

Practices Supporting Student-Centered Learning in Rhode Island: Equitable Access to College and Career Readiness Opportunities

By 2020, 71% of jobs in Rhode Island will require postsecondary education.¹ Many students, especially low-income students, face barriers to college enrollment and success. Improving access and exposure to advanced coursework including Advanced Placement (AP) courses, dual and concurrent enrollment, work-based learning opportunities, and career preparation courses can help address these barriers.²

Rhode Island's *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* Plan

Rhode Island's *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* plan includes a proposed Postsecondary Success Indicator that will initially measure the percentage of students that graduate with a career and technical education industry-approved credential, college credits through dual or concurrent enrollment, and/or successful completion of AP tests. Starting with the Class of 2021, this indicator will be further expanded to include the Seal of Biliteracy and the Pathway Endorsement.³



Rhode Island has experienced consistent growth in the number of students participating in college and career readiness opportunities. Since 2015, there has been a 35% increase in Advanced Placement participation and a 162% increase in dual and concurrent enrollment participation. There has been more than 100% growth in the PrepareRI summer internship program since 2018, when it was launched.

Advanced Placement

Dual and Concurrent Enrollment

PrepareRI Summer Internship

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education. (n.d.). *Rhode Island has third year of consecutive growth in college-access opportunities*. Retrieved October 8, 2019, from www.ride.ri.gov. *PrepareRI 2018 annual report*. Retrieved October 5, 2019, from www.prepare-ri.org. Governor's Workforce Board. (October, 2019). WBL summer outcomes. Presented at the Rhode Island Children's Cabinet, Cranston, RI.

Although there has been growth in college and career readiness opportunities, there continue to be gaps in both college credits and industry-recognized credentials earned by high school students by race, ethnicity, income, and special education and English/multilingual learner status. Closing these gaps will require a thorough analysis of the barriers students face and what can be done to eliminate barriers and provide equitable access to rigorous and engaging learning opportunities that provide paths to success in college and careers for all students.⁴

We analyzed enrollment data from the Class of 2018 to better understand who is participating in college and career readiness opportunities in Rhode Island, including the Advanced Course Network, industry-recognized credentials, and dual and concurrent enrollment programs and who may be facing barriers to participation.

College and Career Readiness Opportunities in Rhode Island

Advanced Course Network

Beginning in the fall of 2016, Rhode Island students attending middle and high school in participating public school districts have been able to enroll in advanced coursework not normally available at their own school through the Advanced Course Network. The Advanced Course Network allows students to take traditional, online, and blended courses and earn middle school, high school, Advanced Placement, and/or postsecondary credit, or progress toward an industry-recognized certificate or credential, depending on the course. Courses are offered by traditional school districts, private higher education institutions, charter schools, the Department of Labor and Training, and community-based nonprofits.⁵

In Rhode Island, 265 students from the Class of 2018, less than 3% of students, participated in the Advanced Course Network. Of those participants, 35% were from the core cities, 22% from charter schools, 24% from state-operated schools and 19% from the remainder of the state. Nearly half (44%) of students were Hispanic and 74% were low-income students.⁶

Industry-Recognized Credentials

Students can earn industry-recognized credentials by participating in career and technical education (CTE) programs, career pathway programs, and Advanced Course Network courses. These opportunities allow students to explore a career of interest, learn specific career skills, and earn an industry-recognized credential that can lead to employment in a chosen field.^{7,8,9,10} In Rhode Island, 7% of students in the Class of 2018 earned industry-recognized credentials. Of those students, more than half (56%) were low-income, more than one in three (37%) were students of color and more than one in ten

(13%) were students with disabilities. Only 3% of industry credentials were earned by English/multilingual learners.¹¹

Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment allows students to take credit-earning college courses on a college campus while in high school at no cost to the student or the family. Dual enrollment offered through the Advanced Course Network allows students to take college courses at private institutions of higher education in Rhode Island. The PrepareRI Dual Enrollment Fund provides funding for students to take courses at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), Rhode Island College (RIC), and University of Rhode Island (URI).¹²

In Rhode Island in the Class of 2018, 5% of students (567) participated in dual enrollment. Of these students, 30% attended state-operated schools, such as The Met, 15% attended schools in the four core cities, 15% attended charter schools, and 43% attended schools in the remainder of the state. A majority (66%) of students were low-income and 56% were students of color.¹³

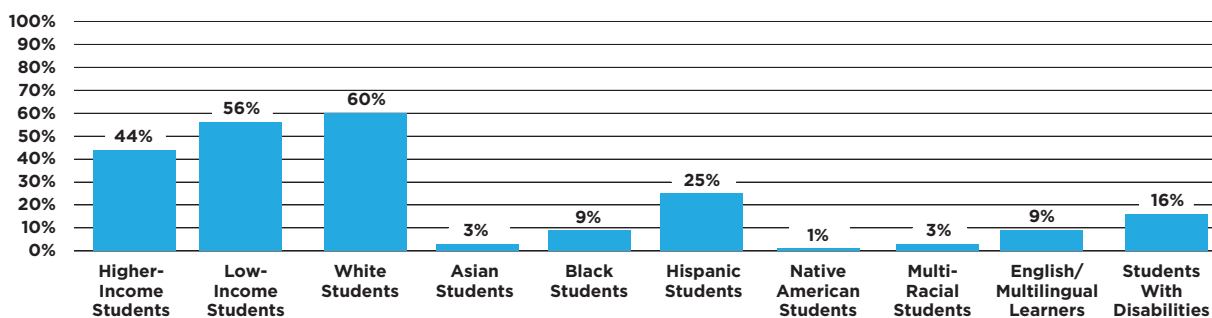
Concurrent Enrollment

Concurrent enrollment allows students to take credit-earning college courses while in high school in their high school building at no cost to the student or the family.¹⁴ Courses are taught by high school teachers that meet instructional requirements.

In Rhode Island in the Class of 2018, 24% of students (2,512) participated in concurrent enrollment. Of these students, 18% attended schools in the core cities, 2% attended charter schools, less than 1% attended state-operated schools, and 79% attended school in the remainder of the state. A majority (64%) were students from higher-income families, and 73% were White.¹⁵



Rhode Island Public School Demographics, Class of 2018

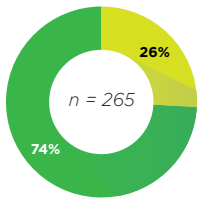


Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2018 cohort. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

In Rhode Island, in the fall of 2014, 10,534 students enrolled in ninth grade for the first time. Of these students more than half (56%) were low-income students, 25% were Hispanic, 9% were Black, 3% were Asian, and 1% were Native American, 9% were English/multilingual learners, and 16% were students with disabilities. The Rhode Island four-year graduation rate for the Class of 2018 was 84%.¹⁶

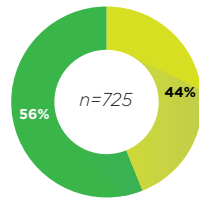
Student Enrollment in College and Career Readiness Opportunities, Rhode Island, Class of 2018

By Income



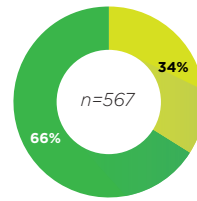
Students Participating in the Advanced Course Network

26% Higher-Income Students
74% Low-Income Students



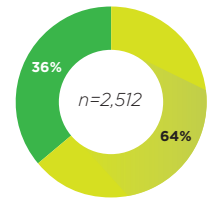
Students Earning Industry-Recognized Credentials

44% Higher-Income Students
56% Low-Income Students



Students Participating in Dual Enrollment Courses

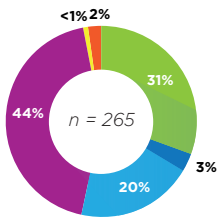
34% Higher-Income Students
66% Low-Income Students



Students Participating in Concurrent Enrollment Courses

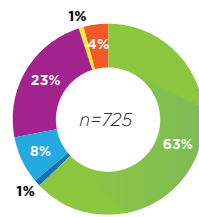
64% Higher-Income Students
36% Low-Income Students

By Race/Ethnicity



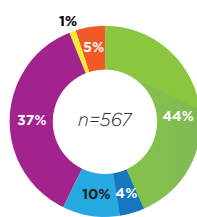
Students Participating in the Advanced Course Network

31% White Students
3% Asian Students
20% Black Students
44% Hispanic Students
<1% Native American Students
2% Multi-Racial Students



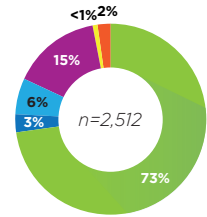
Students Earning Industry-Recognized Credentials

63% White Students
1% Asian Students
8% Black Students
23% Hispanic Students
1% Native American Students
4% Multi-Racial Students



Students Participating in Dual Enrollment Courses

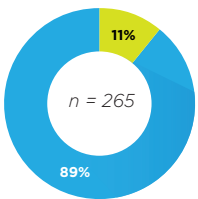
44% White Students
4% Asian Students
10% Black Students
37% Hispanic Students
1% Native American Students
5% Multi-Racial Students



Students Participating in Concurrent Enrollment Courses

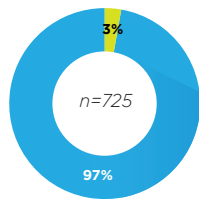
73% White Students
3% Asian Students
6% Black Students
15% Hispanic Students
<1% Native American Students
2% Multi-Racial Students

By English/Multilingual Learner Status



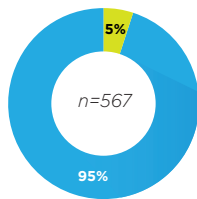
Students Participating in the Advanced Course Network

11% English/Multilingual Learners
89% Non-English/Multilingual Learners



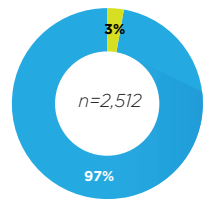
Students Earning Industry-Recognized Credentials

3% English/Multilingual Learners
97% Non-English/Multilingual Learners



Students Participating in Dual Enrollment Courses

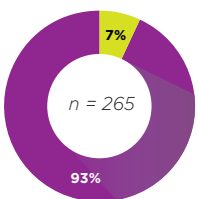
5% English/Multilingual Learners
95% Non-English/Multilingual Learners



Students Participating in Concurrent Enrollment Courses

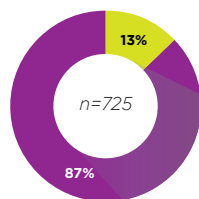
3% English/Multilingual Learners
97% Non-English/Multilingual Learners

By Special Education Status



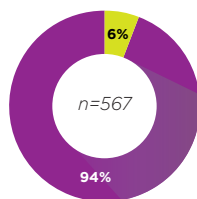
Students Participating in the Advanced Course Network

7% Students With Disabilities
93% Students Without Disabilities



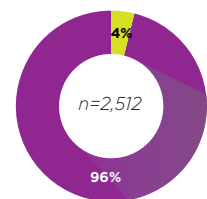
Students Earning Industry-Recognized Credentials

13% Students With Disabilities
87% Students Without Disabilities



Students Participating in Dual Enrollment Courses

6% Students With Disabilities
94% Students Without Disabilities



Students Participating in Concurrent Enrollment Courses

4% Students With Disabilities
96% Students Without Disabilities



Recommendations

Ensure that all students have equitable access to a rigorous and engaging curriculum that allows students to take advanced coursework, explore career pathways, and earn college credit and/or industry-recognized credentials.

- **Monitor and take steps to close opportunity gaps** in the percentage of students earning college credits and industry-recognized credentials while in high school.
- **Ensure that there is adequate funding** to provide all students that want to take them access to courses through the Advanced Course Network and PrepareRI Dual Enrollment Program.
- **Provide information about the Advanced Course Network and PrepareRI Dual Enrollment Program** and the benefits of these opportunities to all students, particularly low-income students, students of color, students with disabilities, and English/multilingual learner students, and their parents and ensure that this information is available in multiple languages.
- **Review Advanced Course Network and PrepareRI Dual Enrollment student application procedures and acceptance rates** to ensure all districts provide equitable access to advanced coursework.
- **Reduce inequities in access to the Advanced Course Network and PrepareRI Dual Enrollment Program** by providing funding for transportation to learning sites and by providing information on these opportunities to all students, particularly English/multilingual learners and students with disabilities.
- **Revamp teacher preparation programs and professional learning opportunities** to provide both new and more experienced educators with certifications needed to lead AP and concurrent enrollment courses in schools with high percentages of students of color and low-income students.
- **Increase percentage of teachers of color.**
- **Provide training, guidance, and advising** to Advanced Course Network and PrepareRI Dual Enrollment providers on the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, *Americans with Disabilities Act*, and Rhode Island Regulations Regarding English Language Learners to ensure students receive supports and accommodations needed for success.
- **Increase supports to English/multilingual learners and students with disabilities** by providing translation services and education accommodations and modifications to Advanced Course Network and PrepareRI Dual Enrollment providers.
- **Increase access to culturally relevant courses** including literature and cultural studies, world languages, art and music within the Advanced Course Network and PrepareRI Dual Enrollment catalogue.
- **Encourage more high schools with higher percentages of low-income students, students of color, and students with disabilities to offer career pathways.**
- **Conduct outreach with middle and high school students and their parents** to make them aware of the value of career pathways and the Pathway Endorsements that will be available as diploma designations starting with the Class of 2021.



References

¹ Carnevale, A.P., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2013). *Recovery: Job growth and education requirements through 2020 (State report)*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce.

² Miller, A., Valle, K., Engle, J., & Cooper, M. (2014). *Access to attainment: An access agenda for 21st century college students*. Washington, DC: Institute for Higher Education Policy.

³ Rhode Island Department of Education. (2018). *Rhode Island's Every Student Succeeds Act state plan*. Retrieved March 15, 2019 from www.ride.ri.gov

⁴ Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. (2018). *Preparing students for college and career: Policies Supporting Student-Centered Learning in Rhode Island*. Retrieved September 7, 2019, from rikidscount.org

⁵ *Advanced Course Network expanding opportunities: A guide for students & families*. (2018). Retrieved October 5, 2019, from www.ride.ri.gov

^{6,11,12,13,15} Rhode Island Department of Education, 2017-2018

⁷ Rhode Island Department of Education. (2019). *ACN Course Types*. Retrieved October 9, 2019, from www.ride.ri.gov

^{8,14} Rhode Island Department of Education. (2019). *Opportunities for earning college credit and other advanced coursework while in high school*. Retrieved October 2, 2019 from www.ride.ri.gov

¹⁶ Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2018



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