

HIGHLIGHTS OF RHODE ISLAND'S ESEA FLEXIBILITY REQUEST

COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL STUDENTS

Commitment to Implementing Higher Standards: Rhode Island adopted high standards in English language arts and math now in place in 45 other states and the District of Columbia, and is developing model resources for coursework and distributing content-specific training materials with a focus on English language arts and math.

Meeting the Needs of English Learners: Rhode Island is one of a handful of States working with the WIDA consortium and other partners to align English language proficiency standards with the Common Core State Standards to ensure a seamless and comprehensive common standards framework for English Learners.

IMPROVED STATE AND DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUPPORT FOR ALL STUDENTS

Index System Based on High Expectations and Multiple Measures: Rhode Island created an index, called the Composite Index Score (CIS), that includes student achievement, growth and graduation rates. The index will place schools into one of six levels: Commended, Leading, Typical, Warning, Focus and Priority.

Ambitious Performance Targets: Rhode Island established new performance targets for reading, math and graduation rates that will cut the gap to proficiency in half within six years.

Renewed Focus on Closing Achievement Gaps: Rhode Island will identify the schools in the State with the greatest challenges for groups of students as “Focus schools” and demand interventions to improve student performance. The new index system places substantive weight on closing achievement gaps to ensure school and district accountability for traditionally underserved students. Rhode Island is featuring graduation rates, and graduation rate growth, as prominent measures of high school performance.

To capture more schools in the accountability system, Rhode Island has lowered from 45 to 20 the minimum number of students necessary for individual subgroup performance to be considered (known as “n-size”). The State is including smaller subgroups of students and combining some subgroups to increase accountability. These changes will help to identify existing achievement gaps in more schools. Under Rhode Island’s new system, all but 13 of 282 schools will be held accountable for the performance of student subgroups. By creating a new combined subgroup, Rhode Island increased the number of schools that will be held accountable for the performance of English Learners from 54 to 227 schools. While the use of combined subgroups will hold schools accountable and identify achievement gaps, Rhode Island will continue to report disaggregated data to inform interventions and support decisions.

Aggressive Plan for Turning Around the Lowest-Performing Schools: Rhode Island will identify the lowest-performing schools in the State as “Priority schools” and ensure that districts implement meaningful interventions in these schools. The lowest-performing schools in the State, and those with the largest achievement gaps, will conduct needs assessments and diagnostic screens

that will help them develop interventions keyed to the areas and subgroups with the greatest needs. The 18 Priority schools and 12 Focus schools that have been identified will begin these interventions in the 2012-13 school year.

In addition to identifying Priority and Focus schools, Rhode Island is identifying Warning schools that may have isolated but serious challenges in achievement, student growth, or graduation rate. The 45 Warning schools must implement an intervention strategy that is responsive to the results of their diagnostic screens and focuses on their areas of most acute need.

Building Capacity for School Improvement: Rhode Island has put in place a strong State and district-level support and monitoring system that will measure the progress of the lowest-performing schools throughout the school year and support districts and schools as they work to improve student achievement. Using Race to the Top funding, the State has developed the Academy of Transformative Leadership, a service center for low-performing and struggling schools.

Transparently Reporting on Students' Progress: Rhode Island's State report card, Infoworks Live!, includes assessment data, teacher effectiveness information, school safety, family and community engagement, and student, parent, and teacher survey data. Annual achievement data for districts and the State is available on the Rhode Island Department of Education's website.

SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP

Rhode Island is putting in place a redesigned statewide teacher and principal evaluation system that uses multiple measures to determine educator effectiveness and is based on the impact of student growth and academic achievement. Rhode Island's districts will fully implement the evaluation system during the 2012-13 school year. Information from the evaluation system will be used to improve instruction and drive professional development. Rhode Island schools are developing classroom-level Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) to measure growth for all teachers and schools, including those who teach in non-tested grades and subjects. The SLOs are an innovative strategy providing increased flexibility at the local level.