



Secondary School Regulations Reference Guide

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THE SECONDARY SCHOOL REGULATIONS: VISION AND RATIONALE

The Rhode Island 2020 Vision for Education defines an ideal Rhode Island graduate to be “one who is well prepared for postsecondary education, work, and life. He or she can think critically and collaboratively and can act as a creative, self-motivated, culturally competent learner and citizen.” The updated Secondary School Regulations, which go into effect in the 2017-2018 school year (for the graduating class of 2021 and beyond), are intended to encourage all schools to further develop a system of opportunity by which every student can reflect the vision of the ideal Rhode Island graduate. The following three ideas provide the basis for that intent.

Graduation by Proficiency

Personalization

Multiple Pathways

| Every student learns both broadly and deeply. | Every student is supported to own their learning. | Every student is engaged and exercises choice. |
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| <p><i>What:</i> Students should be exposed to and gain understanding of a broad base of content and critical subject areas, while also having an opportunity to practice deep learning - bringing together knowledge from multiple academic subject areas to gain a full appreciation of a specific topic of interest.</p> <p><i>Why:</i> By learning both broadly and deeply, students will be more fully prepared to succeed in whatever post-secondary choices they choose to pursue. Deep learning requires building mental connections between content areas – a skill that, when practiced, is transferable to all types of learning in future careers.</p> <p><i>How:</i> Students must demonstrate that they have learned both broadly and deeply to earn a diploma. Students must successfully complete at least 20 courses in a variety of subject areas aligned to rigorous standards, including ELA, math, science, and social studies. Students must also use information from their coursework and applied learning skills to complete a performance-based diploma assessment (i.e. a senior project, portfolio, exhibition, or other capstone product), which involves an in-depth study of a particular topic of interest to the student.</p> <p>Students may earn a Commissioner’s Seal, which recognizes their accomplishment on rigorous math and literacy exams.</p> | <p><i>What:</i> Schools, classrooms, and learning opportunities should be purposely designed to encourage students to think about how and what they are learning and to support students in taking academic risks that stretch their knowledge and skills. Students should be encouraged to try new things and to learn from their experiences with the mentorship of a caring adult.</p> <p><i>Why:</i> To prepare to be self-motivated learners and citizens, students must understand how they learn and how to push themselves to learn more, even when it seems difficult. Students need the support of adults to develop these skills, and secondary school is a critical time and space to practice them.</p> <p><i>How:</i> Each student must undergo the process of setting goals, creating an action plan to meet these goals, and discussing these action plans regularly with a caring adult as part of the school’s personalization strategies and Individual Learning Plan process. This process will offer opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and identify ways to stretch themselves beyond simply meeting requirements. Students who are falling behind will be identified and given additional academic and social emotional supports through the school’s Response to Intervention approach.</p> | <p><i>What:</i> All learning experiences should be facilitated in a way that allows students to find relevance and applicability to their own life, interests, and/ or previous knowledge. Students should have opportunity for choice in how, when, and in what ways they learn and demonstrate learning. Learning opportunities should be diverse, rigorous, and connected to the world outside the school.</p> <p><i>Why:</i> By ensuring learning is relevant, students are more likely to find joy in the learning process and want to continue to learn throughout their lives. Further, by learning how to make well-informed decisions in the secondary grades, students will be more adept at advocating for themselves as adult learners and citizens.</p> <p><i>How:</i> Students will have a variety of options to complete their coursework and diploma assessment requirements in a way that best supports their learning, which will be documented in the student’s Individual Learning Plan.</p> <p>Students will have an opportunity to pursue a Pathway Endorsement that will recognize that they have actively chosen a course of study and persisted in engaging with the content.</p> |

REGULATIONS REVISION PROCESS

Rhode Island's Board of Education adopted the state's most innovative and collaborative strategic plan yet, [2020 Vision for Education: RI's Strategic Plan for PK-12 & Adult Education, 2015-2020](#). In the spirit of adopting the values and tenets of this strategic plan, RIDE has aligned our Secondary School Regulations and high school graduation requirements to be even more supportive of RI's vision for successful graduates of our schools.

The revision process for the RI Secondary School Regulations was launched in December 2015. During the initial phase of the revision process, which took place between December 2015 and May 2016, RIDE conducted an iterative development process that provided multiple opportunities for input and engagement from key stakeholder groups and community members. During this process, RIDE established a series of feedback loops, whereby data generated from community members were analyzed and incorporated into subsequent revisions, and these new concepts were then shared for further community review. A further revised draft of Secondary School Regulations underwent a formal process for recording public comment which was open from July 2016 through September 15, 2016. Overall, twenty six meetings were held to discuss the regulations and gather feedback, hundreds of Rhode Islanders completed feedback surveys and participated in public comment, and the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education was involved at each successive stage of analysis and revision. The final draft of the revised Secondary School Regulations was presented to and accepted by the Council in October 2016.

PURPOSE OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL REGULATIONS REFERENCE GUIDE

The primary purpose of this reference guide is to provide clarification to educators, students, and families regarding the regulatory changes adopted in the 2016 Secondary School Regulations.

The guidance provided in this reference guide is one piece of a larger, ongoing effort by RIDE to provide schools and LEAs with support and technical assistance toward meeting the goals of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education-adopted regulations. It is intended to be used as a reference guide on particular topics addressed in the Secondary School Regulations and will be updated as more information is requested or becomes available.

This initial Reference Guide is not an exhaustive or all-purpose document. It does not include detailed information on:

- Recommended methods and approaches to implement the requirements;
- The relationship between and among different programmatic or regulatory initiatives ; or
- Descriptions of additional supports and technical assistance that RIDE plans to offer, or are available to schools and LEAs, for implementation of these regulations.

RIDE will provide additional information in separate documents or alternative formats, including frameworks for different structures and/or processes required by these regulations, as needed, to ensure full implementation.

The sections of the Reference Guide enclosed in text boxes represent language directly quoted from the regulations.

ACADEMIC SUPPORTS AND INTERVENTIONS

L-6-4.1 Supports for students

"[Local Education Agencies (LEAs)] shall be responsible for providing additional academic and instructional support and research-based interventions for all students not on track to meet the diploma requirements established by section L-6-3.1 and L-6-3.2 of these regulations. Students failing to reach the required level of proficiency as established locally and in accordance with these regulations shall be provided a support plan, including the types and duration of academic and educational supports and academic performance targets necessary for earning a diploma. Support plans shall be documented in the [Individual Learning Plan (ILP)] and may address academic weaknesses in course performance and/or performance-based diploma assessments. Other academic and instructional supports shall also be documented in the student's ILP."

Each LEA is required to monitor the progress of each student toward meeting grade-level expectations and provide academic interventions to students who are behind. The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) can be the primary place to document student progress on grade level expectations and to record information on interventions used. The ILP process can provide a meaningful opportunity for students to understand their own progress and learning needs. With appropriate supports, multiple opportunities, and ongoing progress monitoring, students are expected to be ready to demonstrate an LEA-defined level of proficiency in the six core content areas (English language arts, math, social studies, science, the arts, and technology) to be eligible to earn a diploma and to meet council designation requirements, if desired.

LEAs should have a framework in place to ensure that all students' academic, social emotional, and behavioral needs are supported. Hallmarks of effective academic support and intervention system frameworks include a team approach, universal screening, using data to make decisions, evidence-based practices, and progress monitoring. These systems should provide a tiered framework for supporting student success with a focus on a preventative model. Examples of existing frameworks for academic support and intervention in Rhode Island include: Response to Intervention (RtI), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS).

LEAs are responsible for establishing routines and protocols for reviewing school-wide data to determine the effectiveness of core instruction based on a guaranteed and viable curriculum (See [RI Basic Education Program G-13-1](#)) for all students. LEAs should also utilize focused intervention strategies for individual or small groups of students with similar needs to ensure all students are supported to meet the LEA-defined graduation by proficiency expectations. Appropriate and evidence-based student supports and relevant interventions should result in improved student outcomes.

ALTERNATE RECOGNITION/ CERTIFICATES

L-6-3.5. Alternate recognition of high school accomplishment.

"[Local Education Agencies (LEAs)] are authorized to recognize any student who has satisfactorily completed specific courses or other standards-based activities within the high school course of study, as defined by the LEA. Alternate recognition certificates shall not be considered a diploma. Alternate recognition certificates shall document academic achievement, technical skills, work readiness, and life skills of the student and may be included as part of a student's transition plan to post-secondary academic or work training programs."

Certificates for alternate recognition of high school accomplishment are an LEA-defined document that can be earned by any student who demonstrates academic and career skills that are measured against state-adopted or nationally-recognized standards. The certificates must include relevant documentation of student's skills for use in transferring to post-secondary education or employment. Awarding of a certificate signifies that a student has attained a measurable set of specific skills and must not merely reflect participation or attendance. Certificates are a powerful supplement to a diploma and can signal to business and institutes of higher education that a student has attained a recognized set of skills. Alternate recognition certificates may not be certificates of attendance, nor are they considered diplomas. Certificates must provide documentation of the awardee's academic achievement, technical skill, work readiness, and/or life skills.

Each LEA makes its own determination of whether the LEA will offer certificates for alternate recognition of high school accomplishment and what skills constitute earning a certificate. LEAs should establish clear policies regarding the issuing of certificates including (a) the areas in which certificates may be issued, (b) the level of knowledge and skills required in those areas in order to obtain a specific certificate, (c) the evidence necessary to certify that the student has met the required level of knowledge and skills, and (d) the procedures and policies for earning a certificate. This information must be communicated to students and families in a timely and effective manner.

LEAs may make more than one alternate recognition certificate available to students. Certificates should not be limited to particular populations of students, pathways, or programs of study, and should be attainable by any student who meets the pre-determined criteria. Students can earn certificates prior to earning their diploma. However, certificates are not equivalent to or a substitute for a diploma and do not signify graduation from high school.

Additional Resources:

[Student certificate options](#)

ASSESSING LITERACY AND NUMERACY PROFICIENCY

L-6-2.1 Assessing literacy and numeracy proficiency levels of secondary students.

"(a) Each [Local Education Agency (LEA)] in Rhode Island shall evaluate the literacy and numeracy levels of all secondary students. All LEAs shall develop a screening/review process that utilizes state and local assessments to identify students in need of additional diagnostic assessments and instructional support.

(b) LEAs shall diagnostically assess all secondary students who have been identified through the screening process described herein as performing below grade level to determine and assign appropriate instructional strategies and interventions. The LEAs shall be responsible for costs associated with test procurement, administration, and interpretation. The Commissioner may authorize the use of suitable state or federal funds for such purposes."

Each LEA in Rhode Island shall evaluate the literacy and numeracy levels of all secondary students. LEAs are responsible for utilizing screening and diagnostic processes to identify students who are not yet performing at grade level in literacy and mathematics.

All LEAs shall develop a screening/review process that includes all students and utilizes state and locally-determined assessments to identify students in need of additional diagnostic assessments and instructional support. This process should include multiple data points, with at least one assessment having demonstrated validity and reliability.

LEAs may use the state literacy and mathematics assessment as part of an initial screening process to determine if further diagnostic assessment is needed. Students not achieving at the proficiency level determined on the state assessment are considered to be reading below grade level. Students who do not have state assessment scores must be assessed using another screening instrument. Additional screening and diagnostic assessments beyond the state assessment should be determined locally.

Students who are within a designated risk category should undergo a diagnostic process to determine the severity of performance discrepancy with additional targeted assessment tools. With the additional assessment results, the school can acquire more detailed information about student needs, validate the screening results, and determine the specific literacy and/or math interventions or supports needed.

A tiered intervention framework such as MTSS, PBIS, or RTI, will help organize interventions for struggling students.

Costs of assessments.

The LEAs are responsible for costs associated with test procurement, administration, and interpretation. The Commissioner may authorize the use of suitable state or federal funds to supplement the cost of assessments and will notify LEAs if these funds should become available.

Documentation of intervention and assessment results.

The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) can be the primary place to document student progress on screening and diagnostic assessments in literacy and numeracy and to record information on interventions that are being used to help students meet grade level expectations. The ILP is a planning and monitoring tool that personalizes and directs students' goals and development in three domains: academic, career, and personal/social.

RI General Law 16-7.1-2 (c) requires LEAs to develop personal literacy programs (PLP) for all students in grades K-5 who are at risk for reading failure. Beginning in Grade 6, students are required to have an ILP. Therefore, in an effort to streamline the documentation of student learning, LEAs may choose to integrate their students PLP documentation within their ILPs.

IEPs, 504 plans, transition plans, and English learner services often cover literacy and numeracy skill development as well, and must coordinate with the ILP, where appropriate.

Parental notification.

LEAs decide how and when to share local assessment administration information and the corresponding results, including but not limited to numeracy and literacy screening performance, with all families. In the event that a student is in jeopardy of not earning a diploma, the LEA must maintain a record of multiple and timely individual notices to the student and his/her family. All communications must be provided in a format accessible to families and students. LEAs should guide families in how to support their children at home.

Special populations.

Student proficiency in literacy and math is a graduation expectation for all students. As with every student, students with special circumstances should be given access to appropriate supports and multiple opportunities to meet these expectations, including English Learners, students with IEPs, and transient populations.

Additional resources:

[Rhode Island Comprehensive Literacy Plan Personal Literacy Plan Guidelines](#), 2013

COUNCIL DESIGNATIONS

L-6-3.4. Council designations

“Commencing with the graduating class of 2021, [Local Education Agencies (LEAs)] shall include a designation notation on permanent high school transcripts and on the diplomas of all students who meet Council-defined criteria. The Council shall (1) determine designations available statewide, and (2) determine the level of achievement necessary for a Council Designation. Designations approved by the Council shall include, but not be limited to documentation of student achievement of a statewide literacy and numeracy standard and documentation of student completion of a course of study consistent with a personal learning goal. LEAs shall provide students with multiple opportunities and appropriate supports to meet designation requirements. LEAs are authorized to award additional locally-developed designations.”

The Council Designations serve as a means to personalize the diploma. Each Council Designation externally validates achievements of high school students to allow for public recognition of specific skills and to incentivize students to take advantage of flexible and personalized high school learning experiences.

The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education determines which designations are available statewide and the level of achievement necessary to earn each designation. LEAs will confer designations upon successful completion of statewide criteria.

The Council Designations currently under consideration for students to earn, beginning with the Class of 2021, are a) the Commissioner’s Seal, b) Pathway Endorsements, and c) Seal of Bi-literacy. Information about the availability and requirements of each designation will be provided upon Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approval in winter 2017.

LEAs are authorized to create and award LEA-defined designations, in addition to state-defined designations. Earned designations must be noted on student transcripts and diplomas. LEAs are required to provide students with multiple opportunities and appropriate supports to meet designation requirements. LEAs should provide information to students about current opportunities to earn available designations. LEAs are required to notify students and their families of designation requirements no later than October 1 of their 9th grade year, or at time of enrollment into the LEA.

COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS

L-6-3.1. Coursework requirements.

“(a) [Local Education Agencies (LEAs)] shall formally adopt coursework graduation requirements that: (1) apply to all students within the LEA; and, (2) require successful completion of at least twenty courses. The twenty courses must include demonstration of proficiency, as defined by the LEA and aligned with appropriate high school content standards, in the six core content areas: English language arts, math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology. All courses shall be aligned to state adopted high school standards, or locally adopted national standards in those content areas for which there are no state standards. All courses must be of scope and rigor sufficient to allow students to achieve high school level proficiency, as determined by the LEA. Successful completion of a course shall include demonstration of the knowledge, skill, and competencies outlined in the course learning objectives.

Students who achieve modified proficiency standards applied to coursework requirements for students determined to be eligible for the alternate assessment under federal law, state rules and regulations, and as noted in the student’s IEP, may, at LEA discretion, be awarded a diploma for graduation purposes.

(b) The twenty courses must include the following content-area courses: four courses of English Language Arts, four courses of mathematics, three courses of science, and three courses of history/social studies. The additional six required courses are presumed to include, but not limited to, world languages, the arts, technology, physical education and health, pursuant to LEA policies and applicable state law. Designation as a content-area course, e.g. “mathematics” or “science,” shall be an LEA decision based upon alignment to relevant state adopted standards or, in those content areas not defined by state-adopted standards, other recognized content standards.

LEAs may integrate multiple core or other content areas and associated learning standards into a single course for the purpose of meeting coursework requirements.

(c) The selection and scheduling of courses shall be consistent with the needs of the individual student and, to the maximum degree possible, the student’s individual learning plan (ILP). LEA graduation requirements must satisfy all curricular requirements set forth in General Laws and applicable Council on Elementary and Secondary Education regulations.

(d) Students can meet the requirements set forth in this section, inclusive of the fourteen content-area course requirements, through courses within state-approved career and technical programs, expanded learning opportunities, dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, on-line learning, experiential learning opportunities, and other non-traditional academic and career-readiness learning experiences. Recognition of these learning opportunities as fulfilling the coursework graduation requirements in this section is a local decision and shall be predicated on alignment to state adopted content-area standards and/or other relevant national and/or industry standards. Course catalogs should clearly indicate courses that can fulfill content-area course requirements.”

LEAs are responsible for establishing graduation policies and coursework graduation requirements within the parameters set forth in the Secondary School Regulations and all specific statutory curricular requirements otherwise set forth in RI General Law.

The attainment of proficiency in the core content areas is a critical graduation requirement for all students, and should be demonstrated through the student’s collective coursework experience. LEAs must align their coursework with the state and locally adopted content standards in order to support

this requirement. The coursework requirements ensure that all students receive appropriate and sufficient opportunities to meet the academic, career, and personal/social goals identified in their Individual Learning Plan (ILP) throughout their high school career.

Coursework aligned to student academic and career goals.

Many students may meet the minimum proficiency requirements for graduation in the core content areas well before the end of the twelfth grade. LEAs are responsible for ensuring that these students have access to additional opportunities to further their level of proficiency and to help them meet their postsecondary academic and career goals. Student course choices in the core academic areas and other areas (e.g., world languages, social sciences, business, career preparation) should be consistent with the goals of the student's ILP. LEAs should provide access to the coursework that will support students' postsecondary goals, including those courses and content areas that are often required by colleges, universities, business, industry, and the military.

Demonstrating proficiency through coursework.

The six core content areas are ELA, math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology. Students must demonstrate proficiency in all six areas through their coursework. Students are required to successfully complete 4 courses of ELA, 4 of math, 3 of science, and 3 of history/social studies that align with appropriate high school content standards. Proficiency is demonstrated throughout the graduation requirements and is not specific to a particular class. The Secondary School Regulations do not require students to specifically take an art or technology course; art and technology proficiency can be demonstrated through other courses. For example, an LEA could incorporate technology standards into science or math coursework.

Flexible definition of a course.

The Secondary School Regulations allow LEAs to examine non-traditional learning opportunities for the purpose of fulfilling the general coursework and content area course requirements. These regulations intend to expand the opportunities for students to meet coursework and proficiency-based requirements for graduation through a variety of contexts and applications of learning. Students can complete coursework requirements through experiential learning opportunities, Advanced Placement courses, dual enrollment, CTE courses, or other applied contexts. Internships, apprenticeships, and other work- or career-related experiences may be considered as credit-bearing courses and used to meet diploma requirements, contingent on their alignment with state adopted high school standards and clear assessments to determine proficiency. On-line or blended learning opportunities may be considered as credit-bearing coursework to ensure greater access to accelerated content or application in the core content areas.

LEAs retain the authority to determine whether nontraditional learning experiences meet the breadth, rigor, and depth of disciplinary or content standards to satisfy local coursework requirements. However, LEAs should establish a protocol for determining the possibility of course credit for non-traditional-learning opportunities based on each particular opportunity and may not establish policies that exclude all non-traditional learning opportunities as a means for fulfilling the coursework graduation requirements.

Modified proficiency standards.

Students who qualify for the alternate assessment may be eligible for a diploma by demonstrating modified proficiency expectations on state adopted standards through their coursework. The number and types of courses required for a diploma are the same for all students. LEAs may choose to award

diplomas to students who qualify for the alternate assessment, if the student meets requirements as stated above. LEAs also have the authority to award a certificate of alternate recognition of high school accomplishment, in accordance with LEA-defined policies and the criteria noted in the Alternate Recognition/ Certificates section of this Reference Guide. LEAs are responsible for establishing a clear policy regarding diploma eligibility for students qualifying for alternate assessment and who demonstrate the expected level of proficiency on the standards.

Student learning opportunity requirements.

The Basic Education Program (BEP) requires each LEA to ensure students are provided with a comprehensive program of study that is guaranteed and viable in each content area so that students are prepared for post-secondary education and/or productive employment. The comprehensive program of study shall include access to courses in English Language Arts; mathematics; social studies; the sciences; visual arts and design and the performing arts; engineering and technology; comprehensive health; and world languages. The statewide minimum diploma eligibility requirements include successful completion of 20 courses, inclusive of 4 ELA courses, 4 math, 3 science, and 3 history/social studies. LEAs may require any additional courses as local graduation requirements for diploma eligibility.

Rhode Island state law R.I.G.L 16-22-4 requires students to participate in an average of 100 minutes per week in physical education (P.E.) and health instruction aligned with state adopted physical education and health standards. Successful completion of P.E. and health courses are not included in the state coursework graduation requirements, but may be required by the LEA as a local graduation requirement.

DIPLOMA LOGISTICS

L-6-3.3. Appeals process for graduation decisions.

“Students and families shall have the right to appeal graduation decisions through locally managed appeals policies and processes. Locally managed appeals processes shall consider all valid sources of evidence that demonstrate and document student proficiency at a level commensurate with the requirements set forth in these regulations. [Local Education Agencies (LEAs)] shall maintain documentation on locally managed appeals criteria, processes, and outcomes.”

Appeals process for graduation decisions.

The Secondary School Regulations maintain the LEA’s responsibility for certifying individual students’ eligibility for receiving a high school diploma. Accordingly, the first appeal of a graduation decision by students and families should be made to the LEA. LEAs are responsible for communicating the local appeals process to students and families. Consistent with past practice and policy, nothing in the revised regulations overrides current policies and procedures enabling individual students to appeal local graduation decisions to the Commissioner. An appeal to the LEA may address any aspect of the state graduation requirements or local graduation requirements that affected the graduation decision. If an appeal is not successful at the local level, appeals may be brought to the Commissioner.

Appeals shall not be viewed as a means of removing or reducing the proficiency-based requirements for graduation. Appeals should include additional or alternative evidence that documents and demonstrates that the student possesses a level of proficiency that meets or exceeds the minimum level of proficiency required for graduation by the LEA.

L-6-3.6. Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approved diploma system.

“The Commissioner reserves the right to establish protocols and criteria for reviewing LEA diploma systems to ensure that they are in compliance with all elements of these regulations. The LEA is responsible for maintaining all records that demonstrate compliance with these regulations. The Commissioner shall develop a progressive system of monitoring and accountability to ensure LEA implementation and compliance with these regulations.”

Approved diploma systems.

LEAs are required to maintain documentation of their local diploma requirements, communication of those requirements to students and families, and any relevant policies and procedures to ensure students are supported to meet those requirements. RIDE will develop a protocol to review local diploma systems to ensure compliance with these regulations. Information about review process and protocol will be disseminated to LEAs when it becomes available.

EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

L-6-4.1 Supports for students

“[Local Education Agencies (LEAs)] shall utilize a research-based early warning system to identify students at risk for academic failure and dropout. Identification of students at risk shall occur no later than the sixth grade year (or at the time of enrollment for students enrolling into the LEA after the sixth grade year). LEAs shall communicate regularly with the families of students identified through the early warning system, including providing them with information about the support provided to and progress being made by the student, as described in section L-6-3.7(c) of these regulations.”

LEAs must implement a process for collecting and analyzing student performance and behavior data that helps identify students who are falling off track for graduating on time and who are at risk of dropping out of secondary school. The early warning system (EWS) indicators used should be recognized in research for their effectiveness and look at schoolwide, as well as individual student, indicators. LEAs are responsible for monitoring and analyzing these indicators for students no later than entry into sixth grade and must continue to do so as students progress through grade 12. As students are identified as falling off track, appropriate small group and/or individual supports and interventions must be provided (see Academic Supports and Interventions Section of this reference guide). Families and students must be made aware when a student is off track to graduation and support plans and progress should be communicated frequently.

LEAs should include relevant, available information about a student’s previous academic experiences to populate the early warning system at the time the student enters the LEA. A statewide early warning indicator system is available through RIDEmap, which supports educators in monitoring student-performance and behavior data on a regular basis.

Communicating EWS information.

Teachers, counselors, and advisors will likely be the primary communicators of information learned from the early warning system. To enable their success, they should be aware of all supports available to students provided by the school, the LEA, the state and other partners in the student’s education.

Additional Resources:

National High School Center [EWS Model](#)

GRADUATION BY PROFICIENCY

L-6-2.0 ENSURING GRADE LEVEL LITERACY AND NUMERACY FOR ALL SECONDARY RHODE ISLAND STUDENTS.

“Each local education agency (LEA) shall ensure that all of its secondary students are proficient in literacy and numeracy. LEAs shall ensure student proficiency by providing access to a guaranteed and viable curriculum, monitoring each student’s progress toward proficiency in literacy and numeracy, and providing sufficient academic, career, and personal/social supports to ensure that all secondary students become proficient.”

L-6-3.0 RHODE ISLAND DIPLOMA SYSTEM.

“Diploma eligibility shall be derived from a conjunctive review of two sources of evidence: (1) successful course completion in conformance with Section L-6-3.1; and (2) successful completion of at least one performance-based diploma assessment as described in section L-6-3.2. In order to be eligible for a diploma, students must meet state and local requirements in these two areas.”

To earn a diploma from a Rhode Island high school, each student will have to meet the minimum requirements established in each of the areas specified in the regulations:

1. Successful completion of state and local course requirements; *and*
2. Successful completion of one performance-based diploma assessment.

Through these requirements, students who graduate from Rhode Island high schools must ultimately demonstrate proficiency in the six core content areas of mathematics, English language arts, science, the arts, social studies, and technology.

These two areas are non-compensatory - meaning that low performance in one cannot be offset automatically by high performance in the other area. Although performance across both areas is related, each contributes unique and important information for determining a student’s overall proficiency and their eligibility to earn a high school diploma.

Successful completion of courses aligned to rigorous, high quality state and local content standards are the core indicator of student proficiency in each of the six core content areas. Successful completion of performance-based diploma assessments, including presentation of a student’s portfolio or exhibition work, provides evidence that the student is able to successfully integrate core content knowledge and applied learning skills.

Although both the coursework and performance based diploma assessment requirements must be met, curriculum and instruction should not focus on each of the requirements separately or in isolation. Curriculum and instruction aligned with state and local standards that integrate applied learning skills in coursework across all academic areas will prepare students to meet each of these requirements.

Defining proficiency.

Proficiency is defined as a measure of a student’s knowledge and skill in each of the core content areas that are demonstrated in various settings over time. The specific knowledge and skills are defined by state adopted standards, other content standards, and/or career readiness and life skills.

The level of proficiency in the six core content areas for graduation purposes is determined locally, not by a particular assessment.

For the purposes of graduation, proficiency is not based on a particular test but rather demonstrated through successful completion of coursework and the performance based diploma assessment (senior project, portfolio, capstone product, or exhibition). LEAs may choose to add a proficiency benchmark on any standardized assessment as part of their graduation requirements, beginning with the graduation class of 2017.

LEAs are able to set the benchmarks and levels of proficiency a student must demonstrate to be eligible to earn a diploma. While LEA benchmarks may differ, they must all be aligned to high school level standards. RIDE is currently working to provide an exemplar of a set of graduation proficiencies that an LEA may choose to adopt.

The state level graduation requirements do not require proficiency in areas outside the six core content areas. However, LEAs may require additional proficiency requirements in other content areas aligned to appropriate standards as part of their local requirements.

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLAN (ILP)

L-6-4.3 Individual Learning Plan.

“(a) [Local Education Agencies (LEAs)] are responsible for developing a student ILP process beginning no later than the sixth grade to help students identify and meet their academic, career, and personal/social goals. The ILP shall document the student’s academic and applied learning interests and learning supports that culminate in graduation, council designations, and preparation for post-secondary success. The ILP shall document additional educational opportunities to help students reach their goals.

(b) The ILP process shall provide regular and ongoing opportunities for students to review and revisit their goals with the guidance of responsible adults, including parents or legal guardians. In order to ensure the use of the ILP in coordinating appropriate supports, access to courses, and additional learning opportunities necessary to support students in meeting their goals, ILP reviews must occur not less than twice in each school year and during key transition periods including middle to high school and high school to post-secondary placement. LEAs shall maintain documentation of the effectiveness of their ILP process.”

The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is a student directed planning and monitoring tool that customizes learning opportunities throughout the secondary school experience, broadens their perspectives, and supports attainment of goals. The ILP documents students’ interests, needs, supports, course selections (including access to college-level programming), transition placements, and other learning experiences both in- and out-of-school. This information produces a thoughtful program of study leading to proficiency for graduation and post-secondary experiences. As a working document, the ILP is at the center of a personalized education program. The ILP is more than a repository of information about a student; it is a dynamic student-driven tool that maps academic plans; reflects each student’s unique set of interests, needs, learning goals, and graduation requirements; and documents the supports needed to reach those learning goals.

The ILP will be used to help students plan for and choose appropriate coursework for their learning goals and needs, and to identify supports and learning opportunities - such as dual enrollment, online learning, alternative pathways, career and technical education, transition placements, or employment training - to help students reach their goals. The ILP is a vehicle for coordinating student supports such as an Individual Educational Program (IEP), personal literacy plan (PLP), section 504 Plan, Response to Intervention (RtI) plan, English Learner plan, as well as other supports and services a student may require, as appropriate and necessary. LEAs are encouraged to streamline the documentation and monitoring process and avoid compartmentalizing students' holistic education plan by maintaining separate and isolated records of different aspects of student progress. While the ILP does not replace the need for Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and 504s, as required by federal regulations, efforts towards consolidation and alignment, as permissible by federal law, are encouraged.

In 2008, RIDE published a framework for the ILP that provides detailed information and models for implementation of an LEA's ILP process. Updated guidance will be available in spring 2017.

ILP process.

LEAs are responsible for developing a process for students to initiate an ILP, beginning no later than the student's entry into the sixth grade. The role of counselors, teachers, and other staff who work with students is to guide, facilitate, and support in the process of developing their ILPs, and to ensure students are re-visiting their ILP at key points throughout the school year. Parents/guardians, as well as city and community-based partners who work with students during in-school or after-school programs, are encouraged to help guide, facilitate, and support students' use and development of their ILPs.

ILP use and frequency of review.

In order to ensure the use of the ILP in coordinating the appropriate academic and social emotional supports, course selections, and additional learning opportunities necessary to support students in meeting their goals, the ILP must be revisited with every student, under the guidance of a responsible adult in the school, no less than twice per year in grades 6-12.

Additionally, ILPs should be used to support key transition periods, including middle school to high school and high school to postsecondary college or career placement, and transfer across schools and LEAs. To ensure effective transitions, ILPs should document individual student circumstances that affect their education plan, including, but not limited to, transience, involvement with the juvenile justice or foster care system, home languages other than English, or involvement in pertinent activities outside of the school, as appropriate.

ILP and family notification.

LEAs should have a policy and procedures in place for families to access, review, and discuss their student's ILP, when desired or necessary. LEAs are required to inform families about this policy and procedure annually. Schools should make every effort to include families in discussions of student progress and goals.

ILP applicability.

The requirements set forth in this section shall apply equally to students enrolled in state-approved career and technical programs, transitional or alternative education programs, or other self-contained educational environments. The ILP process must continue when a student is enrolled in a program housed outside of a central, comprehensive high school. The LEA should have a policy in place to ensure

that the student's ILP continues to be monitored, evaluated, and adjusted, particularly when the student enrolls in a different school, LEA, or educational program.

Additional resources:

[American School Counselor Association \(ASCA\) National Standards for Students Individual Learning Plan Framework, 2010](#)

IMPROVING LITERACY AND NUMERACY

L-6-2.2 Improving literacy and numeracy for secondary students performing below grade level.

“(a) Each [Local Education Agency (LEA)] shall initiate interventions for every student functioning below levels of expected performance for their grade based on the assessments required under section L-6-2.1 of these regulations. Any student who continues to fall below grade level and/or fails to attain proficiency in literacy or numeracy in subsequent years shall continue to receive specialized intervention and supports.

(b) Ensuring grade level literacy and numeracy is the responsibility of each LEA, and shall include instruction and the provision of school-wide, targeted and intensive supports. Intervention and support for students performing one or more years below grade level shall be documented within the student's Individualized Learning Plan (ILP).

(c) Each LEA shall ensure that all students who are not demonstrating proficiency as measured by state-adopted math and literacy standards will attain and maintain performance that allows them to engage in grade appropriate curriculum. LEAs shall have mechanisms in place that: (1) identify and support students who are not making progress in literacy and mathematics as measured by local and state assessment data; and, (2) provide universal student access to a guaranteed and viable curriculum aligned to state adopted standards. LEAs shall have mechanisms in place that ensure that all grade levels work collaboratively to transition students between schools within and across LEAs.

(d) All LEAs shall maintain documentation of the effectiveness of specific literacy and mathematics strategies and programs that have been implemented.”

Literacy.

Students reading one or two years below grade level must receive targeted interventions. Students who have substantial reading difficulties (reading more than two years below grade level) should receive intensive literacy instruction from a reading specialist or other qualified educator. Students' targeted interventions or intensive literacy instruction must be documented and include the development, implementation, and progress monitoring of a Personal Literacy Plan (PLP), which can be within the ILP.

Numeracy.

Students who have substantial numeracy deficits should receive targeted instruction from a mathematics specialist or other qualified educator. Instruction must be systematic and explicit, making use of appropriate alternative representations to develop and clarify mathematical concepts and thinking. A progress monitoring process must be utilized that is well defined and directly tied to the state-adopted content standards and students' individual needs. Students' targeted interventions or intensive mathematics instruction must be documented in the ILP.

Additional Resources:

[Personal Literacy Plan Guidelines](#)
[Rhode Island Comprehensive Literacy Plan](#)

INSTRUCTIONAL MINUTES

The Secondary School Regulations are intentionally proficiency-based and, as such, do not require alignment with seat time (e.g. Carnegie units). There are no seat time requirements for successful completion of coursework graduation requirements.

Under RI State Law R.I.G.L. 16-2-2, LEAs are required to provide no less than 330 minutes of instruction time per school day and maintain at least 180 school days annually.

According to RI state law R.I.G.L. 16-22-4, students must complete an average of 100 minutes per week of physical education and health instruction.

Due to the proficiency-based graduation requirements, LEAs have the flexibility to allow students to complete high school graduation requirements and obtain a diploma in fewer than or more than four years. LEAs are encouraged to discuss and plan with families and students if meeting graduation requirements and demonstrating proficiency in the six core content areas will likely take more or less than four years. According RI State Law R.I.G.L. 16-19-1, students are required to attend school until age 18 or until graduation requirements have been met, whichever comes first. Students with IEPs are entitled by federal law to remain in school until the age of 21.

MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET REQUIREMENTS

L-6-3.0 RHODE ISLAND DIPLOMA SYSTEM.

"[Local Education Agencies (LEAs)] shall provide students with multiple opportunities and appropriate supports to meet local graduation requirements adopted in compliance with these regulations and to prepare for post-secondary academic and career goals."

The Secondary School Regulations require LEAs to create multiple opportunities and supports for all students to meet all graduation requirements. To the degree possible, those supports should be flexible and personalized in nature for all students. In order for students to successfully complete all graduation requirements, it is essential that LEAs provide sufficient learning opportunities and supports for all students within and among course options. All opportunities should be mapped to specific learning objectives and/or content standards thereby ensuring equity of outcomes regardless of activity. Any opportunities to meet graduation requirements that have time constraints or considerations should be clearly identified.

Learning opportunities should be diverse, rigorous, and connected to the world outside the school. All learning experiences should be facilitated in a way that allows students to find relevance and applicability to their own life, interests, and/ or previous knowledge. Students should have opportunity for choice in how, when, and in what ways they learn and demonstrate learning.

At a minimum, schools should provide information on all graduation requirements, including multiple opportunities to meet and complete requirements, in their student handbooks, and other publically available documents or locations, such as their school website.

NOTIFICATIONS

L-6-3.7. Local educational agency (LEA) notification to students, families, and community members of the requirements for graduation.

“(a) LEAs shall provide full and effective notice of the state and local graduation requirements to administrators, teachers, students, families, and members of the community. Full and effective notice of the requirements for graduation and Council designations must be provided to students and their families no later than October 1 in the year in which said students enter the ninth grade (or at the time of enrollment into the LEA), after which the local and state diploma system requirements shall not be altered for the affected class. LEAs shall provide notice of the requirements to students enrolled by the LEA in non-public schools or programs and to students attending school in juvenile correction programs.

(b) LEAs shall provide notification annually of the process by which parents/guardians can access their child’s individual learning plan, including information regarding their child’s progress toward graduation and Council designation requirements.

(c) In the event that a student is in jeopardy of not earning a diploma, the LEA must maintain a record of multiple and timely individual notices to the student and his/her family that include: (1) clear notification of the student’s academic status; and (2) the opportunity to meet and discuss the student’s academic program, support, and planned interventions; and (3) regular updates of student performance and progress. All such communications must be provided in a format accessible to families and students. LEA failure to provide student and family notifications in the manner set forth in these regulations may be addressed through locally managed appeals processes but shall not be presumed to result in the awarding of a diploma.”

Timely and effective communication.

Active participation in the student’s education by the student, family, and educators, including the design and ongoing management of the student’s ILP, requires timely and effective communication of all policies related to graduation requirements. No later than October 1st of the students ninth grade year, all parties involved in the student’s education should be aware of the proficiency-based graduation requirements. The student’s ILP should indicate the learning opportunities that best support him or her in meeting graduation requirements and in meeting their postsecondary academic, career and personal/social goals.

LEAs and schools are responsible for providing regular communication to families and students regarding student academic progress, and the supports available and provided to students, to help them meet graduation requirements and reach their academic, career and personal/social goals.

The system by which LEAs communicate this information will be a local decision that should be shared with students through the program of study. To the extent that an LEA is comprised of significant non-English speaking populations, the LEA will publish notifications in those respective languages.

L-6-4.4. Professional development.

“All certified educators in middle level and high schools shall participate in at least fifteen (15) hours of ongoing professional development annually, focused on the priority areas of literacy and numeracy throughout the curriculum, graduation by proficiency, and personalization. Professional development shall be informed by student achievement data and guided by best practice in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.”

L-6-4.5. Common planning time.

“Common planning time shall be used by teams of teachers, administrators, and other educators for the substantive planning of instruction, looking at student achievement data, addressing student needs, and group or embedded professional development. Common planning time must provide for at least one hour per week at the high school level and at least two hours per week at the middle level, focused on the priority areas of vertical articulation, literacy, numeracy, graduation by proficiency, and personalization.

This common planning time must be in addition to individual faculty planning time and locally determined professional development requirements. As established in Section G-4-11 of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Regulations Governing the School Calendar and School Day, common planning time does not qualify as “instructional time” for the purposes of compliance with the required length of the school day.”

Schools should devote professional development and/or common planning time for appropriate teacher-focused instruction on providing multiple opportunities to all students within and among course options.

Both common planning time and professional development should lead to stronger instructional practices and student outcomes. Means of assessing the effectiveness of professional development and common planning time are determined at the local level.

Professional development.

The Secondary School Regulations require all middle and high school educators (including teachers in all content areas and student support professionals) to take part in professional development opportunities focused on the priority areas of literacy and numeracy throughout the curriculum, graduation by proficiency, and personalization. Both scheduled group and embedded professional development opportunities must be aligned to school-wide and/or individual needs identified through available student data. Specific content and delivery mechanisms are determined at the local level. Group professional development should not be regularly scheduled into designated common planning time.

All educators must participate in at least 15 hours of professional development annually (separately and distinctly from designated common planning time). LEA leadership and educators should work together to create a plan for each educator to meet the minimum requirement, if scheduled time is missed. LEAs may choose to spend “back-to-school” orientation time on professional development provided it follows the guidelines in the regulations.

Common planning time.

Middle and high school educators must be allotted weekly time in their schedules for planning activities with other educators. Common planning time activities should be focused on the priority areas of vertical articulation of grade level and school transition expectations, literacy, numeracy, graduation by

proficiency, and personalization. Common planning time should provide opportunities for educators to work in discipline and interdisciplinary groups to ensure consistency of expectations across the grades, content areas, and schools; to discuss effective means to support students; and to ensure that students are meeting expectations. Expectations for missed common planning time are at the discretion of the LEA.

PERFORMANCE BASED DIPLOMA ASSESSMENTS

L-6-3.2. Performance-based diploma assessments.

“Students shall successfully complete at least one performance-based diploma assessment. Successful completion of performance-based diploma assessments shall include demonstrations of both applied learning skills and proficiency in one or more content areas. All performance-based diploma assessments shall be evaluated utilizing an [Local Education Agency]-defined scoring criteria aligned with high school level state-adopted content standards and applied learning standards and/or other relevant nationally-recognized content standards.”

A performance based diploma assessment is a multifaceted assignment that serves as a culminating demonstration of a student’s applied learning skills and knowledge of one or more content areas.

Successful completion of performance-based diploma assessments shall include demonstrations of both applied learning skills and proficiency in one or more content areas. The specific content area(s) is a local decision often made by the student and directed by student interest. The content area(s) explored through this assessment need not be a core content area. To the maximum degree possible, the topic of the performance-based diploma assessment will be chosen with input from the student and will be related to the academic, career, and personal/social goals as reflected in the student’s ILP.

Updated guidance will be available in spring 2017 that provides detailed information and models for implementation of performance-based diploma assessment processes.

Applied learning skills.

The performance-based diploma assessment requirement focuses attention on the integration of content knowledge and applied learning skills. The comprehensive applied learning skills of communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, research, reflection/evaluation, and collaboration are a central component of the state-adopted content standards; and proficiency in these skills is a critical component of college and career readiness. The applied learning skills have been embedded in the state-adopted content standards, either explicitly, as with reading and writing (i.e., English language arts), or more implicitly in mathematics or science. Evidence of student proficiency in each of these areas must include demonstrations of appropriate applied learning skills.

Each student’s ILP should reflect how the applied learning skills will be developed and exhibited over the course of the student’s middle-level and high-school experience. A student’s ILP should include opportunities and supports that allow for the student to develop and demonstrate applied learning skills in an area of specialized interest of the student’s choosing related to his or her academic, career, and personal/social goals.

PERSONALIZATION STRATEGIES

L-6-4.2. Requirement for personalized learning environments.

“All middle level schools and high schools shall implement strategies for creating personalized learning environments, including the provision of a structure by which every student is assigned a responsible adult, in addition to a school counselor, who is knowledgeable about that student’s academic, career, and social/personal goals. These personalization strategies must ensure a collective responsibility for individual students. Structures for personalization at the middle level shall be an integral component of the student program in each [Local Education Agency], inclusive of but not limited to advisory structures. LEAs shall maintain documentation of the effectiveness of such personalization strategies.”

The Secondary School Regulations are predicated on a system of personalized instruction for every student. Personalized learning should permeate every aspect of the schooling experience. Each school, classroom, and learning opportunity should be purposely designed to encourage students to think about how and what they are learning, what they aspire to, and what it will take to accomplish it. Students should also be supported to take academic risks to stretch their knowledge and skills through choices within the system, opportunities within the curriculum, and individual reflection exercises.

School personalization strategies must be part of each middle and high school’s program of study for all students, and may include, but are not limited to advisory structures, comprehensive guidance programs, formal mentoring opportunities, and guided planning and career exploration programming. The performance-based diploma assessment is another opportunity for students to produce a culminating project that reflects their own learning throughout their high school experience, as well as their own interests and skills. Through the Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) process, each student must undergo a process of setting personal academic, social, and post-secondary goals and discuss action plans around those goals with a caring adult in the school.

The Rhode Island diploma system, including the diploma and the Council Designations, aims to recognize students for taking advantage of personalization opportunities to strive to meet their own goals, rather than to simply meet minimum requirements in the school.

USE OF STATE ASSESSMENT

L-6-3.0 RHODE ISLAND DIPLOMA SYSTEM.

“Diploma eligibility shall be derived from a conjunctive review of two sources of evidence: (1) successful course completion in conformance with Section L-6-3.1; and (2) successful completion of at least one performance-based diploma assessment as described in section L-6-3.2. In order to be eligible for a diploma, students must meet state and local requirements in these two areas.

No earlier than the class of 2017, [Local Education Agencies] may choose to include the state assessment or other standardized assessment as a graduation requirement in addition to (1) and (2) above.”

Reaching a particular benchmark score, or growth score, on the state assessment, or other standardized assessments, is not required for graduation purposes as a state graduation requirement. Beginning with the class of 2017, LEAs may choose to include state assessment as part of their local graduation

requirements – either as a participation requirement or by setting an achievement level benchmark in order to be eligible to earn a diploma.

Students are expected to participate in the state assessment (PARCC) as part of federal requirements of a state testing program. The state assessments give teachers, schools, students, and parents better information whether students are on track in their learning and for success after high school, and tools to help teachers customize learning to meet student needs.