasons, some schools are more effective at helping their students achieve proficiency than others with similar populations.

Non-proficiency Gaps



Data Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education & The National Center on Public Education & Social Policy

Using Statistical Modeling to Have a "Value-added" Conversation

To identify those schools who, with a statistically leveled playing field, manage to out-perform others, RIDE contracted with URI researchers at the National Center on Public Education to develop statistical models that take into account the educational challenges each individual school's children bring with them. By factoring in the challenges, researchers can get a sense of how much value is added to children's education by a school.

The following chart lists all RI elementary schools according to the extent to which the school's children perform better, worse or comparably to other students like themselves, statewide. At the top of the chart is the group, or band of those schools whose children performed better than their statewide counterparts on the four relevant subtests. Within each of the bands, schools are alphabetized.

For more information about RI's statistical model, see the User's Guide in the front of Information Works!; for a technical description of the modeling, see the "Technical Brief" on the subject on the web at:

infoworks.ride.uri.edu

Or contact the Department of Education at: 401-222-4600 ext: 2231.

1998 Grade Four Performance by School: Percent of Test Takers at or Above Standard

School Name & District	Mathematics: Skills	Mathematics: Problem Solving	English Language Arts: Reading	English Language Arts: Writing
Brown Avenue School, Johnston	82%	38%	71%	64%
Community School, Cumberland	89%	30%	77%	71%
Cranston - Calvert School, Newport	87%	22%	69%	61%
Cumberland Hill School, Cumberland	81%	24%	68%	54%
Edmund W. Flynn School, Providence	48%	5%	47%	53%
Forest Avenue School, Middletown	75%	17%	63%	58%
Fort Barton School, Tiverton	84%	24%	76%	68%
● Hamilton Elementary School, N. Kingstown	80%	32%	71%	54%
● Hampden Meadows School, Barrington	81%	41%	79%	65%
Hope Highlands Elementary School, Cranston	79%	24%	78%	65%
● Hope Valley Elementary School, Chariho	73%	32%	82%	82%
● Myron J. Francis Elementary School, E. Providence	81%	25%	67%	65%
Nonquit School, Tiverton	91%	35%	83%	96%
Oak Lawn School, Cranston	78%	43%	69%	57%
Orlo Avenue School, E. Providence	72%	23%	51%	53%
Park School, Warwick	87%	21%	62%	49%
Randall Holden School, Warwick	77%	28%	82%	54%
● Wickford Elementary School, N. Kingstown	87%	24%	77%	64%
William D'Abate School, Providence	31%	4%	41%	44%
Asa Messer School, Providence	35%	0%	31%	31%
Bradford School, Westerly	76%	16%	69%	54%
● Charlestown Elementary School, Chariho	79%	30%	58%	61%
Daniel D. Waterman School, Cranston	91%	39%	73%	51%
Davisville Elementary School, N. Kingstown	76%	22%	53%	53%
Elmhurst School, Portsmouth	91%	39%	69%	49%
Flynn Annex II, Providence	31%	2%	30%	15%
George Hanaford School, E. Greenwich	80%	24%	78%	50%
Lincoln Central Elementary School, Lincoln	72%	25%	74%	64%
Quidnessett Elementary School, N. Kingstown	77%	19%	64%	56%
Sackett Street School, Providence	24%	1%	47%	29%
Social Street School, Woonsocket	48%	5%	44%	56%
Woodridge School, Cranston	82%	18%	73%	77%
● Ashaway Elementary School, Chariho	75%	23%	*48%*	55%
Centredale School, N. Providence	83%	*8%*	79%	79%
● Fogarty Memorial School, Glocester	*67%*	28%	70%	54%
Forest Park School, N. Kingstown	81%	33%	67%	*37%*
Holliman School, Warwick	70%	22%	*51%*	60%
● Matunuck School, S. Kingstown	*58%*	26%	81%	76%
North Scituate Elementary School, Scituate	76%	26%	67%	*42%*
Peace Dale Elementary School, S. Kingstown	68%	21%	60%	*36%*
● State Street Elementary School, Westerly	89%	33%	76%	*30%*
Stone Hill School, Cranston	*65%*	22%	78%	78%
Warwick Neck School, Warwick	75%	44%	60%	*40%*
Wilbur & McMahon Schools, Lincoln	90%	30%	65%	*45%*
Dr. Harry L. Halliwell Memorial School, N. Smithfield	69%	23%	61%	55%

Blue shows that the percentage is **more** than the proportion of similar students statewide.
Italics show that the percentage is **less** than the proportion of similar students statewide.
● Indicates schools that were above the statistical model on all 1997 subtests.

School Name & District	Mathematics: Skills	Mathematics: Problem Solving	English Language Arts: Reading	English Language Arts: Writing
Marieville Elementary School, N. Providence	78%	39%	56%	46%
Mary E. Fogarty School, Providence	21%	3%	19%	21%
Narragansett Elementary School, Narragansett	67%	18%	70%	60%
Norwood Avenue, Cranston	45%	16%	55%	29%
Pleasant View School, Providence	45%	2%	38%	28%
● Providence Street School, W. Warwick	62%	16%	58%	56%
Robert L. Bailey Elementary School, Providence	24%	10%	38%	17%
Thornton School, Johnston	61%	17%	76%	58%
Aquidneck School, Middletown	68%	*14%*	73%	49%
Ashton School, Cumberland	74%	17%	64%	*35%*
● Chester W. Barrows School, Cranston	59%	*9%*	59%	54%
Coggeshall School, Newport	63%	15%	43%	*20%*
Glen Hills School, Cranston	69%	29%	*56%*	54%
James H. Eldredge Elementary School, E. Greenwich	74%	33%	62%	*40%*
Jamestown School-Melrose, Jamestown	76%	*16%*	71%	62%
Leo A. Savoie School, Woonsocket	*58%*	16%	68%	68%
Melville Elementary School, Portsmouth	77%	20%	65%	*44%*
Pocasset School, Tiverton	78%	17%	*54%*	61%
Rhodes School, Warwick	*49%*	16%	62%	50%
Tiogue School, Coventry	83%	17%	*49%*	54%
Walter E. Ranger School, Tiverton	69%	21%	63%	*23%*
Block Island School, New Shoreham	80%	*10%*	70%	*40%*
George J. Peters School, Cranston	75%	*14%*	*50%*	76%
Greystone School, N. Providence	*56%*	*0%*	62%	54%
● Old County Road School, Smithfield	*64%*	*14%*	68%	54%
Potowomut School, Warwick	73%	48%	*58%*	*33%*
West Glocester Elementary, Glocester	81%	20%	*54%*	*32%*
● William R. Dutemple School, Cranston	*61%*	*9%*	68%	77%
Alan Shawn Feinstein School, Central Falls	31%	0%	30%	20%
Alfred Lima, Sr. Elementary School, Providence	15%	0%	19%	16%
● Dr. Earl F. Calcutt Middle School, Central Falls	41%	0%	27%	22%
Gilbert Stuart School, Providence	30%	2%	16%	20%
John W. Horton School, Cranston	54%	25%	50%	42%
Kevin K. Coleman Elementary School, Woonsocket	40%	1%	32%	25%
Reservoir Avenue School, Providence	31%	3%	24%	12%
William J. Underwood School, Newport	62%	15%	56%	38%
Windmill Street School, Providence	32%	0%	27%	28%
Agnes B. Hennessey School, E. Providence	67%	13%	*22%*	37%
Colt-Andrews School, Bristol Warren	61%	18%	*52%*	48%
Dr. Edward A. Ricci School, N. Providence	63%	*4%*	65%	45%
● Eden Park School, Cranston	67%	*12%*	56%	63%
Edward S. Rhodes School, Cranston	66%	*14%*	66%	43%
South Road Elementary, S. Kingstown	*56%*	19%	58%	47%
Tower Street School, Westerly	71%	15%	52%	*35%*
Veterans Memorial Elementary, Central Falls	*21%*	0%	35%	18%
Wyman School, Warwick	*66%*	21%	63%	45%
Alice M. Waddington School, E. Providence	*66%*	23%	59%	*42%*

Blue shows that the percentage is **more than** the proportion of similar students statewide.
Italics shows that the percentage is **less than** the proportion of similar students statewide.
● Indicates schools that were above the statistical model on all subtests last year.

School Name & District	Mathematics: Skills	Mathematics: Problem Solving	English Language Arts: Reading	English Language Arts: Writing
Cedar Hill School, Warwick	*67%*	19%	*55%*	64%
Dr. Joseph A. Whelan Elem. School, N. Providence	*42%*	*4%*	58%	51%
Dr. M. H. Sullivan School, Newport	55%	3%	*19%*	*11%*
Drum Rock Elementary School, Warwick	64%	*11%*	62%	*36%*
Dunn's Corners School, Westerly	72%	26%	*49%*	*38%*
Elizabeth Baldwin School, Pawtucket	*23%*	1%	*20%*	31%
Francis J. Varieur School, Pawtucket	*43%*	*6%*	43%	52%
Francis School, Warwick	*66%*	*16%*	61%	52%
Greenbush Elementary School, W. Warwick	*63%*	17%	65%	*41%*
Grove Avenue School, E. Providence	56%	12%	*30%*	*26%*
Harold F. Scott School, Warwick	*60%*	24%	58%	*40%*
Harris School, Woonsocket	58%	9%	*41%*	*10%*
Norwood School, Warwick	*50%*	*0%*	57%	64%
Richmond Elementary School, Chariho	*66%*	25%	*56%*	49%
Sarah Dyer Barnes School, Johnston	81%	17%	*52%*	*27%*
Sheffield School, Newport	60%	9%	*26%*	*23%*
Silver Spring School, E. Providence	*51%*	*8%*	49%	51%
Wakefield Elementary School, S. Kingstown	*60%*	19%	66%	*41%*
Anna M. McCabe School, Smithfield	78%	*14%*	*48%*	*26%*
Bemon Heights School, Woonsocket	*43%*	*5%*	51%	*23%*
Clayville Elementary School, Scituate	*67%*	*17%*	*56%*	56%
Garden City School, Cranston	73%	*11%*	*49%*	*38%*
Graniteville School, Johnston	*59%*	*7%*	*52%*	74%
Greenwood School, Warwick	*55%*	24%	*36%*	*12%*
James L. McGuire School, N. Providence	*53%*	22%	*55%*	*33%*
James R. D. Oldham School, E. Providence	*40%*	*4%*	*32%*	40%
Lonsdale Elementary School, Lincoln	77%	*10%*	*50%*	*21%*
Meadowcrest School, E. Providence	*67%*	*7%*	*48%*	70%
Oak Haven School, Coventry	78%	*9%*	*47%*	*38%*
Raymond C. LaPerche School, Smithfield	74%	*4%*	*49%*	*41%*
Saylesville Elementary School, Lincoln	84%	*14%*	*55%*	*41%*
Springbrook Elementary School, Westerly	74%	*15%*	*39%*	*9%*
Washington Oak School, Coventry	75%	*13%*	*43%*	*37%*
Winsor Hill School, Johnston	*61%*	*2%*	*49%*	61%
Charles Fortes Elementary School, Providence	26%	2%	18%	9%
Arlington School, Cranston	41%	*0%*	32%	9%
Carey School, Newport	47%	9%	44%	*26%*
Carl G. Lauro Memorial School, Providence	*18%*	0%	17%	21%
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. School, Providence	*41%*	6%	43%	37%
Laurel Hill Avenue School, Providence	*19%*	1%	20%	18%
M. Virginia Cunningham School, Pawtucket	*24%*	1%	27%	20%
Veazie Street School, Providence	30%	1%	32%	*14%*
Camden Avenue School, Providence	*13%*	2%	*11%*	15%
Emma G. Whiteknact School, E. Providence	*41%*	*9%*	50%	30%
Howard Hathaway School, Portsmouth	*66%*	*13%*	60%	46%
Stony Lane School, N. Kingstown	*66%*	*15%*	58%	46%

Blue shows that the percentage is **more than** the proportion of similar students statewide.
Italics show that the percentage is **less than** the proportion of similar students statewide.
o Indicates schools that were above the statistical model on all subtests last year.

School Name & District	Mathematics: Skills	Mathematics: Problem Solving	English Language Arts: Reading	English Language Arts: Writing
Vartan Gregorian School at Fox Point, Providence	*26%*	3%	*15%*	15%
West Broadway School, Providence	*21%*	1%	20%	*10%*
William Winsor School, Smithfield	*67%*	21%	62%	*29%*
B.F. Norton Elementary School, Cumberland	*53%*	*11%*	*47%*	36%
Blackrock School, Coventry	*46%*	*10%*	*54%*	45%
Citizens Memorial School, Woonsocket	*31%*	*2%*	33%	*17%*
Cottrell F. Hoxsie School, Warwick	*62%*	*2%*	*41%*	43%
Edgewood Highland School, Cranston	*39%*	*3%*	39%	*13%*
Feinstein School (Broad Street), Providence	*20%*	0%	*21%*	*7%*
Flora S. Curtis Memorial School, Pawtucket	*50%*	*10%*	*33%*	40%
George C. Calef School, Johnston	62%	*3%*	*44%*	*26%*
George J. West School, Providence	*25%*	2%	*25%*	*17%*
Gladstone Street School, Cranston	*40%*	13%	*24%*	*15%*
Henry J. Winters School, Pawtucket	*35%*	6%	*30%*	*23%*
John F. Kennedy School, Middletown	62%	*7%*	*46%*	*34%*
John Greene School, Warwick	*51%*	15%	*29%*	*10%*
John Wickes School, Warwick	69%	*13%*	*52%*	*23%*
Lippitt School, Warwick	*59%*	*14%*	*45%*	43%
Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School, W. Warwick	56%	*6%*	*35%*	*18%*
Northern Lincoln Elementary School, Lincoln	*55%*	18%	*36%*	*19%*
Oakland Beach Elementary School, Warwick	*45%*	12%	*38%*	*23%*
Pothier School, Woonsocket	*42%*	*0%*	*32%*	37%
Robert F. Kennedy School, Providence	*45%*	9%	*39%*	*24%*
Stadium School, Cranston	*51%*	*9%*	*45%*	45%
Webster Avenue School, Providence	*30%*	1%	*25%*	*14%*
West Kingston Elementary School, S. Kingstown	66%	*15%*	*55%*	*23%*
Agnes E. Little School, Pawtucket	*29%*	*1%*	*34%*	*25%*
Captain Isaac Paine School, Foster	*62%*	*8%*	*57%*	*43%*
Curvin-McCabe School, Pawtucket	*45%*	*3%*	*33%*	*11%*
E. G. Robertson School, Warwick	*44%*	*0%*	*20%*	*15%*
Fallon Memorial School, Pawtucket	*40%*	*4%*	*25%*	*16%*
Garvin Memorial School, Cumberland	*60%*	*5%*	*51%*	*37%*
Globe Park School, Woonsocket	*45%*	*5%*	*38%*	*23%*
Hope Elementary School, Scituate	*54%*	*4%*	*41%*	*35%*
Hopkins Hill School, Coventry	*49%*	*10%*	*48%*	*18%*
Hugh Cole School, Bristol Warren	*50%*	*10%*	*43%*	*29%*
John F. Horgan Elementary School, W. Warwick	*35%*	*3%*	*35%*	*20%*
Kent Heights School, E. Providence	*51%*	*8%*	*38%*	*35%*
Metcalf School, Exeter - W. Greenwich	*66%*	*13%*	*53%*	*39%*
Nathanael Greene School, Pawtucket	*45%*	*5%*	*33%*	*19%*
Potter-Burns School, Pawtucket	*36%*	*0%*	*22%*	*21%*
Sherman School, Warwick	*44%*	*7%*	*42%*	*38%*
Steere Farm Elementary School, Burrillville	*59%*	*15%*	*53%*	*42%*
Stephen Olney School, N. Providence	*44%*	*4%*	*43%*	*33%*
W. R. Watters School, E. Providence	*54%*	*2%*	*43%*	*26%*
Western Coventry School, Coventry	*65%*	*15%*	*58%*	*39%*
William L. Callahan School, Burrillville	*57%*	*10%*	*46%*	*37%*

Blue shows that the percentage is **more than** the proportion of similar students statewide.
Italics show that the percentage is **less than** the proportion of similar students statewide.
⊙ Indicates schools that were above the statistical model on all subtests last year.

Data Sources: New Standards Reference Exam & The National Center on Public Education & Social Policy

Moving Towards Responsive, Exciting Schools

Improving Literacy and Numeracy

Intense focus on the state exams will produce only limited improvement in student achievement. The state assessments sample only a small number of the content standards in the subjects that all students should know and be able to do, and these samples are taken at selected points in their educational journey, over the course of a few days. To have a more complete picture of the students' academic progress, schools and communities need to have their own local assessment data.

Furthermore, test results are outcomes which will change little without examining the inputs. To help the schools gain a fuller sense of their over-all functioning, the state administered the SALT (School Accountability for Learning and Teaching) Survey which is designed to yield information about the key dimensions of school functioning that research shows improves student achievement. Some of the state-level findings have clear implications for 4th grade proficiency.

Please Note: These findings refer to the state-level SALT Survey data which, along with all district and school data, can be found on the web at:

infoworks.ride.uri.edu

Classroom Practices

Teachers strongly believe in teaching literacy (reading skill development) throughout the curriculum.

Data Source: SALT Survey Teacher charts #9 and #17

Current classroom practice, however, does not reflect this belief.

Data Source: SALT Survey Teacher charts #17K and #17L

This pattern also holds true for mathematics skill development.

Data Source: SALT Survey Teacher charts #9 and #17J

Elementary Integrates Instruction Much More Frequently than Secondary

The above findings represent the teachers' responses from both elementary and secondary schools. Clearly, because elementary teachers generally teach all core subjects themselves, their integration of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is significantly higher than at the secondary level. But even at 4th grade, the student responses on the New Standards Reference exams indicate that children need much more practice applying their understanding of basic literacy and numeracy to real world problems, using projects requiring writing, reading, and mathematical computation and reasoning. For example, social studies teachers at all levels could enhance student math skills by using or having the students develop charts, graphs and tables to compare demographics, income, the growth of agriculture, and so on.

Standards-based Instruction

Succeeding in a "standards, assessment and accountability" environment requires an investment in standards-based instruction to help children develop stronger literacy and numeracy skills. The process starts by teachers focusing their lesson planning on what students need to know and be able to do. Teachers then select learning activities consistent with these goals and use classroom assignment standards, sometimes called 'rubrics,' so that students can see exactly what is expected of them. When the standard is not met, standards help to identify the specific problem(s) in the work. Students gain experience meeting standards by revising their work until it achieves at least the minimum goals set by the teacher. Revising work gives both students and teachers the chance to recognize and strengthen academic weaknesses. Challenged learners have more opportunities to bring their work up to standard and learn the material in the process.

Teacher Professional Development in Standards

On the plus side, some RI districts and schools have made significant progress in focusing on standards since they were introduced to schools over the past three or four years. Rhode Island has five subject matter curriculum frameworks which set high standards for all RI students. These standards are available in hardcopy through the RI Department of Education (RIDE) and at the following web address: instruct.ride.ri.net\doehome\initiatives.html. Working with the National Center on Education and the Economy (which also developed the New Standards Reference Exams), RI has worked and trained Course One teachers and administrators in standards-based instruction. Certain districts have committed to training every single teacher.

Certificate of Initial Mastery

Several districts have committed to awarding the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) which is a standards-based endorsement of the high school diploma. The CIM is, in effect, a guarantee to higher education and to business that the student has met certain academic standards.

RI Needs More Opportunities to Coordinate Curriculum

However, taken together, a number of survey responses to questions paint a picture of a lack of common standards in our schools and a lack of adequate preparation to teach to standards. Teachers, students and parents need to discuss the expectations for students' work with one another in order to arrive at common standards which all parties understand well. Rhode Island teachers report that they do not coordinate their curricula with their colleagues very often, and in every instance, the level of coordination drops as you move up elementary, middle to high school. Elementary and middle school teachers report coordinating curriculum less than quarterly, and high school teachers report doing so only once a year.

Please Note: These findings refer to the state-level SALT Survey data which, along with all district and school data, can be found on the web at:

infoworks.ride.uri.edu

Many Rhode Island teachers have little familiarity with state and/or national standards and do not feel prepared to teach using them.

- Only 36% of all teachers report being well-prepared to teach using Rhode Island's curriculum frameworks ("much" or "very much" on the survey scale). 27% report having little to no preparation to teach using the frameworks.

Data Source: SALT Survey Teacher chart #2

There is evidence of a lack of common standards, interdisciplinary learning and curriculum coordination in our schools.

- Teachers at all levels set goals related to student learning less than quarterly across their teams or grade levels.
- Elementary and middle school teachers work together in the presentation of lessons less than several times a year; and high school teachers less than once a year.
- Elementary teachers teach interdisciplinary units less than quarterly. High school teachers do so less than once a year.
- Elementary teachers coordinate or integrate curricula across subjects almost quarterly. High school teachers do it less than once a year.

Data Source: SALT Survey Teacher chart #10A

- Teachers report little coordination of student assignments, assessments and feedback within their interdisciplinary teams or grade levels. Elementary and middle school teachers report doing this kind of coordination less than quarterly, and high school teachers report doing it just over once a year.

Data Source: SALT Survey Teacher chart #10

Students need more opportunities and assistance to bring their work up to standard.

- Examining a number of survey items together reveals that students have greater opportunities to receive additional assistance and revise their work at the elementary level. These opportunities diminish in middle school and are lowest at the high school level.
- Once students reach middle school, schools appear to assume increasingly that instruction no longer has to be differentiated. Both students who are falling behind and those ready to move on are often given the same instruction without reference to their individual needs. Remediation and challenge do not appear to be readily available to those students who need the extra attention at any level. It is important to note that the number of students whom teachers teach grows significantly in the course of middle school, and there is a critical number – Education Week's *Quality Counts* put it at 80 students per English teacher – which is too large for teachers to be able to differentiate instruction.

Data Source: SALT Survey Teacher chart #17C, #17E and #17H

Clearly, efforts to educate all teachers about standards – both state and local – must increase. Teachers need to develop common and consistent expectations for what all students should know and be able to do. This will require more time in the regular school day for planning and sharing activities, ideas and insights with their colleagues. Schools will need to re-think their use of time, space and the use of school and district resources. The state professional development money allocated by Article 31 will be an important ingredient in changing teacher planning practices. Also, technology will help forward the agenda as more teachers go on-line through the RI Teachers in Technology Program (www.ed.uri.edu/rif98).

Students Could Make Better Use of After School Time

Students spend too little of their out-of-school time, specifically homework time, in activities that develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

- 79% of elementary students (4th and 5th graders) spend one hour or less on homework each week night and 89% spend one hour or less on weekends.
- 63% of middle school students (grades 6-8) spend one hour or less on homework each week night and 76% spend one hour or less on weekends.
- At the high school level (grades 9-12), 63% of students spend one hour or less on homework each week night and 68% spend one hour or less on weekends.
- 38% of elementary students reported that over the last year they had read two or fewer books outside of regular school work. The comparable statistics were 60% for middle school students, and 77% for high school students.

Data Source: SALT Survey Student charts #19, #21 and #23

Please Note: These findings refer to the state-level SALT Survey data which, along with all district and school data, can be found on the web at:

infoworks.ride.uri.edu

Learning and applying complex literacy and numeracy skills requires practice over time. There is time available for such practice both during and beyond the school day. Literacy and numeracy could be supported outside of class with more homework, leisure time reading, and going to the library. Rhode Island students spend relatively little time doing homework or reading outside of school. Often schools assign more homework than students actually do (especially at secondary levels). Better use of the time out of school requires more sustained partnerships and interchange of information between the home and the schools regarding assignments, expectations and penalties for student non-performance. Spending more time on well-designed homework would increase the students' chances of meeting the standards.

Teacher Expectations

Teachers have alarmingly low expectations of students with certain characteristics.

Please Note: These findings refer to the state-level SALT Survey data which, along with all district and school data, can be found on the web at:

infoworks.ride.uri.edu

- Teachers of children in grades 3 or below perceive that nearly half of their Black and Hispanic elementary students do not have the ability to succeed in higher education.
- Teachers' expectations improve only very slightly for students in grades 4 and above.

Data Source: Teacher Student Rating Scale (TSRS) charts:
TSRS#5 – grades 3 or below – Academic potential by ethnicity
TSRS#4 – grades 4 and above – Academic potential by ethnicity
TSRS#4 – grades 4 and above – Academic potential by lunch status (poverty)

Without denying the existence or presence of racism, the low expectations that teachers report for some children with certain characteristics speaks volumes about the effects of poverty and the other forces at work mentioned in the following section of this report. The students identified by the teachers as having low academic potential are the ones who most need the extra support that the agencies and communities outside school can provide. On the one hand it is critical that teachers examine their expectations of students with certain characteristics because their expectations can easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy. But it is also the case that the teachers are responding to economic and social impacts on children which are very real.

Note that the numbers of children not expected to graduate from high school is not hugely different from RI's drop-out rate. Indeed, if anything, the teachers' expectations are somewhat higher than the actual number of high school graduates. The schools can not possibly handle the socio-economic challenges of many of the children by themselves.

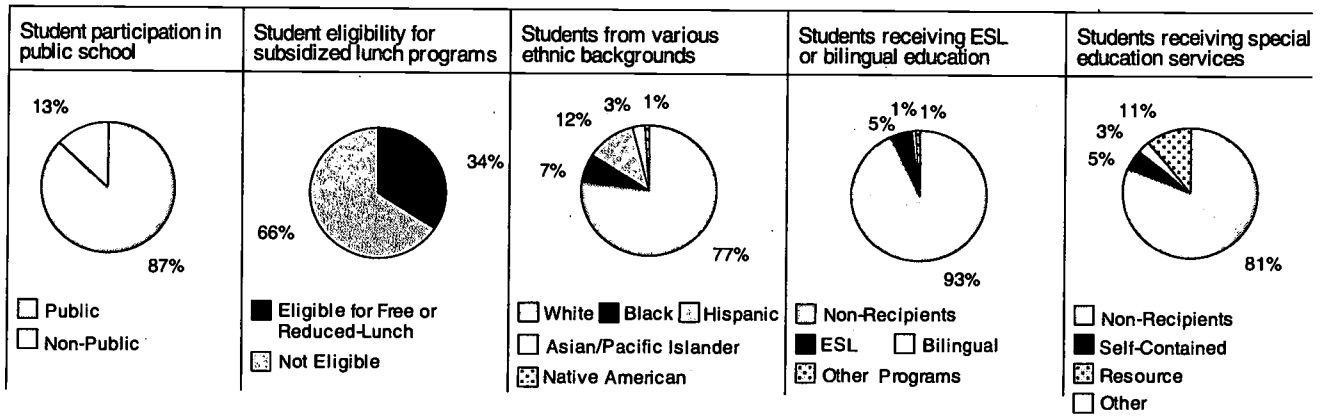
Rhode Island Needs

III. Compassionate, but Unflinching Assessments of RI's Student Characteristics

Who are Rhode Island's Children?

Each state has a unique population with its own set of assets and challenges. Those states which score highest overall on the National Assessments of Educational Progress (NAEPs) generally are states with no major urban centers and limited ethnic diversity among their population. Rural poverty is no more easily overcome than urban poverty, so all states face challenges. Still, it is important to take into account the challenges specific to Rhode Island and its children.

Characteristics of Children in this State



Data Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education & The National Center on Public Education & Social Policy

An Increase in Childhood Poverty

Between the school year 1990-91 and 1997-98, childhood poverty in the state of Rhode Island rose from 23% to 32%. In real numbers this is an increase from 31,719 children to 49,218. The increase in poverty – especially during a time of economic prosperity – is a result of numerous factors which include a high rate of Third World immigration to the state and such modern social dilemmas as the increasing rate of births to teenage mothers, the persistently high divorce rate and the effects of drug and alcohol abuse.

Recent changes in the welfare laws are prompting social service agencies to be more aggressive about moving dependent individuals and families to self-sufficiency. As a state, RI has resisted the more draconian methods of pushing families off the welfare roles and is a national model for employing supportive strategies for helping families to become rooted in economic self-sufficiency before leaving welfare. It is too early to tell if Rhode Island's strategy is successfully improving self-sufficiency in higher numbers with long-range effects on reducing childhood poverty.

Poverty as an Indicator of School Success

Understand first that prior achievement is the most powerful predictor of school success. Barring unforeseen circumstances, a child who is achieving academically will probably continue to achieve. This means that no matter what the family's circumstances, any child who consistently arrives at school adequately nourished, rested, healthy and feeling safe and stable will be able to acquire and accumulate learning. This is what we mean by "ready to learn." A child's readiness to learn, especially in the early years, positions that child for lifelong success with learning.

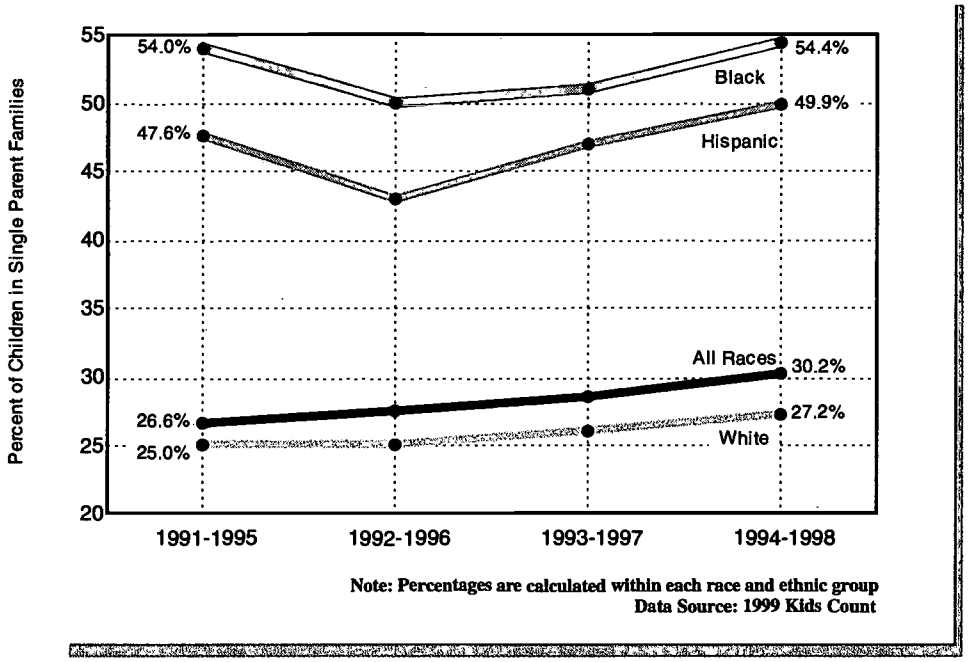
After prior achievement, research shows that poverty is by far the most powerful predictor of school success. Families struggling with obtaining the basics of survival tend not to have extra attention for supporting their children's educations. Caring for an infant or young child's intellectual development is not a human instinct, and many economically-challenged families do not have the information or resources to maximize their children's school readiness. Teachers report that increasing numbers of children do not come to school rested, well-fed, with high expectations of themselves or fully ready to learn. Poor learning readiness is by no means exclusive to children from low-income households, but poverty is the strongest factor, statistically, that threatens a child's school success.

Other Ready-To-Learn Indicators

The social and cultural changes of the last 30 or 40 years have not, on the whole, served children well. The following indicators might occur with higher rates among the populations struggling with poverty, but these are conditions of children found across the state at every socio-economic level. A child whose parents are getting a divorce does not have a condition appropriate to special education, but the child does have special needs and is at risk of sliding towards academic failure. Many children come to school with a variety of factors distracting their attention.

Single Parent Families

Children in Single Parent Families,
by Race/Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 1991-1998



Note: Percentages are calculated within each race and ethnic group
Data Source: 1999 Kids Count

- Between 1991 and 1998, the percentage of RI children living in a single parent household increased from 26.6% to 30.2%.

Teen Birth Rate

- From the early 1980's to the early 1990's the birth rate for RI's teenage girls increased from 22.3 births per 1,000 to 30.3 births per 1,000.

Data Source: 1999 Kids Count

Breakfast

- 11% of 4th grade students never eat breakfast.
- 28% of 4th grade students do not eat breakfast every day.

Data Source: SALT Survey Student chart #13

- 22% of all 9th grade students never eat breakfast; 67% do not eat break fast every day; and these numbers go up as children proceed through high school.

Data Source: SALT Survey Student chart #16

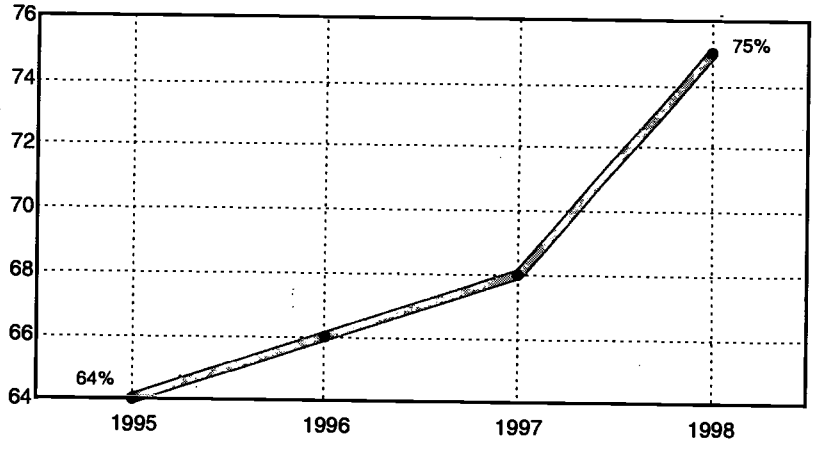
- 12,639 low-income public school students do not receive school breakfast because they attend the 158 RI public schools that do not participate in the Breakfast Program.

Data Source: 1999 Kids Count

Please Note: These findings refer to the state-level SALT Survey data which, along with all district and school data, can be found on the web at:

infoworks.ride.uri.edu

Percentage of Low-Income Children Attending Schools Offering School Breakfast 1995 - 1998



Data Source: 1999 Kids Count

- The percentage of students attending schools offering School Breakfast has increased from 64% in the Fall of 1995 to 75% in the Fall of 1998. In 1998, 157 public schools offered School Breakfast, up from 116 schools in 1995.

Student Behavior

- Teachers report that between 10% to 20% percent of children in grades 3 and under exhibit behavior which is a moderate to very serious problem. While the numbers are not terribly high, there is little extra support for these children. Like the failure to read, these sorts of behavior problems are tolerated more easily at the elementary level when the children are very young. However, as these same children grow to adolescence, behavior problems tend to grow into sizable behavior and discipline problems. The high school cumulative drop-out rate is 17.95% (or 18%) which most likely includes a high percentage of the children who were identified as having difficulties with behavior and self-control when young. Schools also need to consider to what extent anti-social behavior is a response to a child-unfriendly environment. The research on personalizing education shows that discipline problems drop dramatically when the environment is re-structured to encourage listening and responding to the child.

Data Source: SALT Survey TSRS chart #7

Please Note: These findings refer to the state-level SALT Survey data which, along with all district and school data, can be found on the web at:

infoworks.ride.uri.edu

Lead Poisoning

- 15% of RI children have elevated lead levels in their blood.
- In Providence the number climbs to 28% and is generally high in the core urbans.
- RI has one of the highest per capita lead poisoning rates in the country.

Data Source: 1999 Kids Count

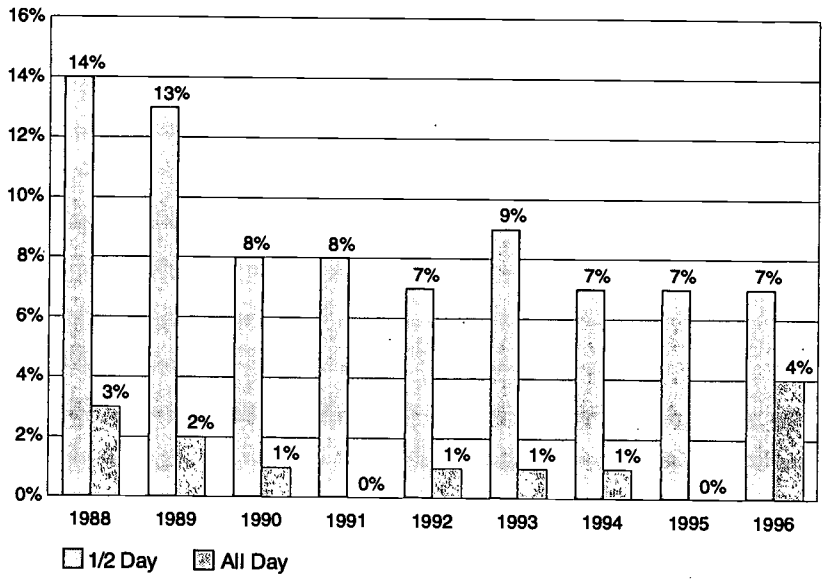
Pre-School

- Only 33% of children entering kindergarten have had pre-school.
- There are 26,519 RI children under the age of 6 who need regulated childcare and only 18,648 available slots.
- Through the RIte Care initiative, RI now offers paid health insurance to certified family child care home providers and center-based providers that care for children who receive state child care subsidies. RI is one of the only states to offer such a benefit to its childcare providers. Still, the demand exceeds the supply of childcare workers.
- Only 46% of the eligible 3- and 4-year-olds are enrolled in Head Start programs in RI's five core urban areas.

Data Source: 1999 Kids Count

All-Day Kindergarten

Percentage of First Graders Who Repeated First Grade
Sorted by Their Type of Kindergarten 1988-1996



Note: Decimals have been rounded to the nearest whole number
Data Source: *Counting on Ourselves* from the 1999 Providence Demography Initiative

The Providence Demography Initiative discovered that fully 10% of Providence's 1st graders do not matriculate to the second grade. An investigation into the characteristics of these children revealed that a significantly larger percentage that had been retained had participated in a half-day program instead of all-day kindergarten. This data strongly suggest that all-day kindergarten prepares economically disadvantaged students for first grade much more successfully than the half-day programs. Over the course of the 1990's, the Providence School Department assertively expanded the availability of all-day kindergarten. Clearly children with access to enriched pre-school experience and extended kindergarten are more likely to succeed in school.

After-School Status

Elementary Student Reports of After-School Supervision

How many days and/or hours each week do you take care of yourself after school without an adult being there?

	Percent responding by **grade level**	Percent responding by **lunch status**	
	4th	Free or reduced	Full Paid
None	57	52	55
1-2 days for less than 3 hours	18	18	23
1-2 days for more than 3 hours	3	3	2
3 or more days for less than 3 hours	14	16	14
3 or more days for more than 3 hours	8	11	6

Data Source: SALT Survey

One in four 4th graders—or 25% — report being left home alone for more than three hours at a stretch at least one or more days a week. Fully 8% report being home alone for more than three hours at least three days a week. Eight percent does not sound terribly alarming except that these are nine and ten year-olds. 19% of middle school students and 36% of high school students are home unsupervised for more than three hours at least three days a week. Common sense as well as research argue that children left home alone are naturally at risk for behaviors not conducive to school success.

If schools were open only one more hour during the day, it would considerably reduce the time spent home alone as well as the waste of time spent with TV and video games. Reducing unproductive time would affect everything from number of books read to daytime crime. After school would be an obvious time for schools to offer "ramp-up" programs for the students who have fallen below grade level in either reading or math. Any curriculum-linked activity held after school would support and enhance a child's chance of meeting the proficiency standards.

Rhode Island Needs

IV. Strong Community Support Networks

Teachers Can Not Shoulder the Full Responsibility for Education by Themselves

Teaching to the increasingly high standards set not merely by the state, but by global competitiveness, is a complex, demanding task unto itself. Teachers can not possibly make up for the social deficiencies in a child's life while trying to impart the intricacies of math or social studies. Increasingly agencies outside of the immediate realm of schools, but working closely with them must shoulder the burden of improving the indicators noted in the previous section. Again, the Children's Cabinet is actively weaving a web of support, but their work is by no means complete nor should the Cabinet be the only external network.

Moving Towards Strong Community Support for RI Children

Child Opportunity Zones (COZ) Family Centers— Community-based, School-linked Support

COZs Family Centers are located at or very near a school where they can provide families with access to coordinated education, health and social services. COZs provide the one-stop shopping for a wide range of information that supports children and their families. These services include adult concerns such as GED or ESL classes, computer skills training and parenting workshops. COZs also provide access to children's services, like homework clubs, counseling and immunization clinics. Families with very young children can find lead poisoning prevention education and screening, pre-school programs and home visiting programs. Each COZ is staffed by a Coordinator who builds community partnerships and helps families negotiate a complex system of school, community and state service systems.

Currently, RI has 13 communities participating in the COZ initiative, serving over 30 schools. Providence has 5 COZs and also has a network of 24 Parents Making A Difference Centers, which focus on parent involvement in neighborhood schools and with their own child's education.

The COZ and other family center initiatives need continued and increased support, both from their host communities and from the more effective integration of the state and local social services systems. These centers provide the infrastructure of support for children and families so that all children come to school ready to learn and so that teachers and school personnel can focus on their primary mission—teaching so that all children experience academic success.

Forging stronger partnerships with parents

One of the most startling findings of the SALT Survey is that RI's parents appear to be a large untapped resource for supporting improved student achievement. Clearly, as students grow older, they tend to resist having their parents directly involved with their school. But schools need to encourage all parents, including those of teenagers, to be involved with their child's education, in spite of the child's qualms. At all levels of RI's school systems, parents report that they are willing and eager to give more time to helping their children if only they knew what to do.

Parent Involvement

Please Note: These findings refer to the state-level SALT Survey data which, along with all district and school data, can be found on the web at:

infoworks.ride.uri.edu

Educators need to do even more to help parents become partners in their child's education.

- On average, statewide, RI schools do not have a high degree of contact with students' homes. State-wide, 21% of teachers report that they do not have regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences other than for problems. 47% report that they have parent conferences once a year. A full 70% of our high school teachers meet with the parents of their students once a year at most.

Data Source: SALT Survey Teacher chart #19

- Parent responses echo those from teachers. Parents report that the schools infrequently outline what skills the child needs to learn each year, explain how to check the homework or give information about how report card grades are earned. In general, contact and communication with parents and families steadily declines from the elementary to high school levels.

Data Source: SALT Survey Parent charts #6, #18, #18a, #18b, #18c

Parents are trying to help their children with school-related work.

- Of the parents who filled out the survey (who we know are at least somewhat committed and involved because they filled out the survey), the vast majority report helping their children with school work by, for example, reading to them, practicing spelling, and checking or helping with homework.

- A strong majority of parents feel that they can help their children with reading and math. The exception is high school mathematics in which only a slim majority of parents — 55% — said that they could help their children.

- Parents at every level ranked math skills as the number one subject about which they wanted to know more. Reading skills always fell within the top four subjects.

Data Source: SALT Survey Parent charts #3, #5 and #8

- Rhode Island parents report that they could spend more time helping their children with homework if teachers showed them what to do. 58% of parents report that they currently spend 10 minutes or less helping their children with homework on an average night. However, 80% of parents report that they could spend 25 minutes or more if they knew what to do.

Data Source: SALT Survey Parent chart #5

Especially at a time when education itself is changing, parents need on-going information about their child's education. Helping all children meet high standards requires a high degree of communication and collaboration between teachers, students and families. The SALT survey reveals a relatively low degree of contact and communication with the students' homes.

Other Partnerships that Strengthen School Effectiveness

Maximizing and Brokering Available Resources – The East Bay Collaborative Model

The East Bay Education Collaborative (EBEC) is a group of eight small Rhode Island school districts who gathered together years ago to create a large enough body of schools to take advantage of economies of scale. Collaborative leaders sized up the task of bringing 100% of their students to proficiency and concluded that these goals would require bringing significant amounts of mentoring and professional development to their school communities. The EBEC has eight Field Service representatives from the Department of Education assigned to their districts and schools. RIDE's Field Service is very useful at brokering information and resources, but those eight individuals could not possibly bring enough capacity to re-tool the 60-some East Bay schools. Similarly, the Collaborative had established relationships with several facilitators from Rhode Island College (RIC) who could provide much expertise, but only on a limited basis.

Working together with RIDE Field Service, the RIC facilitators and with the 41 individual schools who agreed to participate actively, EBEC set about to develop their own internal capacity. They began by identifying those professionals already working within the eight districts who could mentor, teach specific skills, or had experience with working through reform initiatives. Having assembled an initial portrait of the in-house capacity, the partners worked on finding ways to fill the unmet needs with outside help. By no means could all needs be met, but when a request had been heard several times – for classroom management or instruction in teaching to standards – the Collaborative could call on its partners to arrange a professional development opportunity that could be used maximally.

This capacity development pro-actively approaches the challenge of 100% proficiency. The maintenance of multiple partnerships uses a broad range of talents sparingly and to their best advantage. This collaborative is a model of communities coming together to support their schools within the scope of their limited resources.

The RI Parents Information Network

Only a little more than a year ago, a determined, but loose confederation of disparate parent initiatives managed to secure the resources to band together under one roof, as the RI Parents Information Network (RIPIN). RIPIN does not promise to solve a parents' problem, but they will continue to help until parents have enough information to solve it themselves. The directors of such programs as Parents as Teachers, the Right Question Project and Family Voices, among others, help parents connect to whatever information, services, advocacy, support groups and training that would help them help their child. RIPIN works closely with the state PTA to spread the word about available resources. This kind of statewide parent network is a first in RI. RIPIN's number is: 727-4144.

The Bell Atlantic Education Exchange Website

In what is still a new and developing effort to serve all RI education communities with the latest technology, Bell Atlantic has partnered with NCPE at URI and RIDE to host a website at bellatlanticeducationexchange.uri.edu. This site has started to collect resources of all kinds for school communities, including a variety of professional development opportunities. Formal offerings will be posted with search capabilities. A resource directory will have hot links to a wide variety of sites ranging from the home page for the National Science Foundation to sites that have 7th grade science projects. The Education Exchange has interactive capabilities whereby teachers, students, parents, administrators and community members can submit lesson plans and suggestions for other hot links or documents that could be useful like the regulations for RI certification. Users can discuss topics in an interactive forum. Currently, no other comprehensive clearinghouse for education-related opportunities and concerns exists for the general public.

Rhode Island Needs

V. Well-prepared, Well-supported Teachers

The teacher is education's first-line service-delivery provider. That which gets in the teachers' way, to a large extent gets in the child's way. The SALT survey provides school communities with a great deal of information about what might facilitate the progress of school improvement.

Time

Teachers report that the principal obstacle to reform is a chronic lack of time.

- When teachers were asked to choose from a large list of possible obstacles to implementing reform, they answered resoundingly: a lack of time. At least a third of the teachers reported as moderate or major problems: a lack of adequate team planning time, lack of time for implementation, lack of professional development time for staff, and difficulties in obtaining release time for planning and/or professional development. At least 25% more teachers identified these issues as a moderate problem in every instance.

Data Source: SALT Survey Teacher chart #29

Please Note: These findings refer to the state-level SALT Survey data which, along with all district and school data, can be found on the web at:

infoworks.ride.uri.edu

School committees will need to find creative ways to get more teacher time into the school day. They will need to work with teacher contracts to adjust schedules. Schools can reorganize the existing school day. Block scheduling, for example, reduces the time students spend passing between classes and frees it for other purposes. The practice of looping, or giving teachers two-year assignments, has been shown to make better use of the time over the summer and to eliminate the getting-to-know-you period in the fall. Creative scheduling of specialists can help to coordinate free time among core teachers for common planning time. Many RI schools do not use the after school time for school purposes at all.

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Teacher Preparation

Teacher preparation is not always adequate.

Please Note: These findings refer to the state-level SALT Survey data which, along with all district and school data, can be found on the web at:

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- Being certified in a certain area is one indicator of being prepared to teach in that subject. Happily, the vast majority of Rhode Island math teachers are certified in math. At the high school level, this number reaches 98%.

- Reading, however, appears to be different in that only 63% of our reading teachers are certified in reading. At the middle and high school levels, this percentage drops to approximately 55%. Secondary teachers tend to be certified in English which usually involves little formal preparation in how to teach and enhance reading skills, especially how to address these skills with middle and high school students. Outside of English language arts, very few secondary teachers have had any formal preparation in teaching reading skills.

Data Source: SALT Survey Teacher chart #3

Professional Development

Teachers do not feel there are adequate professional development opportunities in general, but especially lacking are opportunities that deal directly with teaching to state or national standards.

1997-98 Teacher Reports
of Additional Staff Development Activities Wanted/Needed

	Elementary	Middle	High
Teaching to National Standards	3rd	3rd	2nd
Reading Skill Development	8th	15th	21st
Integration of Mathematical Reasoning and Concepts	10th	20th	28th
Criterion Referenced Lesson Plan Development	23rd	27th	23rd

Data Source: SALT Survey Teacher charts #23 and #24

- With the intense changes in both the demands and practices of education itself and in the larger social context, the need for professional development has never seemed greater. RI teachers report that in many instances they do not feel prepared to meet the challenges. Clearly teachers – of all kinds – need help with learning techniques for teaching reading and most teachers need much more help with standards..

- Over 50% of all teachers identified as a moderate or major problem: the lack of training, inadequate professional development offerings and/or opportunities, and lack of professional development on state or national standards. Furthermore, professional development that supports teaching to standards is ranked 9th most frequent overall—just under once a year. Extended summer institutes are 11th.

Data Source: SALT Survey Teacher chart #29 and #22

Please Note: These findings refer to the state-level SALT Survey data which, along with all district and school data, can be found on the web at:

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By working through the Policy Consortium, a group which includes the teachers unions among other state-level leadership, RIDE is partnering with higher education to infuse teaching to standards in teacher education. The Policy Consortium and higher education must consider the needs that the teachers have expressed so clearly through the SALT survey. RIDE and the school communities must work together to make available some of the much-needed training.

The Center for School Leadership

RIDE is working with the Center for School Leadership (CSL), housed at Rhode Island College, as well as teachers unions and other partners to provide sustained professional development around teaching to standards. The CSL is a consortium of the RI Association of School Administrators, RI Association of School Principals, RI Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the RI Association of School Committees. A series of professional development activities are being offered this year to help teachers, administrators and communities understand the high standards RI has set for its children, and to develop curriculum, instructional strategies and support systems in line with these challenging standards.

Concluding Remarks from the Commissioner...

Dear Citizens of Rhode Island:

I want to share with you some of my reflections based on this report. I am sure some ideas occurred to you too as you read through this data-rich portrait of education in our state – especially as it relates to our youngest students. I hope you will share your ideas with your local school and community as well as communicating them to others and me at the state level. Public education can succeed in the face of its challenges if everyone does their part.

This report testifies that we have now reached a point in our educational system where information can be brought to bear on specific questions and issues – in this case, we considered what it would take to make all fourth graders proficient in the high standards set by the Regents. I think three steps are essential if we are going to achieve this ambitious goal:

1. **Take care of the multiple needs of our children that influence their ability to perform in school.**

Children are more than minds waiting to be educated. They are people with all the physical, emotional, and social needs that being human entails. We can no longer ignore these other factors and focus solely on intellectual development in school, particularly when so many of our children come to school hungry, emotionally stressed, and within larger systems of support that fail to adequately provide for their human needs. We must expand school breakfast programs so children can learn undistracted by hunger. Schools have to partner more effectively with other agencies that serve children. Each agency has to look beyond its individual agenda to forge new relationships that guarantee that children get the help they need when they need it. Quality afterschool programs involving community agencies and nonprofits have to be innovatively funded and physically located in ways that make them both accessible and affordable so that all children can benefit.

2. **Give teachers and students the opportunities they need to teach and learn to standards.**

The SALT Survey clearly underscores that both teachers and students need more, and sustained, opportunities to work and learn with Rhode Island's content and performance standards. School Committees, unions, and district leadership need to create and fund agreements that give teachers time to learn from one another and to focus on improving student learning results. Rhode Island's institutions of higher education, professional associations, unions, and regional collaboratives have to marshal fiscal and human resources in more effective ways to provide high quality, targeted help to teachers in the challenging instructional tasks that they face on a daily basis. Many organizations have already made strong efforts in this area, but this data tells us we must do more.

Students need more sustained time for learning to standards, too. Historically, students have been given the same amount of instructional time with some learning a lot and others learning little. We need a new way of thinking about learning where the standards are common to all but time, space, opportunity, and assistance is varied dependent on the needs of the individual child. This will require a major rethinking of how we plan and deliver educational services to students and where such learning occurs. Embedded learning within the context of "real" as opposed to "artificial" work must become the norm. Teachers, administrators, parents, and business will have to forge new relationships and understandings about applied learning in real-world environments. Above all, we must maintain the level of rigor that the Regents' standards embrace but recognize that we will never get all children there if we simply try to do more of what we currently do. We have to reinvent our educational systems to keep pace with the times in which we live and the challenges of the new millennium.

3. Focus first and foremost on reading

The importance of reading emerges as one clear message within this report. Children who cannot read and read well are doomed to academic failure or poor performance and bleak economic prospects. Students need to be strong readers to perform well not only on Rhode Island's state assessments but in all areas of the school curriculum. Reading is truly fundamental and a key that opens many doors.

With this in mind, Governor Lincoln Almond and I convened the Reading Excellence Taskforce. The taskforce recently completed its first task of articulating reading policy for the state. We also are working to reform teacher preparation programs so that all teachers will be able to help students read and read well. Ensuring that all of our students become readers and delight in expressing themselves clearly and fully in the English language as well as other languages, must become one of our major educational goals.

These are some of the major thoughts I have in light of this year's report. I invite your involvement in the dialogue and action of today's educational reforms. There is entirely too much at stake for anyone to remain on the sidelines. I hope you will use the data in this report and the voluminous information available on the Information Works! website (http://infoworks.ride.uri.edu) and its various publications to engage in informed local conversations about the meaning of the data and planning a way forward. We must persevere and overcome every obstacle to ensure that all Rhode Island children, not just some children, are literate and able to succeed in life and living in the twenty-first century.

Sincerely,

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

Information Works! has been a fascinating and complex undertaking. Its creators are making every effort to respond to Rhode Island's desire to improve education by providing access to detailed, responsible and vital information about schools and the students they serve. The inter-agency cooperation to accomplish this task has been impressive. Individual supporters and contributors are far too many to list here, but the RI Department of Education would like to thank its principal partner:

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