

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner

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Dear Fellow Educators,

In 2011, following a series of hearings and public meetings, the Board of Regents approved a new [Diploma System](#) for Rhode Island. The goal of our Diploma system is to maintain a high standard for graduation and to ensure that schools provide all students with adequate support and with ample opportunities to meet the graduation requirements.

As you know, our Diploma System is based on multiple measures, not on state assessments only. I do not believe that a test score *alone* should determine whether a student is ready to graduate, nor do I believe that a test score *alone* is a reasonable way to measure student achievement. We must measure student growth and achievement using many sources of evidence, *including* state assessments.

Early next month (February 4), we will send you on an embargoed basis the results of the latest NECAP assessments, which the students in your junior class took last October. One of our graduation requirements is scoring at least “partially proficient” on the NECAP high-school (Grade 11) assessments in mathematics and reading. Based on the results of previous NECAP assessments that your students have taken, we anticipate that a significant number of students in your school will score “significantly below proficient” and will be at risk of not graduating with their class.

These students will take the NECAP assessment again in their senior year and, if their results improve, they will meet this graduation requirement. To prepare students for graduation, our Secondary School Regulations require that schools provide additional, intensive support and instruction to all students who fall below partially proficient on the NECAP assessments. Also, you must engage families in the process as you develop support plans for students and you must keep families informed about the progress their children are making.

We at the R.I. Department of Education have developed this toolkit, which contains background information on the Diploma System and links to resources and opportunities such as the free Virtual Learning Math Modules that you can use to help your students improve their achievement in mathematics and reading. I understand that our Diploma System demands a lot of our teachers, of our students, and of their families. I appreciate all that you and your staff members are doing to prepare your students for success. I hope the toolkit will be helpful as you engage in this important work, and I welcome any suggestions you may have regarding additional resources that we can share with other schools in our state to help prepare all students for success.

Sincerely,



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