

IMPROVING HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES IN RHODE ISLAND

2008 SUPPLEMENT WITH NEW HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES

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 2008*, an *Education Week* special report, data from 2005 show that 71% of Rhode Island students graduated from high school on time with a regular diploma, comparable to the U.S. rate. Rhode Island ranks 30th among the states on this measure, with 1st being best and 50th worst. The report also calculates that Rhode Island public high schools lose 20 students from the "graduation pipeline" every school day.

REDUCING POVERTY AND INCREASING ECONOMIC SECURITY

Education has an impact on the likelihood of finding and maintaining employment. People who drop out of high school in the United States are almost twice as likely to be unemployed as those who attain a high school degree or equivalent, and are almost four times as likely to be unemployed as those who receive a Bachelor's degree.

High school graduation is also the minimum requisite for college and most employment. Higher education is fast becoming a necessity for the majority of workers in the growing high-tech economy. In fact, according to U.S. Department of Labor projections, about 90% of the fastest-growing jobs in the U.S. will require some post-secondary education or training.

High school dropouts are more likely to have a range of negative social outcomes as compared to people who graduate from high school, including living in poverty, receiving public assistance, being a teen parent, incarceration, having poor health, being divorced, and being single parents of children who also drop out of school.

NEW METHODOLOGY FOR CALCULATING RHODE ISLAND GRADUATION RATES

- ♦ The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) recently released data that calculated graduation and dropout rates using a cohort formula for the first time. This new methodology is acceptable for federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability reporting and adheres to the National Governors Association (NGA) compact that all 50 states have signed. The NGA compact is an agreement by all states to use the cohort calculation method for graduation rates. This method is considered best practice and enables graduation and dropout data to be compared across all participating states.
- ♦ The cohort graduation rate shows the percentage of students from an entering 9th grade cohort who graduate with a standard diploma within four years. This new method uses a student roster tracking method based on unique student identifier data. Because the cohort rate is based on individual student data that is tracked over time, it now accounts for every student who enters the public high school system.
- ♦ To calculate the 4-year graduation rate, RIDE used the state-assigned student identification numbers (SASID) to track students from 9th grade through the end of high school. The graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of students who graduate within four years by the total number of students in the cohort. The size of the cohort is adjusted for students who transfer into and out of the system. The formula for the 2007 cohort is:

of students in cohort who graduate in four years or fewer

2007 Graduation Rate =

[# of 1st time entering 9th graders in 2003–04] – transfers out + transfers in

- ♦ The cohort dropout rate is calculated the same way as the graduation rate, but the numerator is the number of students who drop out or whose status is unknown at the end of four years. Separate rates are also calculated for the percentage of students who are retained in high school and therefore are taking more than four years to graduate and for the percentage of students who received their GED within four years instead of graduating with a traditional diploma.
- ◆ Beginning with the Class of 2008, RIDE will use the 4-year cohort rate formula to determine whether schools have met their annual NCLB targets. RIDE will also publish 5-year graduation rates when the data become available.

OLD AND NEW RHODE ISLAND GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES FOR THE CLASS OF 2007

Under the OLD FORMULA :	Under the NEW FORMULA :			
Graduation Rate 89%	Graduation Rate70%			
Dropout Rate11%	Dropout Rate			
	Students Still in School 6%			
	GED Completed 5%			

RHODE ISLAND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES BY DISTRICT, 2007 GRADUATING CLASS

DISTRICT	STUDENTS IN COHORT	NEW GRADUATION RATE	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% STILL IN SCHOOL	OLD GRADUATION RATE
Barrington	293	96%	1%	2%	1%	96%
Bristol Warren	322	75%	14%	3%	7%	84%
Burrillville	282	71%	22%	4%	3%	87%
Central Falls	392	46%	39%	3%	11%	76%
Chariho	383	79%	12%	5%	4%	93%
Coventry	512	81%	14%	3%	2%	95%
Cranston	1,122	80%	13%	3%	4%	93%
Cumberland	448	79%	15%	3%	3%	93%
East Greenwich	183	96%	3%	1%	1%	98%
East Providence	622	66%	22%	5%	7%	94%
Exeter-West Greenwich	188	86%	9%	2%	3%	96%
Foster	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Foster-Glocester	209	94%	2%	3%	1%	96%
Glocester	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Jamestown	2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Johnston	293	63%	25%	6%	6%	82%
Lincoln	290	86%	7%	3%	4%	96%
Middletown	207	82%	9%	5%	4%	91%
Narragansett	144	90%	3%	5%	3%	96%
Newport	235	60%	25%	4%	11%	82%
New Shoreham	7	NA	NA	NA	NA	100%
North Kingstown	380	90%	5%	3%	2%	98%
North Providence	352	88%	8%	2%	3%	97%
North Smithfield	135	87%	8%	2%	2%	96%
Pawtucket	902	48%	33%	12%	7%	78%
Portsmouth	281	88%	3%	8%	1%	93%
Providence	2,704	58%	30%	4%	7%	82%
Scituate	148	85%	8%	4%	3%	89%
Smithfield	242	86%	9%	2%	3%	96%
South Kingstown	337	86%	7%	5%	3%	96%
Tiverton	208	79%	16%	2%	3%	90%
Warwick	1,083	66%	17%	7%	10%	89%
Westerly	282	88%	5%	1%	7%	94%
West Warwick	320	67%	18%	4%	10%	81%
Woonsocket	690	54%	34%	5%	8%	82%
Core Cities	5,243	56%	31%	5%	8%	81%
Remainder of State	9,672	78%	13%	4%	5%	93%
Rhode Island	14,915	70%	19%	5%	6%	89%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2008. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

NA indicates that there were too few students in the category to report data or that students in that district attend high school in another district.

Notes on the methodology:

Students are assigned to cohorts based on when they first enter grades 9 through 12 in a Rhode Island public school. Publicly-funded students placed in collaboratives and private 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 second school or district's cohort rate. Students who are retained in a high-school grade or who complete their GED are not counted in school or district 4-year cohort graduation or dropout rates. These students are listed in separate columns in the table above.

RHODE ISLAND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES BY SCHOOL, 2007 GRADUATING CLASS

SCHOOL	STUDENTS IN COHORT	NEW GRADUATION RATE	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% STILL IN SCHOOL	OLD GRADUATION RATE
Times ² Academy	13	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Classical High School	275	97%	1%	1%	1%	99%
Barrington High School	290	96%	1%	2%	1%	91%
East Greenwich High School	183	96%	3%	1%	1%	98%
Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy	60	95%	5%	0%	0%	96%
Ponaganset High School	208	94%	2%	3%	1%	96%
North Kingstown Sr. High School	372	91%	5%	3%	0%	97%
Westerly High School	274	90%	4%	1%	5%	95%
Narragansett High School	142	90%	3%	5%	2%	96%
Cranston High School West	486	89%	6%	3%	2%	95%
Portsmouth High School	280	88%	3%	8%	1%	93%
Exeter-West Greenwich Reg. High School	184	88%	8%	2%	2%	97%
North Providence High School	347	88%	7%	2%	3%	97%
North Smithfield Jr. Sr. High School	135	87%	8%	2%	2%	96%
South Kingstown High School	320	87%	7%	4%	2%	97%
Lincoln Senior High School	288	86%	7%	3%	4%	96%
Smithfield Senior High School	241	86%	9%	2%	3%	96%
Scituate High School	148	85%	8%	4%	3%	89%
Metropolitan Regional Career Tech. Center	199	83%	4%	1%	13%	95%
Middletown High School	202	83%	7%	5%	4%	91%
Coventry High School	510	82%	14%	3%	2%	95%
Chariho Regional High School	362	81%	10%	5%	4%	93%
Tiverton High School	204	80%	16%	2%	1%	91%
Cumberland High School	439	80%	14%	3%	3%	93%
NE Laborers Career Academy	124	77%	11%	2%	9%	93%
Mt. Hope High School	308	76%	15%	4%	6%	83%
Cranston High School East	485	75%	20%	4%	2%	91%
Wm. M. Davies Jr. Career Tech. High	200	73%	16%	4%	8%	92%
Burrillville High School	274	72%	23%	4%	2%	87%
Toll Gate High School	329	69%	18%	6%	7%	89%
East Providence High School	605	67%	22%	5%	6%	94%
Warwick Veterans Memorial High School	348	67%	14%	7%	12%	86%

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RHODE ISLAND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES BY SCHOOL, 2007 GRADUATING CLASS (CONTINUED)

school	STUDENTS IN COHORT	NEW GRADUATION RATE	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% STILL IN SCHOOL	OLD GRADUATION RATE
Providence Academy of International Studies	184	67%	26%	4%	4%	85%
West Warwick Senior High School	307	67%	19%	5%	10%	80%
Wm B. Cooley Health & Science Tech. Academy	168	65%	23%	4%	8%	88%
Pilgrim High School	375	65%	18%	9%	9%	91%
Johnston Senior High School	280	63%	25%	6%	6%	82%
Rogers High School	226	62%	24%	4%	11%	81%
BEACON Charter School	52	58%	19%	4%	19%	85%
Mount Pleasant High School	510	57%	31%	4%	8%	78%
Central High School	527	57%	34%	2%	6%	75%
E-Cubed Academy	103	57%	26%	5%	12%	74%
Feinstein High School	106	57%	25%	2%	16%	79%
Hope Leadership School	131	55%	32%	7%	6%	81%
Hope Arts School	133	55%	32%	5%	8%	77%
Woonsocket High School	676	55%	34%	5%	7%	82%
Hope Information Technology School	191	53%	37%	4%	6%	77%
Shea Senior High School	381	51%	30%	11%	9%	81%
Blackstone Academy Charter School	76	50%	29%	8%	13%	92%
Educare I	46	50%	39%	0%	11%	55%
RYSE (Clinical Day and Alt. Learning)	17	47%	35%	6%	12%	100%
Central Falls Senior High School	375	46%	39%	3%	12%	73%
Wm. E. Tolman Sr. High School	481	46%	36%	13%	5%	75%
Alternate Learning Project	30	27%	63%	10%	0%	NA
DCYF Alt. Education Program	169	13%	59%	27%	1%	NA
Harrison Street High School	75	1%	75%	24%	0%	NA
Block Island School	7	NA	NA	NA	NA	100%
Adelaide High School	9	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
DelSesto High School	9	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
RI School for the Deaf	7	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Rhode Island	14,915	70%	19%	5%	6%	89%

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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, as in the nation, students in the following sub-populations are completing high school at lower rates than many of their peers.

- Low-income students
- Minority students
- ◆ Youth in the foster care system
- Pregnant and parenting teens

- Male students
- English language learners
- Students with special needs or disabilities

WARNING SIGNS FOR STUDENTS AT RISK OF DROPPING OUT

Dropping out is almost always a long process rather than a sudden event. In addition to demographic characteristics, several risk factors contribute to and are warning signs of a student's decision to leave school, including:

- Repeating one or more grades
- ◆ Performing below grade level in 4th grade
- Ongoing patterns of absenteeism or tardiness
- Multiple suspensions

- Poor grades and poor achievement on tests
- Moving or changing schools one or more times
- ◆ Lack of connection or disengagement in school
- ◆ Failing one or more subjects in 9th grade (especially English or mathematics)

USING EARLY DROPOUT INDICATORS TO INTERVENE IN NINTH GRADE...OR EARLIER

- ♦ It is possible to identify the risk factors that are most predictive of dropping out of high school. Schools can decrease dropout rates by having systems in place to comprehensively identify a majority of those 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 populations that are off-track for graduation.
- ◆ Using a reliable prediction system for evaluating student dropout risk allows schools, administrators and teachers to focus on prevention rather than recovery. Cities across the country, including Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia and New York City, are beginning to use data on academic performance (test scores and grades), grade retention, age, attendance, and discipline indicators to create these early warning and intervention systems. These systems are made accessible to teachers and administrators in ways that allow them to assess what the contributing factors are and what interventions would be most appropriate for individual students.
 - ◆ 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.



Strategies that increase high school graduation rates are important for reducing poverty and increasing family economic security. Improving educational attainment for this generation of young people is a key strategy to improve child development outcomes, literacy and educational success in future generations. The following are critical dropout prevention strategies:

- ◆ Provide ongoing monitoring tied with immediate interventions for students who are falling behind in the early grades and middle school to ensure that all students are on course to grade-level achievement.
- ◆ Provide additional supports for struggling students, such as tutoring, credit-recovery programs and summer remediation opportunities, to allow extra time for the mastery of basic skills for students who are already behind.
- ◆ Intervene in ninth grade to provide intensive supports for students who are failing a course or not obtaining sufficient course credits in that crucial year.
- ◆ Improve the school climate, support strategies that promote cultural competence, and implement effective advisories in all schools in order to foster meaningful connections between adults and youth and ensure that all youth have caring adults in their lives.
- ♦ Ensure that all students have highly qualified 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.
- ◆ Ensure that all school leaders have high expectations for students and staff.
- Offer all students a rigorous and engaging curriculum that is aligned with standards, tied to career pathways and vocational exploration opportunities, and that offers individualized learning opportunities.
- ◆ Improve communication and partnerships with parents, especially when children are falling behind academically.
- Provide access to high-quality early childhood education, pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten to prevent the achievement gap early on.
- Offer high-quality after-school and summer enrichment and remediation programs in low-income schools and communities.
- ◆ Implement an adequate and predictable state education funding formula that reflects the higher costs of educating low-income students.
 - ◆ According to the *Education Week* report *Quality Counts at 10*, "For every 100 American students who enter 9th grade, only 67 graduate from high school; 38 of those enter college, 26 are still enrolled after their sophomore year, and only 18 graduate with either an associate or baccalaureate degree within six years."

RHODE ISLAND RESOURCES

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Peter McWalters, *Commissioner* www.ride.ri.gov (401) 222-4600

Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education

Robert G. Flanders Jr., *Chairman* (401) 222-8435

Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education

Jack Warner, Commissioner www.ribghe.org (401) 462-9300

The Governor's PK-16 Council

Janet Durfee-Hidalgo, Education Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor www.governor.ri.gov (401) 222-8135

The Urban Education Task Force Warren Simmons, *Chair* (401) 863-7990 The Annenberg Institute for School Reform

Warren Simmons, *Executive Director* www.annenberginstitute.org (401) 863-7990

The College Crusade of Rhode Island Mary Sylvia Harrison, *President* www.thecollegecrusade.org (401) 854-5500

The Education Partnership Valerie Forti, *President* www.edpartnership.org (401) 331-5222

Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council John C. Simmons, Executive Director www.ripec.com (401) 521-6320

Rhode Island Education Justice Council Veronika Kot, *Co-Chair* (401) 274-2652 x 164

Monica Teixeira de Sousa, *Co-Chair* (617) 422-7271

NATIONAL RESOURCES

Alliance for Excellent Education www.all4ed.org

The Education Trust www.edtrust.org

The Education Week: Diplomas Count Series www.edweek.org National Center for Education Statistics www.nces.ed.gov

U.S. Department of Education www.ed.gov

This is a supplement to an Issue Brief released by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT in November 2006. For a detailed list of sources, please see the 2006 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Issue Brief entitled *Improving High School Graduation Rates in Rhode Island* available at www.rikidscount.org. All data included in this publication are from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education unless otherwise noted.

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