

IMPROVING HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES IN RHODE ISLAND

Education is essential preparation for adult life. Higher educational attainment increases the likelihood of individual success and leads to positive economic and social outcomes for families and communities. Given the link between educational attainment and family economic status, schools have a critical role to play in preparing children and youth for employment in a high-skills economy.

According to *Diplomas Count 2011*, an *Education Week* special report, 70% of Rhode Island students from the class of 2008 graduated from high school on time with a regular diploma, up slightly from 1998 when 69% of Rhode Island students graduated on time. During the same period, the US graduation rate improved from 66% in 1998 to 72% in 2008. Rhode Island ranks 35th among the states on this measure, with 1st being best and 50th worst.¹

REDUCING POVERTY AND INCREASING ECONOMIC SECURITY

High school graduation is the minimum requisite for college and most employment, and post-secondary education is fast becoming a necessity for a growing number of workers. A recent analysis from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce predicts that by 2018, almost two-thirds (61%) of Rhode Island jobs will require some postsecondary education.²

High school dropouts are more likely to have a range of negative social outcomes when compared to people who graduate from high school. They are more likely to be unemployed, live in poverty, receive public assistance, be involved in criminal activity and have poor physical and emotional health.³

In 2009, adults without a high school diploma in Rhode Island were more than three times as likely to be unemployed as those with a bachelor's degree.⁴

In Rhode Island in 2009, the median income of adults without a high school diploma or General Education Development (GED) certificate was \$20,547 compared to \$28,785 for people with a high school degree, and \$48,845 for those with a bachelor's degree.⁵



CALCULATING GRADUATION RATES IN RHODE ISLAND

- ◆ The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) began calculating graduation rates using a cohort formula starting with the class of 2007. This methodology is acceptable for federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability reporting, adheres to the National Governors Association (NGA) compact that all 50 states have signed and enables graduation and dropout data to be compared across states.
- ◆ The cohort graduation rate shows the percentage of students from an entering 9th grade cohort who graduate with a standard diploma within 4 years. This method uses a student roster tracking method based on a unique state-assigned student identification number (SASID). Because the cohort rate is based on individual student data that is tracked over time, it accounts for every student who enters the public high school system.
- ◆ RIDE uses SASIDs to track students from 9th grade through the end of high school. The 4-year graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of students who graduate within four years by the total number of students in the cohort with adjustments for students who transfer into and out of the system. Beginning with the Class of 2008, RIDE has used the 4-year cohort rate formula to determine whether schools have met their annual NCLB targets. In 2008, Rhode Island also began calculating a 5-year graduation rate to recognize the graduation accomplishment regardless of the time it takes.

$$\text{4-Year Graduation Rate} = \frac{\text{\# of students in cohort who graduate in 4 years or fewer}}{\text{[\# of 1st time entering 9th graders] - transfers out + transfers in}}$$

Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.



RHODE ISLAND'S NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION

Starting with the Class of 2014, Rhode Island students will need to meet three types of graduation requirements in order to graduate.

REQUIREMENT 1: COURSEWORK

Complete at least 20 courses, including 4 English, 4 math, 3 science, 3 social studies and 6 others, including physical education, health, arts, and technology.

REQUIREMENT 2: PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENTS

Complete at least two performance-based assessments, such as a portfolio, exhibition (senior project, Capstone, etc.), comprehensive course assessment or Certificate of Initial Mastery.

REQUIREMENT 3: STATE ASSESSMENT

Achieve a minimum level of proficiency on the state's reading and math assessments. This is currently defined as achieving Level 2 (partially proficient) on the 11th grade *New England Common Assessment Program* (NECAP) test.*

*Students who do not score at least partially proficient in reading and math will be given the opportunity to retake the state test during 12th grade and must score partially proficient or demonstrate improvement in order to graduate.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

