



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT
ONE UNION STATION
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903
401/351-9400 • 401/351-1758 (FAX)

UNDER EMBARGO until Monday, September 24, 2018, at 12:01 a.m. ET

Contact: Katherine Linwood Chu, Communications Manager
401.351.9400, Ext. 22 / kchu@rikidscount.org

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT to release new report

Preparing Students for College and Career: Policies Supporting Student-Centered Learning in Rhode Island

This report provides an overview of Rhode Island's policies, initiatives, and practices that support student-centered learning as well as perspectives from students about how these policies, initiatives, and practices are playing out in their classrooms.

Providence, RI (September 20, 2018): Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will release its newest publication, *Preparing Students for College and Career: Policies Supporting Student-Centered Learning in Rhode Island*, at a policy roundtable on Monday, September 24, 2018 from 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, One Union Station, Providence, RI.

Featured speakers will include Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT; Pedro Moya, high school senior and Youth Member of Young Voices; Keith Nalbach, Advisor, The Met High School; Ken Wagner, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education; and Colleen Burns Jermain, Superintendent, Newport Public Schools. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Senior Policy Analyst Stephanie Geller will share findings from the report.

Student-centered learning: A brief overview

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 the important skills and strong work habits that are essential for success in college and careers.

For these reasons, nationally and in Rhode Island, there is a move toward student-centered learning – learning that is personalized, competency-based, can happen anytime and anywhere, and allows students to take ownership over their own learning.

- **Learning that is personalized** – A range of instructional approaches that are designed to address the skills, knowledge, needs, interests, and aspirations of individual students.
- **Learning that is competency-based** – An approach to teaching and learning that bases student advancement on mastery of skills and academic

content, rather than age, seat time, or hours on task and also may be called mastery-based or proficiency-based learning.

- **Learning that happens anytime, anywhere** – The principle that structured, credit-bearing learning experiences can take place outside of the traditional school day, or even the school year, and that they can take place in the community and are not restricted to the classroom.
- **Learning that allows students to take ownership** – Allowing students to become actively engaged in their own success by incorporating students’ interests and skills into the learning process and giving students a voice in decision-making about issues that affect their learning at the classroom, school, district, and state levels.

Rhode Island’s Policies that Support Student-Centered Learning

- Rhode Island was the birthplace of Big Picture Learning, a nonprofit organization established in 1995 with the sole purpose of putting students at the center of their own learning. The first Big Picture Learning School was the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center (“The Met”) which is located in Providence.
- In 2003, Rhode Island became the first state to establish a proficiency-based high school diploma.
- Rhode Island’s Strategic Plan for Public Education for 2015-2020 continues this strong focus on student-centered learning. Personalized Learning Statewide is one of six priority areas in the strategic plan.
- For more than a decade, Rhode Island’s *Secondary School Regulations* have supported student-centered learning. When the *Secondary School Regulations* were revised in October 2016, the focus on student-centered learning was strengthened. Guidance from the Rhode Island Department of Education released in 2017 and updated in June 2018 builds on the new *Secondary School Regulations* with updated high school graduation requirements. Please see page 3 of the report for specific aspects of the *Regulations*.

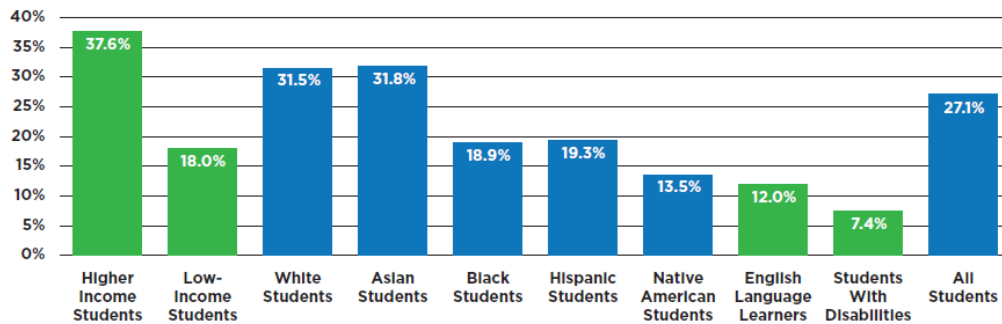
Room for Growth

Rhode Island’s policies and statewide strategic plan for education support student-centered learning, but sometimes strong policies are not enough. Ensuring that all Rhode Island students have opportunities for student-centered learning requires the efforts of a variety of stakeholders including policymakers, state education officials, district and school administrators, school committees, teachers and school personnel, community partners, parents, and students.

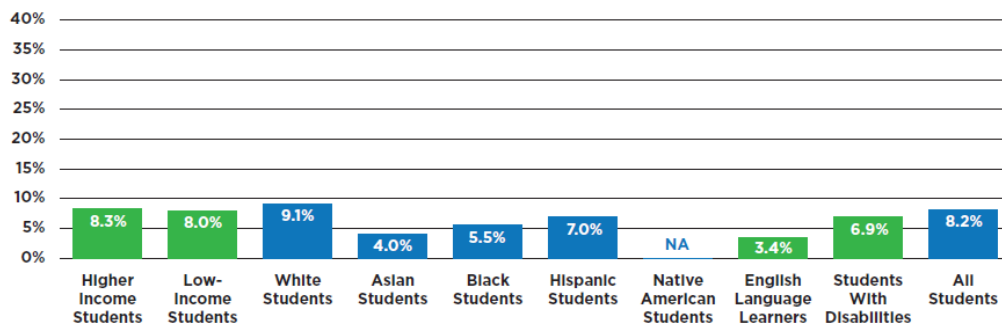
An example of student-centered learning is offering the opportunity for student to earn college credits while in high school. Taking such courses through the Advanced Coursework Network and PrepareRI Dual Enrollment Program can help prepare students for the rigor of college courses, pursue deeper knowledge in a subject area of interest, and potentially save money by completing college credits before they even graduate from high school.

Early data on post-secondary readiness suggests that Rhode Island is making progress but that there are large gaps in college credits and industry-recognized credentials earned by high school students by race, ethnicity, income, and special education and English language learner status:

College Credits Earned by Students Enrolled in 12th Grade, 2016-2017



Industry Recognized Credentials Earned by Students Enrolled in 12th Grade, 2016-2017



Source: *PrepareRI 2018 annual report*. (2018). Retrieved September 19, 2018, from www.prepare-ri.org NA indicates that the data are not available because the number of students was too small to report.

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.

Youth Perspectives

In 2017, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and Young Voices, a youth empowerment organization, planned and conducted a series of focus groups with students at several urban high schools to get their perspectives about what teaching and learning looked like in their schools and what experiences they have had with more student-centered approaches to learning.. The findings from these focus groups provide youth perspectives on how schools could better engage students in their own learning and prepare them for success in college and careers. **Quotes from these focus groups are included on pages 4 - 8 of the report.**

“Student-centered learning is about getting students excited about and involved in their education,” said Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “Despite Rhode Island’s strong history of student-centered learning policies, it’s clear that that policy is not enough. We see stark disparities in college credits and industry-recognized credentials earned by Rhode Island high school students. Thoughtful implementation of student-centered learning policies and addressing existing barriers is a key aspect of preparing *all* students to meet the expectations they will face in college and in the workforce.”

Recommendations

The report provides key recommendations to support student-centered learning in Rhode Island. Please see page 11 for the full set of recommendations.

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children’s policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children.