Rhode Island **KIDS COUNT**

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 U.S. 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.

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

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.

RHODE ISLAND FOUR- AND FIVE-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES, BY STUDENT SUBGROUP AND DISTRICT, 2006 COHORT

SUBGROUP/DISTRICT	COHORT SIZE	4-YEAR GRADUATION RATE	5-YEAR GRADUATION RATE	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% OF STUDENTS STILL IN SCHOOL
All Students	12,653	76%	3%	14%	5%	3%
Females	6,241	80%	2%	11%	4%	2%
Males	6,412	71%	4%	16%	6%	4%
English Language Learners	731	64%	4%	24%	2%	5%
Students with Disabilities	2,594	59%	5%	22%	6%	8%
Low-Income Students	5,475	64%	4%	20%	7%	5%
Higher-Income Students	7,178	85%	2%	8%	4%	1%
White	8,872	80%	2%	11%	5%	2%
Asian	371	74%	3%	16%	4%	4%
Black	1,145	67%	5%	17%	6%	5%
Hispanic	2,182	64%	3%	22%	5%	5%
Native American	83	70%	6%	13%	4%	7%
Central Falls	263	47%	7%	33%	7%	6%
Newport	143	74%	4%	11%	4%	6%
Pawtucket	715	56%	5%	20%	15%	4%
Providence	2,046	66%	3%	22%	3%	6%
West Warwick	293	69%	2%	20%	3%	5%
Woonsocket	530	65%	4%	21%	5%	6%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2006 Cohort. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

◆ The Rhode Island four-year graduation rate for students entering the ninth grade during the 2005-2006 school year and graduating in 2009 was 76% and the dropout rate was 14%. Within five years, an additional 3% of students graduated, 5% completed their GEDs and 3% were still in school in the fall of 2010.[6]

◆ Poverty is strongly linked to the likelihood of dropping out. Students in the core cities in Rhode Island are more than twice as likely to drop out as students in the remainder of the state. Minority students are also more likely than White students to drop out.[7] Lower graduation rates in minority communities are driven by higher poverty rates and lower rates of educational attainment among adults in the community.[8]

◆ Females (80%) have a higher graduation rate than males (71%). Graduation and dropout rates for pregnant and parenting youth and youth in the foster care system in Rhode Island are not available at this time.[9]

RHODE ISLAND 4-YEAR GRADUATION RATE BY DISTRICT TYPE, 2007-2010
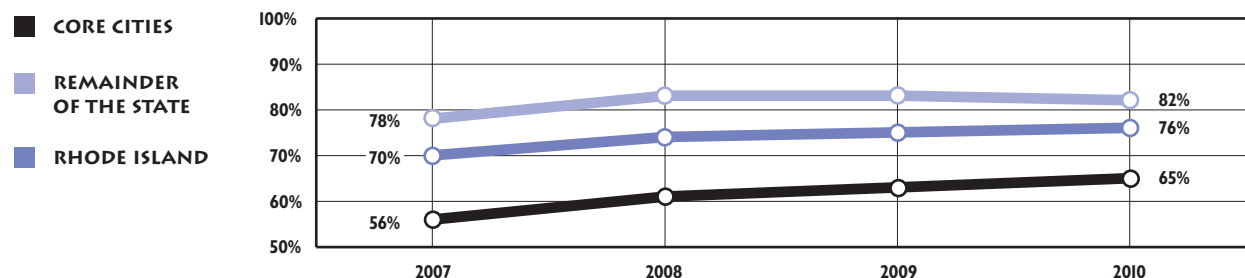
◆ In Rhode Island, the 4-year graduation rate increased from 70% to 76% between 2007 and 2010. The 4-year graduation rate for the core city districts continues to be much lower than the remainder of the state, but the core city rate has increased from 56% in 2007 to 65% in 2010, a steeper increase than in remainder of the state districts.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

RHODE ISLAND FOUR-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES BY DISTRICT AND SCHOOL, CLASS OF 2010

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL	COHORT SIZE	4-YEAR GRADUATION RATE	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% OF STUDENTS STILL IN SCHOOL
Barrington	**276**	**96%**	**1%**	**0%**	**3%**
Barrington High	275	96%	1%	0%	3%
Bristol Warren	**304**	**82%**	**7%**	**2%**	**10%**
Mt. Hope High School	297	83%	6%	2%	9%
Burrillville	**222**	**83%**	**10%**	**1%**	**5%**
Burrillville High School	219	83%	10%	1%	5%
Central Falls	**267**	**51%**	**34%**	**3%**	**12%**
Central Falls High School	262	52%	35%	3%	10%
Chariho	**291**	**82%**	**7%**	**4%**	**8%**
Chariho Regional High School	283	83%	6%	4%	6%
R.Y.S.E. School	7	*	*	*	*
Coventry	**473**	**80%**	**11%**	**2%**	**7%**
Coventry High School	470	81%	11%	2%	6%
Cranston	**966**	**81%**	**11%**	**3%**	**4%**
Cranston High School East	418	81%	12%	4%	3%
Cranston High School West	444	87%	7%	2%	4%
New England Laborers' Charter School	96	63%	23%	4%	10%
Cumberland	**383**	**83%**	**12%**	**1%**	**4%**
Cumberland High School	381	83%	12%	1%	4%
East Greenwich	**190**	**96%**	**1%**	**1%**	**3%**
East Greenwich High School	190	96%	1%	1%	3%
East Providence	**515**	**72%**	**15%**	**2%**	**11%**
East Providence High School	486	73%	15%	2%	9%
Exeter-West Greenwich	**151**	**89%**	**4%**	**3%**	**3%**
Exeter-West Greenwich Regional High School	149	90%	4%	3%	3%
Foster-Glocester	**225**	**83%**	**11%**	**2%**	**4%**
Ponaganset High School	225	83%	11%	2%	4%
Johnston	**262**	**61%**	**23%**	**7%**	**9%**
Johnston High School	259	62%	22%	7%	9%
Lincoln	**261**	**81%**	**8%**	**3%**	**8%**
Lincoln Senior High School	259	82%	8%	3%	8%
Middletown	**161**	**82%**	**9%**	**6%**	**4%**
Middletown High School	156	83%	8%	5%	4%
Narragansett	**111**	**90%**	**4%**	**4%**	**3%**
Narragansett High School	111	90%	4%	4%	3%
New Shoreham	**4**	*	*	*	*
Block Island High School	4	*	*	*	*
Newport	**143**	**78%**	**12%**	**4%**	**6%**
Rogers High School	136	80%	10%	4%	6%
North Kingstown	**414**	**86%**	**8%**	**1%**	**4%**
North Kingstown High School	409	86%	9%	1%	4%
North Providence	**304**	**80%**	**16%**	**1%**	**3%**
North Providence High School	304	80%	16%	1%	3%
North Smithfield	**152**	**83%**	**5%**	**5%**	**8%**
North Smithfield High School	151	83%	5%	5%	7%
Pawtucket	**657**	**58%**	**24%**	**6%**	**12%**
Jacqueline M. Walsh School for the Performing & Visual Arts	28	100%	0%	0%	0%
Shea Senior High School	256	57%	26%	3%	14%
William E. Tolman Senior High School	358	57%	24%	9%	11%
Portsmouth	**254**	**85%**	**7%**	**6%**	**2%**
Portsmouth High School	250	86%	7%	6%	2%

RHODE ISLAND FOUR-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES BY DISTRICT AND SCHOOL, CLASS OF 2010 (CONTINUED)

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL	COHORT SIZE	GRADUATION RATE	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% OF STUDENTS STILL IN SCHOOL
Providence	**2,033**	**68%**	**23%**	**3%**	**5%**
Academy of Service	12	0%	83%	17%	0%
Dr. Jorge Alverez High School	240	67%	27%	2%	5%
Central High School	284	67%	25%	2%	6%
Classical High School	272	97%	0%	1%	1%
William B. Cooley, Sr. Health & Science Tech. High School	109	66%	25%	5%	5%
DelSesto High School	4	*	*	*	*
E-Cubed Academy	101	61%	32%	3%	4%
Educare I	1	*	*	*	*
Feinstein High School	99	61%	31%	4%	4%
Hope Arts School	144	70%	22%	3%	6%
Hope Information Technology School	165	71%	21%	4%	4%
Hope Leadership School	19	5%	79%	16%	0%
Mount Pleasant	348	57%	30%	5%	7%
Providence Academy of International Studies	90	69%	23%	4%	3%
Providence Career and Technical Academy	48	58%	33%	0%	8%
Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy	48	75%	10%	4%	10%
Times2 Academy Charter	33	94%	0%	0%	6%
Scituate	**151**	**93%**	**5%**	**1%**	**2%**
Scituate High School	151	93%	5%	1%	2%
Smithfield	**219**	**91%**	**4%**	**3%**	**2%**
Smithfield Senior High School	219	91%	4%	3%	2%
South Kingstown	**299**	**86%**	**6%**	**3%**	**5%**
South Kingstown High School	296	86%	6%	3%	4%
Tiverton	**213**	**77%**	**15%**	**3%**	**5%**
Tiverton High School	211	78%	14%	3%	5%
Warwick	**958**	**75%**	**16%**	**4%**	**4%**
Pilgrim High School	311	73%	15%	4%	8%
Toll Gate High School	303	83%	12%	3%	2%
Warwick Veteran's Memorial High School	326	73%	19%	5%	3%
West Warwick	**321**	**65%**	**18%**	**3%**	**14%**
West Warwick Senior High School	311	66%	17%	3%	14%
Westerly	**232**	**87%**	**9%**	**1%**	**3%**
Westerly High School	227	88%	9%	1%	2%
Woonsocket	**487**	**63%**	**17%**	**3%**	**17%**
Woonsocket High School	479	64%	16%	3%	17%
Independent Charter Schools					
Beacon Charter	73	60%	19%	5%	15%
Blackstone Academy Charter	41	88%	5%	5%	2%
State-Operated Schools					
William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School	185	77%	8%	2%	12%
DCYF Alternative Education Program	56	9%	4%	73%	14%
Metropolitan Regional Career and Tech. Center (The MET)	204	82%	6%	2%	10%
Rhode Island School for the Deaf	6	*	*	*	*
Core Cities	*3,908*	*65%*	*23%*	*4%*	*9%*
Remainder of State	*7,993*	*82%*	*10%*	*3%*	*5%*
Rhode Island	*12,471*	*76%*	*14%*	*3%*	*7%*

Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007 Cohort/Class of 2010 (those students who entered high school as 9th graders in the 2006-2007 school year and are expected to graduate on time in four years in June 2010). Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Publicly funded students placed in collaboratives and special-education schools or programs are included in their home districts' rates. Students who transfer from one school district to another are only included in the receiving school or district's cohort rate.

YOUTH AT GREATEST RISK OF DROPPING OUT

High school graduation rates are one achievement measure that can help us to see how well our schools and communities are doing in educating the next generation. In Rhode Island, students in the following sub-populations are completing high school at lower rates than many of their peers.[10]

- ◆ Low-income students
- ◆ Minority students
- ◆ Students with special needs or disabilities
- ◆ Male students
- ◆ English Language Learners

Rhode Island data are not available, but national data also show that the following groups are at increased risk for dropping out:

- ◆ Pregnant and parenting teens[11]
- ◆ Youth involved with the juvenile justice system[13,14]
- ◆ Youth in the foster care system[12]
- ◆ Homeless youth[15]

INTERVENING IN NINTH GRADE...OR EARLIER

In Rhode Island during the 2009-2010 school year, 2,148 students dropped out of high school between 9th and 12th grade. An additional 179 students are recorded as dropping out in the 7th or 8th grade.[16]

Dropping out is almost always a long process rather than a sudden event. Several factors are better predictors of a student's decision to leave school than demographic characteristics and can help educators identify when to intervene and provide tailored supports to students. These warning signs can begin as early as elementary school and include:

- ◆ Repeating one or more grades
- ◆ Poor grades and poor achievement on tests
- ◆ Reading below grade level at the end of third grade
- ◆ Performing below grade level in 6th grade
- ◆ Failing one or more subjects, particularly in 9th grade (especially English or mathematics)
- ◆ Ongoing patterns of absenteeism or tardiness
- ◆ Lack of connection and engagement in school
- ◆ Multiple suspensions or other behavior problems[17,18]

◆ It is possible to identify the risk factors that are most predictive of dropping out of high school early on in a student's academic career. School districts can decrease dropout rates by establishing early warning systems that identify students at risk for dropping out and then implementing multiple strategies to support each student on their path to graduation. This includes preventative interventions for at-risk populations as well as recovery programs for individual students who are off-track for graduation.[19,20]

◆ Research has shown that the following indicators can be used in elementary and middle school to identify students at risk of dropping out: 4th grade reading proficiency and 6th grade attendance, behavior and course performance. Course-taking and course failure patterns also can be used to identify high school students at-risk of dropping out.[21]

◆ Poor performing or disruptive students may find it difficult to get the help they need to stay in school. Some students report that they encounter little resistance from those around them when they are frequently absent or make the decision to drop out of school.[22]

RECOMMENDATIONS

HIGH QUALITY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES: PRE-K TO COLLEGE

◆ Provide access to high-quality early childhood programs, pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten to prevent the achievement gap early on. The achievement gap is evident in language skills at nine months-old, and without intervention, this readiness gap widens as children get older.

◆ Ensure that all students have effective teachers and that all teachers have access to meaningful professional development opportunities focused on effective instructional practice and differentiated teaching methods for a range of learning styles.

◆ Offer students a rigorous and engaging curriculum aligned with standards and tied to college access, career pathways and vocational exploration opportunities.

◆ Provide multiple pathways to graduation for all students who need them, including acceleration programs for students lacking credits, newcomer academies, e-learning programs, schools with flexible hours, partnerships with adult education and other community providers, alternative completion models, and others.

◆ Improve college preparation and access services and supports so that all students have the opportunity to attend college.

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

◆ Offer high-quality after-school and summer enrichment, career development, and internship programs in low-income schools and communities.

◆ Improve communication with families, especially when children are falling behind academically.

◆ Facilitate partnerships between higher education, community organizations, businesses and schools to improve student access to wrap-around supports and other opportunities to promote educational success.

EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND SUPPORTS FOR STRUGGLING STUDENTS

◆ Use valid, reliable screening and assessment tools to track the language and reading skills of young children and ensure that all children read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade.

◆ Set up early warning systems that use data on 6th grade attendance, behavior and course performance to identify children at risk for dropping out of high school. Regularly and frequently monitor individual student progress and provide appropriate interventions.

◆ Intervene in 9th grade to provide intensive supports for students who are failing a course or not obtaining sufficient course credits in that crucial year.

SCHOOL CLIMATE

◆ Ensure that all school leaders have high expectations for students and staff.

◆ Implement effective advisories in all middle and high schools in order to foster meaningful connections between adults and youth and ensure that all youth have school-based relationships with caring adults.

◆ Support strategies that promote cultural competence for all school and district staff.

◆ Increase access to the arts, music and sports programs that help students remain engaged in school.

◆ Improve truancy, attendance and discipline policies to increase student engagement and create safe and supportive school atmospheres.

◆ Two-thirds (67%) of Rhode Island seniors who graduated from high school in 2008 went directly on to a two-year or four-year college, compared with 63% nationally. In 2008, Rhode Island ranked 13th in the nation and 3rd in New England (where 1st is best) in the number of high school seniors graduating and going directly to college.[23]

RHODE ISLAND RESOURCES

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