

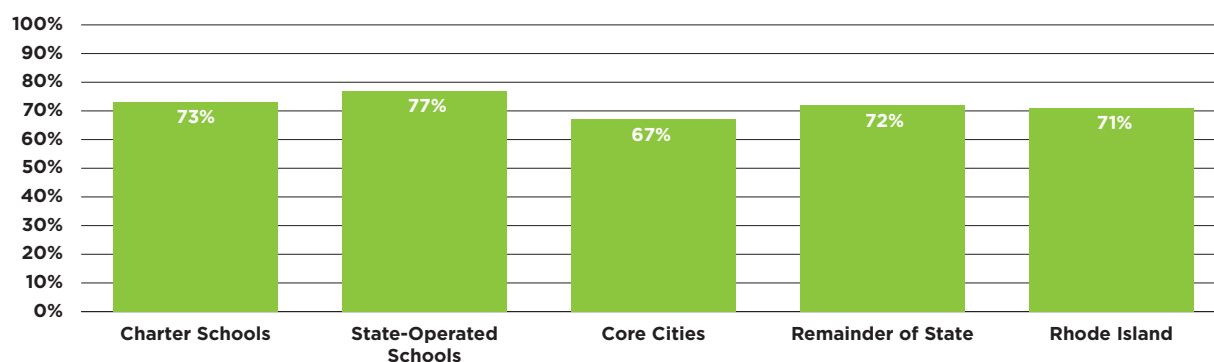
# Practices Supporting Student-Centered Learning in Rhode Island: Advisory Systems and Individual Learning Plans

Student-centered learning is learning that is personalized, competency-based, can happen anytime and anywhere, and allows students to take ownership over their own learning. Adopting student-centered learning practices can help students develop meaningful relationships with adults inside and outside of school, increase engagement and achievement for students from a variety of backgrounds, and ensure that students graduate from high school with important social and emotional skills, including problem solving, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and strong work habits, that are essential for success in college and careers.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

## Rhode Island's *Secondary School Regulations* include:

- A requirement that every middle and high school student be assigned a responsible adult, in addition to a school counselor, who is knowledgeable about that student's academic, career, and social/personal goals. This can be accomplished through **student advisories**, schools within schools, academies, and/or interdisciplinary teams supporting a group of students.<sup>4</sup>
- School districts are responsible for helping students in grades six through 12 develop **Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)** that describe students' academic, career, and social/personal goals and map out the path they will take to achieve their goals. ILPs should be developed and revised with the support of school personnel as well as parents. Students should have the opportunity to revise their ILP at least twice each year.<sup>5</sup>

## Students Who Responded Yes to Having at Least One Teacher or Adult They Can Talk to in School, Middle and High School, by District Type, Rhode Island, 2019



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education. *SurveyWorks*, Student Survey, Grades 6-12, 2019. Retrieved September 22, 2019, from [www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov)

Nearly three quarters (71%) of Rhode Island students surveyed said they had at least one teacher or adult they could talk to in school if they had a problem. Research shows adolescents who have a caring adult outside of their home are more likely to complete tasks they start, show interest in learning new things, be engaged in school, and participate in out-of-school activities.<sup>6</sup> Strong student-teacher relationships are key elements to implementing student-centered learning practices.<sup>7</sup>

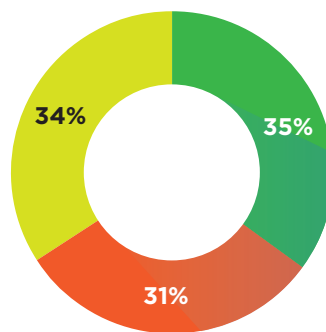
## What is Advisory?

Advisory is a regularly scheduled time in the school day with a clear focus, mission and system that fosters personal relationships between students and adults for the purpose of providing guidance on how to navigate school so each student has a personalized plan that prepares them for postsecondary opportunities. Advisory is a key component of ILP creation and implementation and can serve as a central hub for college and career guidance including provision of regular check-ins between student and advisor on student academic guidance, academic intervention, and alignment of coursework and real-world learning experiences to postsecondary goals. Implementation of an advisory program can vary. Some may be credit bearing and use structured curriculum to teach study skills, career exploration or social-emotional learning.<sup>8,9,10</sup>

## What is an Individual Learning Plan?

Individual Learning Plans (ILP) are dynamic planning and monitoring tools that are developed collaboratively by students and school staff members. They describe each student's interests, academic and career goals, graduation requirements, and the path they will take to achieve their goals. ILPs provide supports to students by expanding student perspectives, coordinating additional supports including Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with special needs, literacy plans, transition plans and other student support services.<sup>11</sup>

## Individual Learning Plans, Middle and High School, Rhode Island, 2019 Do You Have an ILP?



n = 59,167

35% ● Yes  
31% ● No  
34% ● I Don't Know

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education. *SurveyWorks*, Student Survey, Grades 6-12, 2019. Retrieved September 22, 2019, from [www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov)

■ Although Rhode Island's *Secondary School Regulations* require that all students in grades six through 12 have ILPs, only about a third (35%) of students surveyed said they had one. More steps are needed to revitalize these plans to ensure that all students have ILPs that are meaningful. These steps include collaborative development of ILPs with students, frequent reference and revising of ILPs, and implementation of ILP curricula that align with ILP systems.<sup>12</sup>



## How Can Technology Support ILPs?

By the 2020-2021 school year, all middle and high schools are expected to have adopted an ILP system from the state-vetted menu of providers or developed their own ILP system and curriculum model that meets the state's requirements. RIDE has approved four vendors that provide a comprehensive ILP system and curriculum. The approved programs, Naviance, Richer Picture, XAP Choices360, and Xello, offer a variety of programs and services including skills and interest assessments, college admission statistics, national and local scholarship tracking, tracking of progress on goals, pathways and graduation requirements, transcript sending and tracking, student plan management, and professional development training.<sup>13</sup>

Technology can provide students the tools to independently organize their learning process and teachers the ability to assess individual students' strengths and needs. Technology is best used as an enhancement to face-to-face instruction and guidance and not as a replacement for direct student-adult interaction.<sup>14,15</sup>

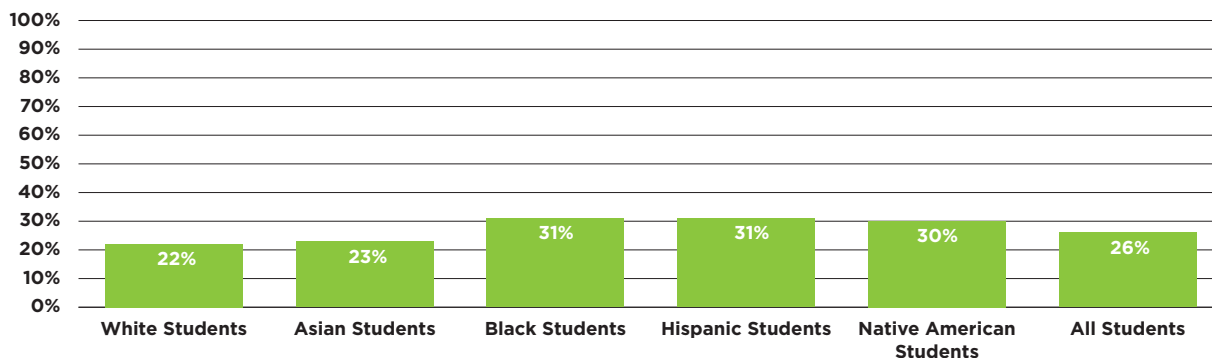
Disparities in access to, use of, and comfort with technology can create barriers for students to utilize and interact with computer based ILP technologies. Accommodations for technology, such as one-on-one support to navigate ILP software in a language or manner that is accessible to students' linguistic and developmental needs as well as access to laptops and other technology devices, may be needed.<sup>16</sup>



## Addressing Equity Through Student-Centered Learning

Many students, especially low-income students, English/multilingual learners, students of color and students with disabilities, face barriers to postsecondary success, such as insufficient academic preparation and difficulty navigating the college application and financial aid processes. ILPs and advisory systems can help address these barriers by identifying students' interests and academic and career aspirations, exposing students to different career options and pathways, helping students navigate the college search, application, and financial aid processes, and providing direct academic supports.<sup>17</sup>

### Students Who Found ILPs to Be Quite or Extremely Useful Middle and High School, Rhode Island, 2019



n = 51,043

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education. *SurveyWorks*, Student Survey, Grades 6-12, 2019. Retrieved September 22, 2019, from [www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov)

**Policymakers, state education officials, district and school administrators, school committees, teachers and school personnel must recognize and understand the barriers students face and ensure that all students have equitable access to student-centered learning.** Advisory models and ILPs can help close significant disparities in education outcomes for students with disabilities, students of color, students from low-income families, and English/multilingual learners.<sup>18</sup>

For students with disabilities, ILPs should complement existing IEP plans. Schools must ensure that parents/guardians, advisors and IEP teams work together to develop ILPs that address the needs of each student. Lowered expectations and negative perceptions of students of color, English/multilingual learners and

students with disabilities held by teachers and school staff and systemically re-enforced by policies and practices are harmful and limit the benefits of student-centered learning practices. Cultural and linguistic differences between students and adults can affect students' ability to advocate for their own learning and assessment needs, an essential component of student-centered learning.<sup>19</sup> To address these barriers, teachers and administrators should be required to participate in professional development that focuses on cultural competence, identification of student strengths and abilities, academic, social and emotional supports available to students, and how to properly scaffold rigorous learning goals that maintain high standards and support postsecondary pathways for all students.



# Percentage of Students Who Responded Yes to Having an Individual Learning Plan, Middle and High School, Rhode Island, 2019

## Core Cities

24%

## Charter Schools

39%

## State-Operated Schools

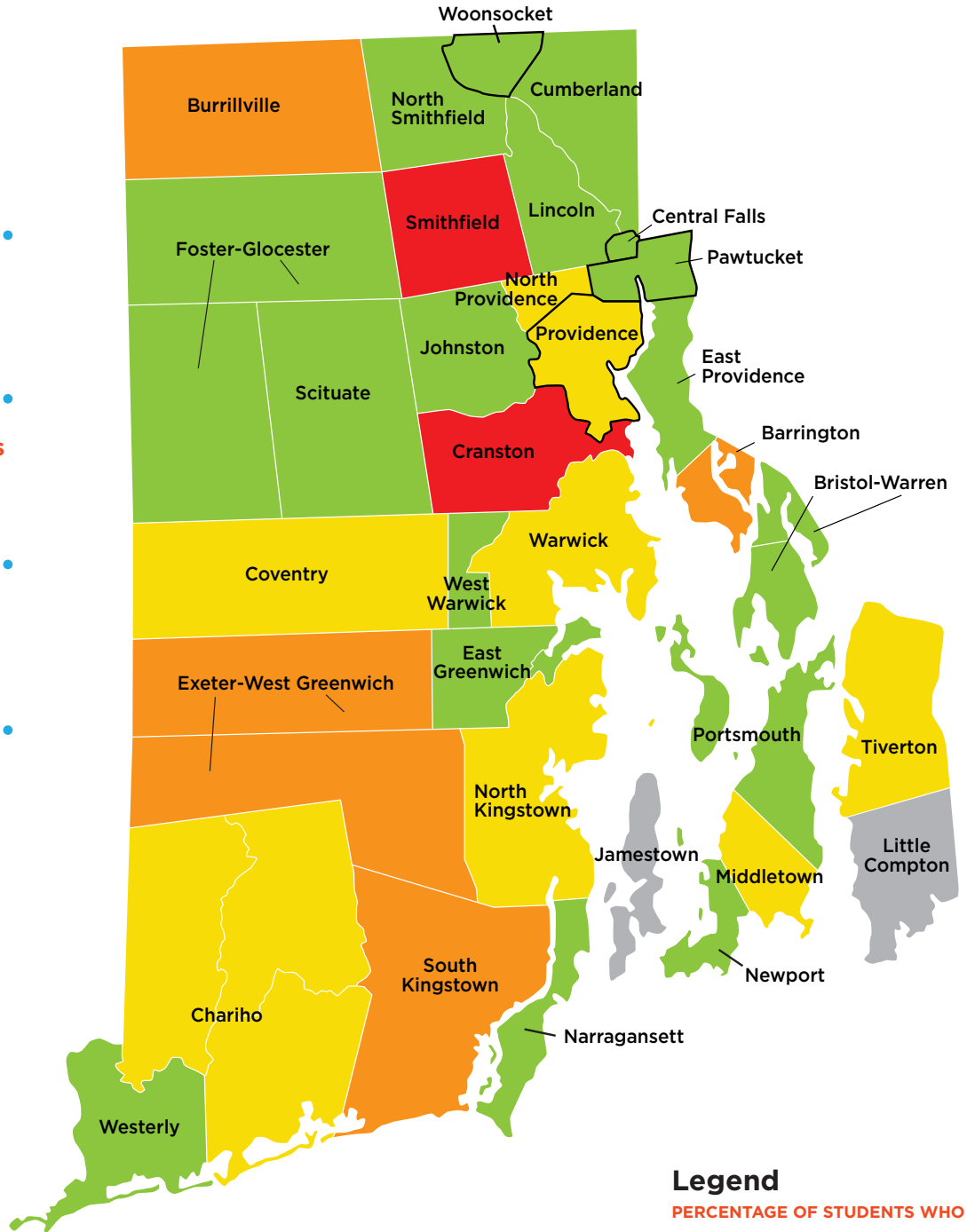
57%

## Remainder of State

36%

## Rhode Island

35%



## Legend

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO RESPONDED YES TO HAVING AN INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLAN

- <30%
- 30%-44%
- 45%-59%
- 60% or More
- NA
- Core City

Notes: Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

Charter schools include: Beacon Charter School High School for the Arts, Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, Charette Charter, The Compass School, Paul Cuffee, Charter School, The Greene School, Highlander Charter School, The Learning Community, RI Nurses Institute Middle College, Segue Institute for Learning, Sheila "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, and Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts.

State-operated schools include: William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School, DCYF Schools, Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center, and Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, *SurveyWorks*, Student Survey, Grades 6-12, 2019.

## Percentage of Students Who Responded Yes to Having an Individual Learning Plan, Middle and High School, Rhode Island, 2019

SCHOOL DISTRICT	% OF STUDENTS WHO RESPONDED YES
Barrington	52%
Bristol Warren	26%
Burrillville	48%
Central Falls	29%
Chariho	40%
Coventry	30%
Cranston	71%
Cumberland	17%
East Greenwich	23%
East Providence	27%
Exeter-West Greenwich	46%
Foster-Glocester	27%
Johnston	27%
Lincoln	18%
Middletown	30%
Narragansett	24%
New Shoreham	18%
Newport	23%
North Kingstown	30%
North Providence	39%
North Smithfield	26%
Pawtucket	26%
Portsmouth	15%
Providence	30%
Scituate	21%
Smithfield	64%
South Kingstown	46%
Tiverton	39%
Warwick	39%
West Warwick	24%
Westerly	27%
Woonsocket	25%

CHARTER SCHOOL	% OF STUDENTS WHO RESPONDED YES
Beacon Charter School High School for the Arts	20%
Blackstone Academy	62%
Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy	35%
Charette Charter	46%
The Compass School	16%
Paul Cuffee Charter School	29%
The Greene School	12%
Highlander Charter School	42%
The Learning Community	14%
RI Nurses Institute Middle College	54%
Segue Institute for Learning	86%
Sheila "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy	41%
Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts	31%
Village Green Virtual Public Charter School	57%

STATE-OPERATED SCHOOL	% OF STUDENTS WHO RESPONDED YES
William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School	28%
DCYF Schools	31%
The Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center	89%
Rhode Island School for the Deaf	58%

Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program (UCAP)	20%
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	24%
<i>Remainder of the State</i>	36%
<i>Rhode Island</i>	35%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, *SurveyWorks*, Student Survey, Grades 6-12, 2019.

Note: Core Cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.



24% Core Cities

39% Charter Schools

57% State-Operated Schools

36% Remainder of State

35% Rhode Island





## Recommendations

- **ILPs should be proactive tools** that reach every student. ILPs should be referenced and revised regularly to continue to reflect each student's growth and challenges.
- **ILPs and advisories should be the responsibility of all adults in schools**, including teachers of core subjects and electives as well as administrative staff. The inclusion of all staff will decrease advisory class size and provide opportunities for students to build positive relationships with more adults within the school building.
- **Schools should regularly train staff how to lead advisory and how to develop Individual Learning Plans.** Training should include how to help students set goals and how to align these goals with coursework, internships, and community-based programs, including expanded learning opportunities, afterschool programs, counseling, and medical services.
- **Teachers and administrators should receive regular training** on cultural competence and culturally responsive practices.
- **Advisories should meet regularly** and consist of the same students meeting with the same staff member on a consistent basis.
- **Advisors should work closely with IEP teams** to ensure that students with disabilities have ILPs that are aligned to IEP goals and resources.
- **Schools should provide accommodations** and assistance to students with limited access to and comfort with technology and computer-based ILP systems.
- **Guest presentations and out-of-school opportunities** provided by business professionals, parents, and community agencies should be accessed as a resource for advisories and to enhance students' ILPs.
- **Schools should engage parents** in the ILP process. ILPs can engage parents and provide another opportunity to build positive relationships with students and families.

## References

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- <sup>4,5</sup> Rhode Island Code of Regulations 200-RICR-20-10-2. Secondary design: Middle and high school learning environments and the Rhode Island Diploma System.
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- <sup>10</sup> Reif, G., Shultz, G., & Ellis, S. (2016). *A qualitative study of student-centered learning practices in New England high schools*. Quincy, MA: Nellie Mae Education Foundation.
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- <sup>14</sup> Moeller, B., & Reitzes, T. (2011). *Integrating technology with student-centered learning*. Quincy, MA: Nellie Mae Education Foundation.
- <sup>15,16,18,19</sup> Council of Chief State School Officers. (2017). *Equity and personalized learning: A research review*. Retrieved August 1, 2019, from [www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org)

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