
ESEA Flexibility Request



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LABEL	LIST OF ATTACHMENTS
1	Notice to LEAs
2	Comments on request received from LEAs (if applicable)
3	Notice and information provided to the public regarding the request
4	Evidence that the State has formally adopted college- and career-ready content standards consistent with the State’s standards adoption process
5	Memorandum of understanding or letter from a State network of institutions of higher education (IHEs) certifying that meeting the State’s standards corresponds to being college- and career-ready without the need for remedial coursework at the postsecondary level (if applicable)
6	State’s Race to the Top Assessment Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (if applicable)
7	Evidence that the SEA has submitted high-quality assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review, or a timeline of when the SEA will submit the assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review (if applicable)
8	A copy of the average statewide proficiency based on assessments administered in the 2010–2011 school year in reading/language arts and mathematics for the “all students” group and all subgroups (if applicable)
9	Table 2: Reward, Priority, and Focus Schools
10	A copy of the guidelines that the SEA has developed and adopted for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems (if applicable)
11	Evidence that the SEA has adopted all of the guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems

LABEL	LIST OF APPENDICES
A	Rank Ordered School List with Scoring Detail
B	BEP Performance Measures
C	Priority and Focus School Implementation Timeline
D	RIDE Commitments to LEAs serving Priority and Focus Schools
E	AMO Supporting Materials
F	Dr. Ramirez Letter of February 1, 2012
G	Rhode Island LEP/ELL Advisory Council Feedback on ESEA Request
H	Educator Evaluation Guidance Document

Waivers

By submitting this flexibility request, the SEA requests flexibility through waivers of the ten ESEA requirements listed below and their associated regulatory, administrative, and reporting requirements by checking each of the boxes below. The provisions below represent the general areas of flexibility requested; a chart appended to the document titled *ESEA Flexibility Frequently Asked Questions* enumerates each specific provision of which the SEA requests a waiver, which the SEA incorporates into its request by reference.

- 1. The requirements in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(E)-(H) that prescribe how an SEA must establish annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for determining adequate yearly progress (AYP) to ensure that all students meet or exceed the State's proficient level of academic achievement on the State's assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics no later than the end of the 2013–2014 school year. The SEA requests this waiver to develop new ambitious but achievable AMOs in reading/language arts and mathematics in order to provide meaningful goals that are used to guide support and improvement efforts for the State, LEAs, schools, and student subgroups.
- 2. The requirements in ESEA section 1116(b) for an LEA to identify for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, as appropriate, a Title I school that fails, for two consecutive years or more, to make AYP, and for a school so identified and its LEA to take certain improvement actions. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA and its Title I schools need not comply with these requirements.
- 3. The requirements in ESEA section 1116(c) for an SEA to identify for improvement or corrective action, as appropriate, an LEA that, for two consecutive years or more, fails to make AYP, and for an LEA so identified and its SEA to take certain improvement actions. The SEA requests this waiver so that it need not comply with these requirements with respect to its LEAs.
- 4. The requirements in ESEA sections 6213(b) and 6224(e) that limit participation in, and use of funds under the Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) and Rural and Low-Income School (RLIS) programs based on whether an LEA has made AYP and is complying with the requirements in ESEA section 1116. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA that receives SRSA or RLIS funds may use those funds for any authorized purpose regardless of whether the LEA makes AYP.
- 5. The requirement in ESEA section 1114(a)(1) that a school have a poverty percentage of 40 percent or more in order to operate a schoolwide program. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA may implement interventions consistent with the turnaround principles or interventions that are based on the needs of the students in the school and designed to enhance the entire educational program in a school in any of its priority and focus schools that meet the definitions of “priority schools” and “focus schools,” respectively, set forth in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*, as appropriate, even if those schools do not have a poverty percentage of 40 percent or more.

6. The requirement in ESEA section 1003(a) for an SEA to distribute funds reserved under that section only to LEAs with schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. The SEA requests this waiver so that it may allocate section 1003(a) funds to its LEAs in order to serve any of the State’s priority and focus schools that meet the definitions of “priority schools” and “focus schools,” respectively, set forth in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*.
7. The provision in ESEA section 1117(c)(2)(A) that authorizes an SEA to reserve Title I, Part A funds to reward a Title I school that (1) significantly closed the achievement gap between subgroups in the school; or (2) has exceeded AYP for two or more consecutive years. The SEA requests this waiver so that it may use funds reserved under ESEA section 1117(c)(2)(A) for any of the State’s reward schools that meet the definition of “reward schools” set forth in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*.
8. The requirements in ESEA section 2141(a), (b), and (c) for an LEA and SEA to comply with certain requirements for improvement plans regarding highly qualified teachers. The SEA requests this waiver to allow the SEA and its LEAs to focus on developing and implementing more meaningful evaluation and support systems.
9. The limitations in ESEA section 6123 that limit the amount of funds an SEA or LEA may transfer from certain ESEA programs to other ESEA programs. The SEA requests this waiver so that it and its LEAs may transfer up to 100 percent of the funds it receives under the authorized programs among those programs and into Title I, Part A.
10. The requirements in ESEA section 1003(g)(4) and the definition of a Tier I school in Section I.A.3 of the School Improvement Grants (SIG) final requirements. The SEA requests this waiver so that it may award SIG funds to an LEA to implement one of the four SIG models in any of the State’s priority schools that meet the definition of “priority schools” set forth in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*.

Optional Flexibilities:

If an SEA chooses to request waivers of any of the following requirements, it should check the corresponding box(es) below:

11. The requirements in ESEA sections 4201(b)(1)(A) and 4204(b)(2)(A) that restrict the activities provided by a community learning center under the Twenty-First Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program to activities provided only during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session (*i.e.*, before and after school or during summer recess). The SEA requests this waiver so that 21st CCLC funds may be used to support expanded learning time during the school day in addition to activities during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session.
12. The requirements in ESEA sections 1116(a)(1)(A)-(B) and 1116(c)(1)(A) that require LEAs and SEAs to make determinations of adequate yearly progress (AYP) for schools and LEAs, respectively. The SEA requests this waiver because continuing to determine whether an LEA and its schools make AYP is inconsistent with the SEA’s State-developed differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system included in its ESEA flexibility request. The

SEA and its LEAs must report on their report cards performance against the AMOs for all subgroups identified in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v), and use performance against the AMOs to support continuous improvement in Title I schools that are not reward schools, priority schools, or focus schools.

13. The requirements in ESEA section 1113(a)(3)-(4) and (c)(1) that require an LEA to serve eligible schools under Title I in rank order of poverty and to allocate Title I, Part A funds based on that rank ordering. The SEA requests this waiver in order to permit its LEAs to serve a Title I-eligible high school with a graduation rate below 60 percent that the SEA has identified as a priority school even if that school does not rank sufficiently high to be served.

Assurances

By submitting this application, the SEA assures that:

- 1. It requests waivers of the above-referenced requirements based on its agreement to meet Principles 1 through 4 of the flexibility, as described throughout the remainder of this request.
- 2. It will adopt English language proficiency (ELP) standards that correspond to the State's college- and career-ready standards, consistent with the requirement in ESEA section 3113(b)(2), and that reflect the academic language skills necessary to access and meet the new college- and career-ready standards, no later than the 2013–2014 school year. (Principle 1)
- 3. It will develop and administer no later than the 2014–2015 school year alternate assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards or alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities that are consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(a)(2) and are aligned with the State's college- and career-ready standards. (Principle 1)
- 4. It will develop and administer ELP assessments aligned with the State's ELP standards, consistent with the requirements in ESEA sections 1111(b)(7), 3113(b)(2), and 3122(a)(3)(A)(ii). (Principle 1)
- 5. It will report annually to the public on college-going and college credit-accumulation rates for all students and subgroups of students in each LEA and each public high school in the State. (Principle 1)
- 6. If the SEA includes student achievement on assessments in addition to reading/language arts and mathematics in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system and uses achievement on those assessments to identify priority and focus schools, it has technical documentation, which can be made available to the Department upon request, demonstrating that the assessments are administered statewide; include all students, including by providing appropriate accommodations for English Learners and students with disabilities, as well as alternate assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards or alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(a)(2); and are valid and reliable for use in the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system. (Principle 2)
- 7. It will report to the public its lists of reward schools, priority schools, and focus schools at the time the SEA is approved to implement the flexibility, and annually thereafter, it will publicly recognize its reward schools as well as make public its lists of priority and focus schools if it chooses to update those lists. (Principle 2)
- 8. Prior to submitting this request, it provided student growth data on their current students and the students they taught in the previous year to, at a minimum, all teachers of reading/language

arts and mathematics in grades in which the State administers assessments in those subjects in a manner that is timely and informs instructional programs, or it will do so no later than the deadline required under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund. (Principle 3)

- 9. It will evaluate and, based on that evaluation, revise its own administrative requirements to reduce duplication and unnecessary burden on LEAs and schools. (Principle 4)
- 10. It has consulted with its Committee of Practitioners regarding the information set forth in its request.
- 11. Prior to submitting this request, it provided all LEAs with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment on the request and has attached a copy of that notice (Attachment 1) as well as copies of any comments it received from LEAs (Attachment 2).
- 12. Prior to submitting this request, it provided notice and information regarding the request to the public in the manner in which the State customarily provides such notice and information to the public (*e.g.*, by publishing a notice in the newspaper; by posting information on its website) and has attached a copy of, or link to, that notice (Attachment 3).
- 13. It will provide to the Department, in a timely manner, all required reports, data, and evidence regarding its progress in implementing the plans contained throughout this request.
- 14. It will report annually on its State report card, and will ensure that its LEAs annually report on their local report cards, for the “all students” group and for each subgroup described in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II): information on student achievement at each proficiency level; data comparing actual achievement levels to the State’s annual measurable objectives; the percentage of students not tested; performance on the other academic indicator for elementary and middle schools; and graduation rates for high schools. It will also annually report, and will ensure that its LEAs annually report, all other information and data required by ESEA section 1111(h)(1)(C) and 1111(h)(2)(B), respectively.

If the SEA selects Option A in section 3.A of its request, indicating that it has not yet developed and adopted all the guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, it must also assure that:

- 15. It will submit to the Department for peer review and approval a copy of the guidelines that it will adopt by the end of the 2011–2012 school year.(Principle 3)

Consultation

An SEA must meaningfully engage and solicit input from diverse stakeholders and communities in the development of its request. To demonstrate that an SEA has done so, the SEA must provide an assurance that it has consulted with the State’s Committee of Practitioners regarding the information set forth in the request and provide the following:

1. A description of how the SEA meaningfully engaged and solicited input on its request from teachers and their representatives.

Rhode Island Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist has a strong, ongoing commitment to engage stakeholders in the development and implementation of policies and initiatives. In keeping with that commitment, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) conducted extensive outreach throughout the development and refinement of this ESEA flexibility request. During the “Input Phase” of our outreach when our draft was under development, we solicited comments on perceived limitations of the No Child Left Behind Act, as well as suggestions for our request for flexibility, at a series of targeted events and through a designated e-mail address. We then posted our draft flexibility request to the RIDE website and began the “Feedback Phase,” in which we solicited specific comments and feedback from targeted stakeholders and the public, again via meetings, webinars, and the designated email address. [For a complete list of the outreach events that RIDE conducted during this process, refer to “Table 1: Stakeholder Outreach around Rhode Island’s ESEA Flexibility Request” at the end of this section.]

In total, RIDE hosted three community forums, made presentations at fifteen stakeholder-specific meetings, and hosted four webinars to share information about our flexibility request and to solicit input and feedback. In addition, RIDE consulted with our Committee of Practitioners to gather its feedback on our request. Weekly e-mails to the Commissioner’s contact lists, as well as posts to the Commissioner’s social-media pages, directed stakeholders – teachers, administrators, parents, students, government officials, community and advocacy organizations, business leaders, and others – to the RIDE website to learn more about our developing proposal and to provide input and feedback. [See Attachment 3 for evidence from RIDE’s outreach efforts.] Those weekly e-mails and web posts also informed Rhode Islanders of the many opportunities to learn more at public forums and stakeholder-specific meetings and webinars. The RIDE staff leading this outreach effort directly contacted targeted stakeholder groups to invite them to review the draft request and to schedule a time to meet and discuss their feedback.

RIDE is committed to ensuring that classroom teachers are informed, involved, and meaningfully engaged in the policy and implementation decisions that affect their work. Teachers and union leaders have been deeply engaged in the development and

implementation of the Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation System and in our transition to the Common Core State Standards, as discussed in Principles 1 and 3 herein. To ensure that teachers were similarly engaged in the development of this flexibility request, RIDE actively solicited teacher comments during both the Input Phase and Feedback Phase of our outreach. RIDE worked with our two state teachers' unions to ensure that information regarding ESEA flexibility and the opportunity to provide feedback reached teachers, and RIDE and the two unions co-hosted a webinar for local union leaders and other teachers. In addition, local union leaders and individual teachers, including special education teachers and teachers of English Learners (ELs), attended the three public forums and "all-educators webinar" that we held. RIDE also presented information about ESEA flexibility to the Commissioner's Distinguished Educators Cabinet to solicit input from our state's award-winning educators.

Teachers who participated in events and submitted written comments emphasized that they appreciated the inclusion of growth measures into our proposed accountability system. As one award-winning educator said during our meeting with the Distinguished Educators Cabinet, "The ideal accountability system would be a hybrid of using a growth model and proficiency measures, so that we can recognize growth but also be honest about how a child, school, and district are performing in terms of proficiency for the age and grade level." We heard similar feedback from various types of educators and administrators, which affirmed our position that the inclusion of growth measures is essential and was long-awaited by many in the education field. Another affirming piece of feedback from several teachers was regarding the importance of including additional years in our calculation of high school graduation rates. Multiple teachers of special education students discussed the accountability benefits this would offer to schools and LEAs that successfully graduate special education students who stay in school longer than four or even five years. Our decision to include six years in our calculation of graduation rates supports this position, which was also shared by many other stakeholders.

RIDE conducted significant targeted outreach to school and LEA-level administrators, classroom teachers, and union representatives. Both superintendents and principals emphasized that we should eliminate the requirement that schools identified as persistently low-achieving had to remove the school principal, regardless of that individual's track record at the school. Our "Flex Plan" option is responsive to this feedback and does not call for the automatic removal of principal or staff, but rather requires the school to take significant action – one option being the removal of the principal – based on the specific needs and gaps identified through a newly developed diagnostic screen. In general, administrators praised the Flex Plan option for its use of the Basic Education Program capacities and the balance of rigor and manageability among its options. Superintendents were adamant that the diagnostic screen should be made available to all schools so that they may identify their greatest needs and strategies to address them. RIDE has since made the decision to extend the use of the diagnostic screen to any school that wishes to use it, not only to identified focus and priority schools.

Finally, superintendents suggested that we include assessment participation rates into the accountability structure so as to capture the extent to which a school has been successful at emphasizing the importance of the assessment to students and educators. We have responded to this excellent suggestion by making 95% participation in the state assessment a threshold determinant for school classification. Regardless of how a school performs in our composite measurement system, a school that fails to meet the participation target will be designated as a “Warning” school subject to state intervention.

2. A description of how the SEA meaningfully engaged and solicited input on its request from other diverse communities, such as students, parents, community-based organizations, civil rights organizations, organizations representing students with disabilities and English Learners, business organizations, and Indian tribes.

As discussed above in response to question one, RIDE provided information to, and solicited comments from, a variety of stakeholders regarding our ESEA flexibility request. [For a complete list of the outreach events that RIDE conducted during this process, refer to “Table 1: Stakeholder Outreach around Rhode Island’s ESEA Flexibility Request” on page 14.] Families, community organizations, advocacy organizations for students with special needs and students who are English Learners and business leaders were all included on each of the broad communications that RIDE issued regarding ESEA flexibility. In addition, we targeted topical outreach to these stakeholders, inviting them to provide comments online and also to attend public forums and stakeholder-specific meetings and webinars.

We offered a targeted webinar for business leaders and several targeted meetings for student advocates, families, and community leaders to offer input and feedback on our flexibility request. RIDE proactively sought the engagement and feedback of these groups during the Input and Feedback Phases to ensure that a diversity of perspectives would inform our thinking around crafting a new accountability structure for Rhode Island schools. In total, approximately 200 educators and community members participated in the presentations and feedback sessions that RIDE offered, and we received approximately 35 written comments on our request through our designated e-mail address. [See Attachment 2 for a summary of comments received.]

On the whole, parents, community organizations, and student advocacy groups praised the role that the decreased n size and the role that consolidated subgroups would play in shining a brighter light on achievement gaps in more schools across the state, as well as equalizing the number of targets that must be met by urban and suburban schools. Another overarching theme from the feedback of community partners was their appreciation of our plan for districts to administer targeted interventions to students, and within struggling schools generally, based on data. The idea of using a diagnostic screen to identify needs and gaps within a school, and then choose interventions based

on those needs, was extremely well-received by community members and educators alike.

During both the input and feedback phases of our public outreach efforts, RIDE staff met with representatives from the 21st Century Community Learning Center sites (21st CCLC) and the Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance. These groups strongly advocated for RIDE to reconsider our original decision to seek flexibility around the use of the 21st CCLC funding. Through these meetings, RIDE staff better understood and ultimately agreed that the current investment strategies for 21st CCLC are yielding rich results across Rhode Island and have a long track record of success. Further, RIDE staff and community organizations all agree that the 21st CCLC funding can be managed and weighted by the SEA in a manner that will ensure a focus on students and schools in greatest need and the applicants with the strongest program design. Consequently – and directly due to outreach efforts -- RIDE is not seeking the 21st CCLC waiver in our final application.

We received consistent feedback from educators, families, community groups, advocacy organizations – particularly advocates of special needs and EL students – emphasizing the need for additional student supports and interventions for at-risk students, especially those who have special needs or are English Learners. During the Feedback Phase, many teachers and administrators who read our draft request articulated the need for more of an emphasis on increased supports and interventions for special needs students and EL students. As a result of this feedback, our waiver application now includes more narrative on the many student supports established under State law, including a comprehensive Response to Intervention initiative, special supports to teachers of EL students and students on IEP's, and an enhanced monitoring and information system specific to supports for students acquiring English. We also received feedback from our state-level EL Advisory Committee suggesting that we establish disaggregated graduation rates for ELs, as well as for students with IEP's. We have incorporated this suggestion into our accountability and reporting system. Many advocates of special needs students also articulated support for our decision to include additional years into our calculation of graduation rates for accountability purposes.

Advocates for EL students requested that RIDE consider waiving first-year EL students from the requirement to take the state assessment in mathematics. It is their contention that some students may be in schools for less than a week and still have to participate in the state mathematics assessment. This is a particular concern due to Rhode Island's fall testing program. These same advocates also suggested including English proficiency measures as part of the school diagnostic screen, which we found to be a helpful addition to the screen to give a deeper picture about the needs of a school that is struggling, especially in those schools with relatively low incidence populations who have previously escaped scrutiny under our current system. Multiple community organizations recommended that chronic absenteeism data be included, and we acted on that suggestion by adding this additional piece of evidence to the screen, as we know that chronic absenteeism has a detrimental effect on student and school performance.

The most controversial element of our waiver application has been the creation of a consolidated sub-group that combines English Learner students and students with disabilities. There has been general acknowledgement and support for RIDE's commitment to expand accountability for low incidence populations, especially in regard to identifying achievement gaps. However, the EL and SPED advocacy communities expressed early and strong reservations based on: (1) a perception of insensitivity and lack of differentiation for these two very different sub-populations; (2) a mistaken belief that the proposed Rhode Island system would not recognize critical differences in performance between these two groups within one school or system; and (3) a misunderstanding of how supports and interventions would be derived, thereby raising the inference that RIDE planned on a "one size fits all" approaches to improving student performance. These concerns are well-expressed in the February 1, 2012 letter from ELL Advisory Committee member Dr. J. Andrés Ramírez (Appendix F).

Prior to receiving this letter, RIDE had invited all members of the RI ELL Advisory Committee to a meeting to discuss RIDE's proposal to create a consolidated sub-group consisting of both EL and SPED students. The meeting with the ELL Advisory Committee was held on Monday, February 13, 2012. The Deputy Commissioner explained that RIDE was well aware of the perceptions that might arise from using this combination of program-dependent students. However, it was also explained that the benefits far outweighed the risk in that too many of our schools were not being held accountable for the performance of their English Learners. Even with a reduction in the "n" size to 20, only 54 of 300 schools would be held accountable for their EL students. By combining EL student performance with SPED student performance, that number jumped to 227! When it was explained that AMO sub-group accountability would remain in place, and that interventions would be based only on fully disaggregated results, our rationale became clear. The RI LEP/ELL Advisory Council, including Dr. Ramirez, provided its official position to RIDE on February 16, 2012.

While it is troubling that these two very different populations of students will be grouped together, the end result shows promise. If things play out the way RIDE is projecting, a substantial number of schools that were previously not help accountable for the achievement of their ELLs will come under closer scrutiny according to state and federal guidelines. We were also assured, and it appears in the documents, that while ELLs and students with IEPs will be grouped together for initial accountability, the data will be disaggregated before it is used for other purposes. (Appendix F).

It should also be noted that RIDE officials also met with the RI State Special Education Advisory Board, who did not raise objections to the proposed consolidated sub-group once there was an understanding that intervention and support decisions would be made only on the basis of disaggregated data.

Table 1: Stakeholder Outreach Around Rhode Island’s ESEA Flexibility Request

EVENT NAME	EVENT DATE
Input Phase (prior to draft)	
Board of Regents Briefing	October 6, 2011
Distinguished Educators Cabinet Meeting	November 30, 2011
South County “How’s School?” Parent and Community Forum	December 1, 2011
RI Association of School Principals, RI Middle Level Educators, and RI ASCD Meeting	December 2, 2011
English Language Learners Directors Meeting	December 8, 2011
RI Association of School Committees Meeting	December 10, 2011
Public Forum	December 12, 2011
Race to the Top Meeting with Superintendents, Board Chairs, Union Presidents, and Charter School Representatives	December 13, 2011
RI Association of School Principals Executive Board Meeting	December 14, 2011
Community Forum for Parents, Students, Community Organizations, Special Education advocates, and English Language Learners advocates	January 9, 2012
Webinar for Local Union Leaders and Teachers Co-hosted by RIDE, RI Federation of Teachers, and National Education Association RI	January 9, 2012
Webinar for Principals Co-hosted by RIDE and RI Association of School Principals	January 10, 2012
Webinar for Business Leaders	January 13, 2012
Feedback Phase (after draft released)	
RI Association of School Superintendents Meeting	January 19, 2012
Webinar for All Educators	January 30, 2012
Meeting with Urban LEAs	January 31, 2012
Public Forum	February 1, 2012
Board of Regents Briefing	February 2, 2012
Rhode Island Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting	February 6, 2012
Advocacy Groups Meeting	February 7, 2012
Committee of Practitioners Meeting	February 9, 2012
Civic and Community Leaders Briefing	February 10, 2012
English Language Learners Advisory Board Meeting	February 13, 2012
RI Association of School Principals Executive Board	February 15, 2012

Evaluation

The Department encourages an SEA that receives approval to implement the flexibility to collaborate with the Department to evaluate at least one program, practice, or strategy the SEA or its LEAs implement under principle 1, 2, or 3. Upon receipt of approval of the flexibility, an interested SEA will need to nominate for evaluation a program, practice, or strategy the SEA or its LEAs will implement under principles 1, 2, or 3. The Department will work with the SEA to determine the feasibility and design of the evaluation and, if it is determined to be feasible and appropriate, will fund and conduct the evaluation in partnership with the SEA, ensuring that the implementation of the chosen program, practice, or strategy is consistent with the evaluation design.

Check here if you are interested in collaborating with the Department in this evaluation, if your request for the flexibility is approved.

Overview of SEA's Request for ESEA Flexibility

Provide an overview (about 500 words) of the SEA's request for the flexibility that:

1. explains the SEA's comprehensive approach to implement the waivers and principles and describes the SEA's strategy to ensure this approach is coherent within and across the principles; and
2. describes how the implementation of the waivers and principles will enhance the SEA's and its LEAs' ability to increase the quality of instruction for students and improve student achievement.

Under the leadership and vision of Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist, in 2009 the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) developed a comprehensive and coherent strategic plan, [Transforming Education in Rhode Island](#) (*RIDE Strategic Plan*), which formed the foundation for our successful Race to the Top [application](#) and which guides us as we work toward increasing the quality of instruction and improving student achievement in our state.

Our strategic plan is based on the following theory of action:

- all students will achieve at high levels when we have an effective teacher in every classroom and an effective leader in every school; and
- Our teachers and school leaders will be most effective when they receive consistent and effective support and work within a system of policies and resources that is based on student needs.

Rhode Island has taken major steps toward this vision of success by implementing college- and career-ready expectations for all students, including adopting world-class standards and training to date more than 3,000 Rhode Island teachers regarding implementation of these standards. This commitment to providing direct support to teachers and administrators to ensure universal access to rigorous, standards-based instruction forms the backbone of our drive to improve student achievement. We are also fully engaged in supporting effective instruction and leadership, primarily through

the implementation across the entire state of educator evaluations based on multiple measures, including measures of student growth and achievement. At present we are seeking no additional flexibility regarding these two initiatives.

The third element of our efforts to increase the quality of instruction and to improve student achievement, which we describe in our strategic plan as “accelerating all schools toward greatness,” is the area in which we are requesting flexibility under the provisions of ESEA. We at the Rhode Island Department of Education (“RIDE”) have known for some time that our current NCLB accountability system allows too many of our schools to escape accountability for low-incidence populations, including English Learners and many of our racial and ethnic sub-populations. It is therefore not surprising that Rhode Island suffers from significant achievement gaps among student sub-populations. We began our work on this waiver application with an unflinching commitment to create a system of expectations, measurement, and accountability that would reveal these gaps wherever they exist and to use data about individual sub-group performance to drive meaningful and differentiated supports and interventions.

We have been bold in our efforts. RIDE has lowered the “n” size from 45 to 20, which we feel is the smallest number from which we can draw reasonable inferences about common needs within the cohort. We have derived consolidated subgroups that best serve to maximize accountability for our lowest incidence populations. For example, we did significant outreach to our English Learner and SPED advocacy communities to win their support for a consolidated subgroup of ELs and students with IEPs. We were able to win their support by demonstrating that combining the two subgroups raised the number of schools held accountable for their English Learners from 54 to 227. Coupled with RIDE’s commitment to using only disaggregated data to drive differentiated supports and interventions, it is this relentless pursuit of the truth that has won broad support within our state for this ambitious plan for expanded accountability.

As described in further detail under Principle 2 of this request, we hope to build upon our current state system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support in order to develop a system that:

- focuses on closing achievement gaps;
- identifies specific shortcomings and achievements at each school, rather than classifying schools as either making progress or in need of improvement;
- enables us to provide each school with the specific support or intervention needed to improve student achievement, rather than restricting us to a rigid set of intervention options; and,
- provides schools and districts with the ability to select bold and empirically proven interventions that respond to their context and their needs.

Rhode Island is proposing a classification and accountability system that evaluates schools on a wide array of measures so as to produce a detailed and multi-dimensional picture of school performance. Our accountability system consists of three distinct stages. In Stage 1, schools are assigned AMO’s by disaggregated sub-population in accordance with “Option A” of the waiver application. Schools and districts are held accountable for reaching these discrete targets, Failure to meet AMO’s in consecutive

years leads to state interventions. Stage 2 uses a multitude of measures derived from our state assessment system to measure the overall performance of the school. Through the use of lower “n” sizes and consolidated sub-groups, Rhode Island is able to hold 98% of its schools accountable for sub-group performance! This level of inclusion means that virtually all schools in Rhode Island are fully included in an accountability system that measures the performance of all students. The broad measures for which schools are held accountable include percent proficient for the school as a whole and for all student groups, percent proficient with distinction, growth over time, closing of achievement gaps, and graduation rates. This detailed information will allow us more accurately to determine which of our schools are in greatest need of support (Priority and Focus Schools) as well as which are our beacons of success (Reward Schools).

Once schools’ overall performance is measured, our system moves to State 3, which we refer to as the “diagnostic” stage. At this point, data is again disaggregated so that both we and the school can take a closer look at how individual students are actually performing within those schools whose overall performance earned them low scores in Stage 2. In other words, we set and measure AMO’s at the disaggregated level. We then use consolidated sub-groups to help us measure overall school performance in an inclusive and equitable manner. Finally, once we are ready to engage in diagnosis and treatment, we return to granular data unconstrained by limits of “n” size. This level of detail, along with the vast amount of data accessible in our RIDE Data Warehouse, will inform a much more nuanced and diagnostic approach to working with districts to accelerate their schools toward greatness. Time after time, we have found that it is a school’s inability to execute high-quality instruction with fidelity and consistency that prevents meaningful, sustained improvements.

RIDE has had a history of intervention in low-achieving schools, based on provisions in the No Child Left Behind Act and on state law. Our experience to date has been that interventions lead to an improved school climate and to short-term gains in student achievement, which schools have often been unable to sustain over time. We therefore propose under Principle 2 of this request an intervention system that establishes for each identified school a multi-year intervention plan that schools will implement in three stages:

1. diagnosis and planning (6 months);
2. implementation of the plan and progress monitoring (up to 3 years); and
3. transition to monitoring of outcome data or modification of the intervention, possibly leading to reconstitution, restart, or closure.

Our goal is to ensure that these intervention plans are responsive to the specific needs of each identified school and that they lead to improvements in instruction and achievement that schools can sustain over time. The system we propose will link intervention plans directly to the goals of our strategic plan, as well as to the many systemic supports developed through our Race to the Top grant. RIDE will work with districts and schools to design, implement, and monitor plans that ensure educator excellence in each school and that provide teachers and leaders with the support they need to improve instruction and to advance student achievement – be it training,

curriculum resources, data systems, technology, assistance regarding specific student populations, targeted aid as appropriate, or guidance on achieving efficiencies.

The waivers Rhode Island seeks are relatively minor, but of critical importance. Adding the concept of multiple measures to our system of school accountability will provide educators and decision makers with significantly more accurate pictures of school performance. Heretofore overlooked performance of low-incidence populations will be highlighted. We will have more detailed information about student growth and schools' ability to close achievement gaps among groups of students. We will have clearer pictures of how schools are improving over time and will be able to more accurately measure gains of students who are approaching, but have not yet achieved proficiency on our state assessments. Most importantly, our use of sophisticated diagnostic tools will provide better information regarding what individual schools need to focus on in the short term to improve teaching and learning. We are confident that our request is responsive to the needs of our schools, supportive of our teachers and school leaders, and in the best interest of the students of Rhode Island.

Principle 1: College- and Career-Ready Expectations

1.A Adopt College- and Career-Ready Standards

Option A

- The State has adopted college- and career-ready standards in at least reading/language arts and mathematics that are common to a significant number of States, consistent with part (1) of the definition of college- and career-ready standards.
- i. Attach evidence that the State has adopted the standards, consistent with the State's standards adoption process. (Attachment 4)

Option B

- The State has adopted college- and career-ready standards in at least reading/language arts and mathematics that have been approved and certified by a State network of institutions of higher education (IHEs), consistent with part (2) of the definition of college- and career-ready standards.
- i. Attach evidence that the State has adopted the standards, consistent with the State's standards adoption process. (Attachment 4)
- ii. Attach a copy of the memorandum of understanding or letter from a State network of IHEs certifying that students who meet these standards will not need remedial coursework at the postsecondary level. (Attachment 5)

1.B Transition to College and Career Ready Standards

Provide the SEA’s plan to transition to and implement no later than the 2013–2014 school year college- and career-ready standards statewide in at least reading/language arts and mathematics for all students and schools and include an explanation of how this transition plan is likely to lead to all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students, gaining access to and learning content aligned with such standards. The Department encourages an SEA to include in its plan activities related to each of the italicized questions in the corresponding section of the document titled *ESEA Flexibility Review Guidance*, or to explain why one or more of those activities is not necessary to its plan.

The Common Core and the Rhode Island Theory of Action

Overview

The central goal of our strategic plan, [Transforming Education in Rhode Island](#), is to ensure that all Rhode Island students are ready for success in college, careers, and life. Our theory of action is based on the premise that our teachers and school leaders will be most effective when they receive consistent and effective support and work within a system of policies and resources that is based on student needs. The commitment we made in our strategic plan to “establish world-class standards and assessments” is a critical priority in providing this support to our educators. *Transforming Education in Rhode Island* demonstrates our commitment not only to adopting the Common Core State Standards, but also to designing and implementing “appropriate professional development to ensure that teachers and teacher leaders” understand the Common Core and use it to inform instruction, assessment, and curriculum. We have learned through experience that the fidelity of execution at the classroom level is the critical lever needed to actually improve instruction and to raise student achievement. Full implementation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum aligned with a comprehensive assessment system that is available to every student must be the jointly held goal of the state and each of its Local Education Agencies. Finally, an effective instructional system requires a systematic problem-solving approach that provides student-centered, data-driven supports and interventions to identify and address gaps in student performance against the measurable expectations of the guaranteed and viable curriculum.

Background

Rhode Island was one of the first states to adopt the Common Core. We are a member of the Common Core Standards Initiative, a project directed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA) and supported by a coalition of 48 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia. The Common Core State Standards Initiative has developed content standards in English language arts and mathematics for grades K-12 that are envisioned as a first step toward national education reform.

Our past practice in Rhode Island clearly demonstrates our solid commitment to common content standards, through our participation in multi-state consortia, including:

New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP): Rhode Island is a founding member of NECAP. NECAP is the only operational multi-state consortium that developed internationally benchmarked common content standards and an operational common assessment in the multiple grades required by NCLB. The states involved in NECAP are committed to continuing their work together with the Common Core.

World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium: Rhode Island is also a member of WIDA, a 22-state consortium dedicated to the design and implementation of high standards, valid and reliable assessments, and equitable educational opportunities for English Learners. As an early member of this consortium, Rhode Island was one of the first states to adopt the WIDA English-language proficiency standards for all grades and core-content areas.

We have further demonstrated our long-standing commitment to common standards through our active role in participating in and providing feedback during the development of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). We are pleased that the Common Core reflects similar expectations of rigor and close alignment with our current state content standards, and we are pleased that the Common Core and our current state standards show the same commitment to college- and career-readiness.

Adopting the Common Core

Before presenting the Common Core to the R.I. Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education (Board of Regents) for approval, the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) established a Common Core Engagement Committee, made up of representatives from the Governor's Office, the Office of Higher Education, the Department of Labor and Training, and RIDE, to review the standards and to provide feedback in order to ensure the seamless adoption of and transition to the Common Core State Standards. In addition, throughout the drafting process, we at RIDE used our state content specialists to engage our district-level and higher-education content leadership committees, including teachers and principals, in reviewing and providing feedback on the Common Core.

Upon the release of the CCSS, RIDE began a process of examining the standards to ensure that these standards maintain the high expectations that we have set for our students through our current standards, the GLEs (Grade-Level Expectations) and GSEs (Grade-Span Expectations). Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist presented this information to the Board of Regents on June 17 and June 24, 2010. RIDE also described its detailed implementation plan to ensure that all schools are fully implementing a curriculum that is aligned with the Common Core standards prior to the first assessment based on the Common Core standards, during the 2014-15 school year.

On July 1, 2010, the Board of Regents voted unanimously to “Adopt the *Common Core State Standards, as presented.*”

For evidence of this adoption, view the minutes from [Board of Regents July 1, 2010 meeting](#).

In order to establish a consistent set of standards for birth through grade twelve, Rhode Island will be aligning the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards with the Common Core, and we will be developing standards for children ages birth through 3. This work is scheduled to begin later this year, with the Board of Regents scheduled to vote next year (2013) on adoption of the early-learning standards. As a winner of a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, Rhode Island will develop high-quality professional development and assessments to support instruction in early learning.

Timeline for transition to the Common Core

The transition to curriculum and instruction that is fully aligned with the Common Core State Standards will occur over several years, with the expectation of full implementation by the 2013-14 school year.

Beginning July 2010, when Rhode Island adopted the Common Core, Rhode Island initiated the awareness phase of its transition to the CCSS. In this phase, RIDE began outreach on the standards and began developing and sharing resources to build statewide awareness of the adoption of the standards and what that means for stakeholders. As we approached the current (2011-12) school year, RIDE initiated the transition phase of its plan. Throughout the next (2012-13) school year, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) will be transitioning to instruction aligned with the CCSS. Our RTTT “Study of the Standards” initiative has greatly facilitated this initiative. During this transition phase (up to the fall of 2013, one year prior to the first state assessments based on the Common Core), RIDE will provide professional development, assessment and instructional management systems, professional development and resources to districts in order to support educators across the state in their transition to the Common Core.

The strategy for transition to the Common Core includes:

- training (professional development) for educators (teachers and school leaders);
- development of instructional materials and curriculum;
- provision of student supports; and
- a detailed [timeline](#) to support LEA planning.

Comparing the Common Core with Current Standards

Overview

Our existing standards in Rhode Island (Grade Level Expectations and Grade Span Expectations, or GLEs and GSEs) for mathematics, reading, and written/oral communication are comparable in scope, sequencing, and rigor to Common Core. The Common Core includes rigorous expectations, robust content, and relevant, real-world skills. By adopting these standards, Rhode Island is positioned to work with other states on collaborative curriculum and assessment initiatives, such as the PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers), which will replace the current state assessment (NECAP) in 2014-15 for reading and mathematics, and the new alternate assessment for students with severe disabilities, which will replace the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment.

After Rhode Island adopted the Common Core, RIDE further studied the alignment between the two sets of standards – the current standards (GLEs and GSEs) and the Common Core. RIDE quickly learned that structural differences between the two sets of standards would make a crosswalk document complex and not likely to be useful. Our analysts determined that there was not a direct standard-to-standard link between the GLEs/GSEs and the Common Core. Rather, component elements of the GLEs/GSEs mapped fairly precisely to component elements of the Common Core standards. RIDE accordingly developed resources that identified the structure and focus of the Common Core, and RIDE identified the major shifts from the GLEs and GSEs to the Common Core. These resources underscore our belief that educators must study the standards and develop a guaranteed and viable curriculum aligned with the Common Core. We understand that full transition to instruction and assessment aligned with the Common Core is a process that can be managed only by well-informed and fully supported teachers and administrators. To that end, RIDE has developed and distributed comparative overviews of our current state standards in [ELA](#) and [Math](#) and the Common Core.

Adapting current assessments to the Common Core

Upon adoption of the Common Core, the four NECAP states conducted a comparison of the GLEs/GSEs and the CCSS. This comparison included analysis by the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment and the content specialists from the NECAP states, in collaboration with the NECAP assessment contractor, of the two sets of standards. The collective goal of the NECAP states was to create a transition strategy that would be fair to educators and students and that would maintain the quality of the information that the tests provide. The assessment specialists and content specialists from the NECAP states, as well as the NECAP assessment contractors and the NECAP Technical Advisory Committee, reviewed the resulting plan for transitioning from NECAP to CCSS.

Over the course of the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years, districts across the four NECAP states are transitioning to the Common Core State Standards. Although the pace and sequencing of changes to curriculum and instruction vary across districts and schools within and across the NECAP states, all four states expect districts and schools to be prepared to fully implement the Common Core State Standards during the 2013-14 school year.

During the transition period, the NECAP reading, writing, and mathematics tests will continue to be administered in the fall of 2012 and 2013 and will remain aligned with the current standards (GLEs and GSEs).

Here are the highlights of the transition plan:

- there will be *no* changes to the GLEs/GSEs assessed on the NECAP reading, mathematics, and writing tests in the fall of 2012;
- there will be *no* changes to the GLEs/GSEs assessed on the NECAP reading and writing tests in the fall of 2013;
- there will be *some* changes to the GLEs assessed on the NECAP mathematics tests in the fall of 2013; and
- there are no changes to the GSEs assessed on the Grade 11 NECAP mathematics tests in the fall of 2013.

In addition, RIDE developed a transition plan that outlines the role and schedule of the current state assessment and all planned changes during the transition to the Common Core.

Transition to the Common Core

Overview

The Rhode Island plan to support the implementation of the Common Core Standards builds on a strong foundation established through regulation and practice. [The Rhode Island Basic Education Program](#) (BEP) regulations set forth the basic level of academic and support programs required in each Local Education Agency (LEA). The BEP requires that all LEAs implement a guaranteed and viable curriculum with an aligned comprehensive assessment system that includes formative, interim, and summative evaluations of all students in each core content area. In addition, the BEP requires that LEAs use a problem-solving approach to provide student-centered, data-driven supports and interventions that build upon the foundation of the guaranteed and viable curriculum. This approach must be comprehensive and systematic, and it must provide students with a full continuum of universal, targeted, and intensive supports that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, research-based, and designed to respond to student needs. The assessment and instructional management systems, professional development and resources that we are building and providing to districts are designed to support educators across the state in their transition to the Common Core.

The Rhode Island transition plan for the implementation of high-quality standards targets professional development and resources for educators at differing levels of intensity. Our plan also matches professional development and resources with LEA need and capacity. RIDE contracts with The Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin (The Dana Center) to ensure that LEAs are able to develop and deliver curriculum aligned with the Common Core standards. RIDE also worked with the WIDA and NECAP Consortiums and with the Rhode Island Response to Intervention Initiative to provide district leaders, principals, and teachers with professional development that will help educators to use state and local assessment data to inform decisions regarding curriculum and instruction. This work both informs and supports our transition to the Common Core and PARCC assessments. We designed each component of the Rhode Island transition plan to implement standards so that all elements of the plan work together to drive changes in the daily instructional cycle that takes place in every classroom in Rhode Island.

To achieve this goal, RIDE began by conducting broad outreach to build awareness and support for the Common Core. Following this outreach, we developed resources and professional-development opportunities to build LEA capacity in four target areas:

- supporting all educators as they work to understand the standards;
- providing intensive support for curriculum alignment and resource development in targeted LEAs;
- building a comprehensive assessment system; and
- providing access to and professional development in the use of data to drive instructional decision-making.

The Common Core standards will drive greater student achievement only to the degree that all teachers and principals understand the standards and have aligned curriculum, instructional strategies, and resources to teach our students effectively. RIDE makes resources and systems support available to all LEAs through our instructional-management system. Through this system, teachers are able to access units of study and local and state assessment data to support instruction. Through the integration of these supports, educators will deliver high-quality; differentiated, data-driven instruction aligned with the Common Core standards.

Consistent with the Rhode Island theory of action that teachers and school leaders will be most effective when they receive consistent and effective support and when they work within a system of policies and resources that is based on student needs, our strategy for transition to the Common Core calls for developing teachers' capacity to deliver high-quality, differentiated, data-driven instruction aligned with standards and for giving teachers the tools they need to do so. These tools must enable all educators to provide student-centered, data-driven supports and interventions to meet the needs of students with disabilities, English Learners, and low-achieving students. With this principle in mind, we are designing training that supports all educators in improving instruction. Because principals and other leaders set the culture for the school and create the necessary context for effective teaching, this strategy will also develop school

and LEA leaders' understanding of the standards and of the importance of the Common Core standards in guiding school-reform efforts.

To further support Rhode Island educators, RIDE has developed [timelines](#) and [other resources](#) on transition to the Common Core in Rhode Island.

Awareness

Outreach on the Common Core

Our first step in transitioning to the Common Core was to engage in broad outreach to stakeholders in order to build awareness of and support for the adoption of the CCSS. In addition to informal and formal presentations on the CCSS, RIDE developed informational materials targeted to various stakeholder groups, including teachers, administrators, members of the higher-education community, families, and community members. We distributed these materials through various list-serves, and we posted the materials on the RIDE website.

Following the Board of Regents' adoption of the Common Core standards, RIDE sent copies of the standards to all LEAs in the state, and we posted the Common Core State Standards on our website for the public to access. We created implementation documents that illustrate the similarities and differences between the current standards and Common Core standards. We developed a detailed transition plan, which includes a timeline and strategies for implementing curriculum and for ensuring instructional alignment with the Common Core. This timeline also provides details on the transition to the new PARCC assessments, and the timeline provides information regarding when we will begin to use the PARCC assessments for accountability.

Upon completion of the timeline and implementation documents, RIDE sent these materials to every LEA in Rhode Island. RIDE staff members conducted regional meetings to orient educators to the changes and to the additions that the Common Core will bring about. These regional meetings also provided educators with opportunities to discuss implications and needs, which will help to ensure fidelity of implementation throughout the transition to the Common Core. During these meetings and continuously thereafter, RIDE has been developing and distributing content-specific training materials with a focus on [ELA](#) and [math](#).

Supports for educators in the understanding the Common Core

RIDE implemented a process to ensure that all educators have the tools and training necessary to engage in an ongoing study of the standards. This process will help educators understand the Common Core Standards deeply enough to effectively align lessons, assessments, and resources with the Common Core. RIDE is in the process of offering the *Study of Standards* training, developed in partnership with The Dana Center of the University of Texas at Austin, to educators across the state with the goal of directly training more than 4,100 educators. The *Study of the Standards* training

teaches educators a process through which they can implement a continuous study of the standards in their schools, and the training helps educators learn to use the tools they will need in order to study the standards.

The *Study of the Standards* instructs and guides educators regarding:

- how to use a provided set of tools in order to ensure that their LEA has in place curriculum that is aligned with the standards; and
- how to integrate the standards effectively into their daily instruction.

We conduct separate sessions on Mathematics and English Language Arts in order to enable participants to experience the purpose, intent, depth, and clarity of the standards. These trainings were designed to engage educators in examining the coherence and alignment of the standards both vertically (across grade levels) and horizontally (between subjects within a grade), and the training sessions therefore include educators in kindergarten through grade 12. The training emphasizes the process for integrating the standards into a teacher’s instruction and assessment plan. Educators can apply tools and processes that they learn in these training sessions to any content at any grade level.

Our goal is to ensure that as many teachers, school-based administrators, and higher-education faculty members within teacher-preparation programs attend the sessions as possible – so that all educators have the common tools and common language for implementing the standards in their classrooms. LEAs identify appropriate educators in their schools to participate in trainings, including general-education classroom teachers, teachers of English Learners and of students with disabilities, and school and district leaders. To date, more than 4,100 educators in Rhode Island have participated in a *Study of the Standards* session. This figure includes approximately 3,800 teachers or instructional leaders, 200 principals or assistant principals, and 35 central-office administrators representing LEAs. Over the next two years, an additional 900 Rhode Island educators will go through *Study of Standards* training. In order to demonstrate the alignment between the components of the Common Core and the WIDA English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards, we will hold additional sessions for ESL teachers and other general educators who teach English Learners once we have the benefit of the revised WIDA standards currently under development.

RIDE is not training every educator in the each LEA directly, but we are developing resources and protocols for those who attend the training to use when they share the tools with other educators in their schools. In addition, we are developing other tools to facilitate a deep understanding of the standards. As RIDE develops these resource materials, we make the resources available to all educators through the RIDE website. These resources include guidance on how to use the tools with teams of grade-level educators that include general-education teachers, teachers of English Learners, and teachers of students with disabilities. For example, the Instructional Alignment Chart is a tool included in the *Study of the Standards* training (as well as in the intensive curriculum alignment). The protocol that we developed for this tool engages teams in

discussing grade-level standards and identifying the standard that addresses the same topic in the prior and subsequent grades. The protocol also discusses the changes that should occur in instruction from grade to grade so that each member of the team better understands what he or she is expected to teach in each grade level. After the members of the team clearly understand what they should teach at each grade level, the team engages in discussions regarding the implications for the various levels of instruction and assessment. Using these tools, educators discuss the diverse instructional needs of their student population, including students with disabilities and English Learners. Educators also learn how to integrate the WIDA ELP standards into instruction and assessment.

To ensure that new teachers and principals are well versed in the Common Core, RIDE invites higher-education teachers and leaders to *Study of the Standards* sessions. Participation in these trainings enables educators in teacher- and principal-preparation programs to use the same language and concepts that we are using to train educators and school leaders currently working in our K-12 system. We continue to meet regularly with staff members from the R.I. Office of Higher Education and with two content specialists in teacher-preparation programs to receive their input as we transition to the Common Core and PARCC. We will continue inviting our partners in higher education to participate in training sessions and in other opportunities for professional development.

To date, 19 higher-education faculty members, many of whom are in teacher-placement or teacher-preparation programs for incoming teachers and principals, have participated in our Study of Standards sessions to learn how to prepare our incoming teachers and school leaders on transition to the Common Core.

Instructional materials, Curriculum, and the Common Core

In addition to training teachers and principals in all Rhode Island LEAs in the Common Core State Standards, RIDE provides intensive alignment training in a subset of targeted LEAs. The intent of this intensive training is to build capacity within those LEAs and to help teams of educators from those LEAs develop high-quality curriculum resources that RIDE will later provide educators in all LEAs.

In 2008, RIDE entered a partnership with The Dana Center to engage LEAs in aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment with one another and with the standards in mathematics and science. When Rhode Island won a Race to the Top grant in 2010, we expanded our plans for curriculum-development work with the Dana Center. We see the Dana Center as a key partner in implementing our vision of having coherent and aligned curriculum for all students in all subject areas. In addition to building capacity in our LEAs, this partnership will produce substantive model curricula in mathematics, science, English language arts (ELA), and social studies, which we will make available through our instructional-improvement system so that all LEAs can use and adapt the curricula. Our goal is to develop four model curricula in mathematics, three in science, two in ELA, and one in social studies by 2014-15. We have made mathematics and science our priorities because mathematics and science are the areas where our data show the

greatest need for stronger, better-aligned curricula.

The curriculum-development process includes two strands of work: curriculum writing and leadership development. Through this curriculum-development process, teams of approximately 10 teachers per grade level come together over two years, as the writing team, to build a standards-aligned scope and sequence that will become the scope and sequence for the LEA. Teacher teams include content-area teachers as well as teachers of English Learners and teachers of students with disabilities. The teachers on each team “unpack” the standards, examining the vertical alignment within subjects and the horizontal alignment between standards in different subjects. Through this process, the teams identify opportunities to teach concepts and skills from one set of standards (such as writing or mathematics) in other subjects across the curriculum. The teams then construct the scope, content, and sequence of the curriculum, addressing the need for differentiated instruction and specific language-acquisition skill development as part of the scope-and-sequence design. During the second year of the process, the team works from the scope and sequence to create units of study—the planned, written, and taught curriculum. Because of the process involved in the creation of these documents, the units of study are closely aligned with the standards and there is tremendous teacher buy-in. The final step in this work is a process called the Professional Teaching Model (PTM). The PTM is an eight-step process that expands upon the collaborative discussions, using the Instructional Alignment Chart, a tool that the teams used during Study of the Standards and the early sessions of the intensive curriculum-alignment work. The PTM promotes dialogue about content and pedagogy, and the PTM also common language and collaboration among educators in addition to increased student achievement and program coherence. Through this process, educators study the standards, determine the criteria for student demonstration of the standards, and plan common lessons. This planning includes developing appropriate accommodations or strategies for diverse learning needs, implementing the lessons, and analyzing and revising lessons based on student results.

LEA leaders, principals, and lead teachers participate in five leadership sessions to study the standards and to identify the structures that need to be in place to support implementing the Common Core standards in their schools or in their curriculum. In the leadership sessions, these educators also study the assessments that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. The leadership teams begin by examining current student outcomes—both overall and for specific populations of students—to identify and focus attention on populations of students whom our schools may not be serving well, such as English Learners or low-income students. The teams identify achievement gaps and specific areas in need of improvement, and the teams set three-year goals for raising student achievement in specific areas and for specific populations of students for whom there are achievement gaps.

The teams participate in a simulation of leading change within the LEA in order to help the school leaders prepare for obstacles they may encounter. So that they understand this work deeply, the leadership teams then engage in the same detailed work of examining the standards that teams of teachers have engaged in. We train leadership

teams to use a “walk-through” protocol to collect data that they can use to identify areas of alignment and opportunities for improvement. Finally, we train the teams on how to use the data that they collect in these walk-throughs in order to engage in conversations with teachers regarding aligned curriculum, instructional practices, and assessment. The output of this work is a common set of vocabulary, tools, and structures for leaders to use in support of teacher implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

Building a Comprehensive Assessment System

Rhode Island is committed to developing a comprehensive assessment system, aligned with the Common Core standards that will provide data to inform curriculum and instructional decisions at the state, LEA, and school levels. This system is a critical component of the Rhode Island Strategic Plan, *Transforming Education in Rhode Island* (RIDE Strategic Plan). The Rhode Island Basic Education Program regulations (BEP) require each LEA to develop a comprehensive assessment system that measures student performance and that includes formative, interim, and summative evaluations in each core content area.

The [*Rhode Island Criteria and Guidance for a Comprehensive Assessment System*](#) document defines a comprehensive assessment system as a coordinated plan for monitoring the academic achievement of students from prekindergarten through grade 12. The goals of the comprehensive assessment system are:

- to increase student learning by producing actionable data;
- to evaluate the effectiveness of programs; and
- to ensure that all students are making progress toward achieving learning goals.

A comprehensive assessment system must be appropriate for the student population, and the comprehensive assessment system must address the assessment needs of all students, including students with disabilities, culturally and linguistically diverse students, and students in early-childhood programs. RIDE conducts monthly webinars to support LEAs as they develop comprehensive assessment systems. We record these webinars, and we post them on our website. These webinars focus on a variety of topics, including reliability and validity, cultural and linguistic demands of assessments, and how a comprehensive assessment system supports other initiatives (e.g., RTI, educator evaluation, and performance-based graduation requirements). To ensure that LEAs are well-informed about the development and long-term role the comprehensive assessment system, RIDE developed and published an overview and resource materials, the Rhode Island Criteria and Guidance for a Comprehensive Assessment System.

To directly affect the day-to-day learning cycle in the classroom, we are developing online formative assessment modules to teach every educator in Rhode Island how to use tools and processes to effectively design and utilize formative assessment

practices. These practices are connected and embedded in the curriculum in order to accurately measure student learning in regard to daily and weekly learning aims. Further, these web-based modules will be part of the Rhode Island Instructional Management System (IMS). With access to high-quality training on formative assessment, all teachers will have the skills to:

- embed assessment within the learning activity;
- directly link it to the current unit of instruction; and
- use the information gathered to inform instructional “next steps.”

This training will build upon the curriculum work that the LEAs have completed.

RIDE will provide all LEAs in the state with high-quality interim assessments so that they can better assess students’ progress toward annual learning goals. These assessments will be available through the IMS, and teachers can administer these assessments online as well as through the paper-and-pencil format. These interim assessments will use enhanced online accommodations that we developed to meet Accessible Portable Item Profile (APIP) standards. These standards ensure access for all learners, specifically students with disabilities, English Learners, and low-achieving students. Many LEAs in Rhode Island requested that the state provide such interim assessments to enhance the development of the comprehensive assessment systems that LEAs have developed. High-quality interim assessments, which are valid measures of progress toward annual goals, are difficult for an LEA to create in-house and are expensive for a small LEA to purchase.

The interim-assessment system will be made up of two components: fixed-form assessments in English language arts and mathematics in grades 3 through 11 and a test-building engine with a comprehensive item bank. The test-building engine will enable educators to build high-quality assessments in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Items would include selected response, constructed response, and performance tasks. We envision the test-building engine being able to serve two purposes for LEAs. First, at the LEA level, teacher teams can work together to build assessments aligned with the LEA curriculum and that teachers could use as end-of-unit assessments implemented in every school. Second, individual educators can develop assessments to assess specific skills on a more frequent basis.

Finally, as part of our Comprehensive Assessment System, Rhode Island is participating in several national consortia, which are or will implement common summative assessments. Rhode Island is a governing member in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium, a member of the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) consortium, and a member of the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium. Rhode Island is taking an active role in each consortium to ensure that the assessments are rigorous, of high quality, and valid and reliable measurements of the student population the assessment is designed to assess.

PARCC is creating a common assessment system to assess students in kindergarten through high school. The assessments will determine whether students are college- and career-ready or on track. The PARCC summative assessment will have two components. Through performance tasks (e.g., writing effectively when analyzing text, solving mathematics problems based on everyday scenarios), the first component will assess hard-to-measure standards. The second component is made up of innovative items that machines can score. PARCC is also developing two optional assessments (early and mid-year) that schools can use to provide instructionally useful feedback to teachers and students but that do not contribute to a student's summative-assessment score. The first is expected to be diagnostic and an early indicator of student knowledge and skills, and the second is expected to be performance-based. PARCC is also developing a K-2 assessment to monitor readiness for grade 3. All assessments are expected to be computer-delivered.

The NCSC is developing a comprehensive system that addresses the curriculum, instruction, and assessment needs of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The NCSC is developing a summative assessment in English language arts and Mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and in one grade level in high school. The NCSC is designing this summative assessment to support valid inferences about student achievement on the assessed domains. The NCSC will use technology to deliver assessments with appropriate accommodations, to score, and to report on the assessments. In addition, the NCSC is developing curriculum and instruction tools, and the NCSC is developing state-level communities of practice. These resources will support educators as they design and implement appropriate instruction that addresses content and skill expectations aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS); these resources will also help prepare students with the most significant cognitive disabilities for postsecondary life.

Rhode Island is a member of the World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium. WIDA is a consortium of 27 states dedicated to the design and implementation of high standards and equitable educational opportunities for English Learners (ELs). As a member of the WIDA Consortium, Rhode Island uses the ACCESS for ELs to annually measure the English-language proficiency (ELP) of English Learners across the state. The ACCESS for ELs is aligned with the WIDA Summative English Language Proficiency Standards, and the U.S. Department of Education has accepted the ACCESS assessment as a valid and reliable assessment of English proficiency. WIDA has received an Enhanced Assessment Grant to build a new, comprehensive and balanced technology-based assessment system for English Learners. This assessment system will be anchored in the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards, which are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. The new WIDA assessment system will benefit from rigorous ongoing research, and the assessment system will have the support of comprehensive professional development and outreach. The system will include a summative test, an on-demand diagnostic (screener) test, classroom benchmark assessments, and formative-assessment resources.

Providing access to and professional development in the use of data to drive instructional decision-making

Our theory of action emphasizes that effective teachers and effective leaders must have the support of comprehensive student-centered systems, particularly data collection and analysis systems. One of our most important state roles, therefore, is to support LEA efforts to improve student academic achievement by giving them the data and tools necessary to track students' progress relative to the standards and helping LEAs to use this information to inform instruction. To achieve this goal, RIDE is building an Instructional Management System (IMS) that will include a curriculum-and-assessment module, Response to Intervention module, and online professional-development modules. The IMS will enable educators to access and analyze data showing how their students are performing against state standards and to use this knowledge to provide students with appropriate instructional supports. The system will also enable school leaders to access, analyze, and act on the differentiated strengths and needs of their teachers, and it will enable school leaders to provide teachers with appropriate professional development, resources, and assistance. The formative-assessment modules and the interim assessments will also be integrated into the IMS. Through the IMS, educators will access the curriculum documents, including scope and sequence, units of study, and lesson plans that LEAs will develop through the intensive curriculum alignment. A statewide lesson-plan template will allow educators to share lessons with other educators across the state and to receive feedback on these lessons. The lesson-plan format will include a section to describe instructional strategies to ensure that all students can access and participate in the curriculum. For example, ESL professionals will be able to add appropriate instructional strategies to lessons in any content area that general education teachers from their district, and even from other districts, can access – thereby building capacity for supporting appropriate instruction for English Learners in all content areas.

Highly effective teachers and leaders are at the heart of our theory of action. Therefore, RIDE will be providing high-quality, targeted professional development on data-driven instruction to advance student achievement. This training will build upon the Response to Intervention training aimed at improving achievement for at-risk students that has been occurring in the state since 2005. The Rhode Island Response to Intervention Initiative provides district leaders, principals, and teachers with professional development in using state and local assessment data to inform decisions regarding curriculum and instruction. If data and instructional-management practice are to translate into improvements in the day-to-day cycle of teaching and learning in our classrooms, teachers must have both the skills and the motivation to use data effectively to improve student outcomes. The Using Data Professional Development series will be made up of four different components of professional development, each one tiered by content and delivery based on specific LEA needs. A school leadership team made up of four educators, including the principal from every school in Rhode Island, will participate in this training. Before delivering the professional development, our vendor will assess the needs of each LEA, assign each cohort to a specific tier of training, and tailor professional development based on the results. Through this

training, principals and other school leaders will learn how to use assessment data to track student progress, to provide support to students not making progress, and to ensure that our schools use effective practices for diverse learners.

Support for Students and the Common Core

English Learners and Students with Disabilities

Our approach to ensuring that students with disabilities, English Learners, and students who are low achieving reach college and career readiness is inherent in our strategic-plan goal of closing achievement gaps and in our regulatory requirement for a tiered instructional system built on the foundation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum. The Rhode Island BEP requires each LEA to implement a set of coherent, organized instructional strategies designed to ensure positive improvements in student learning. LEAs must base these strategies on current research, and LEAs must adjust these strategies according to student progress-monitoring and to assessment data. The organized strategies must include specific interventions for students who are not meeting proficiency standards or who are at risk of non-promotion or of dropping out of school. Additionally, each LEA must provide a full continuum of universal, targeted, and intensive supports that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, research-based, and designed to respond to student needs in compliance with the specific requirements for support services.

Our plan to transition to the Common Core, as we have described above, includes providing professional development, resources, and systems that include specific connections to address the needs of students with disabilities, English Learners, and students who are low achieving. The first step toward meeting the needs of all learners is a core instructional program that is designed to include all learners. We know, however, that some students will need supports beyond the core instructional program; therefore RIDE will develop specific supports to assist educators in analyzing and implementing the learning and accommodation factors necessary to ensure that students with disabilities and English Learners receive the support they need to become ready for success in college and in careers.

As a member of the National Center and State Collaborative, we will be developing resources to support educators to design and implement appropriate instruction that addresses content and skill expectations aligned to the Common Core for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to prepare them for postsecondary life. Curriculum resource guides for focus content within mathematics and ELA will provide information on instruction within the general education setting, differentiation through Universal Design for Learning, and teaching and applying skills in meaningful content areas. Online professional development modules will help special educators gain an understanding of the prioritized academic content within learning progressions that describe a curricular sequence for how students develop understanding in each content area over time. Finally, formative and interim tools will be developed as part of

comprehensive curriculum, instruction, and assessment resources that can be used by educators throughout the school year to monitor student progress.

To ensure that English Learners will have the opportunity to achieve to these college- and career-ready standards, RIDE will continue to work with the WIDA Consortium to ensure alignment of the English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards. The WIDA consortium conducted an alignment study with the current WIDA standards and the Common Core. According to the executive summary of that study, adequate linking across all grade clusters exists between the WIDA English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards Model Performance Indicators (MPIs) and the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts (Reading, Writing, and Speaking and Listening) and Mathematics.

Rhode Island is one of three states that have partnered with the Center for Applied Linguistics, with the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, and with representatives from various institutions of higher education in the initial development of the next generation of WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS). A large proportion of this work is the alignment of the ELPS with the Common Core State Standards to ensure a seamless and comprehensive common-standards framework for English Learners. Rhode Island (and the other 21 WIDA Consortium member states) will adopt this next generation of WIDA standards this spring, when final versions are ready. When the standards work is complete, WIDA will offer a combination of printed guidance and training materials, computer-based trainings, and in-person training for LEAs.

RIDE also provides training and resources to teachers responsible for instructing students who are English Learners to enable these teachers to use the WIDA ELPS in conjunction with content standards. These resources and training opportunities will help educators meet the academic and language needs of English Learners at all proficiency levels. This added step will reinforce the need to develop both social and academic language skills for this population of students. The training and resources are targeted to both ESL professionals and all general-education professionals. This broad-based training reinforces our philosophy that the education of English Learners is the responsibility of all teachers, and the training also helps to build capacity, making the philosophy a reality in all classrooms.

Rhode Island is working with the PARCC consortium to analyze and implement the learning and accommodation factors necessary to ensure that students with disabilities become ready for success in college and careers. Rhode Island is member of the Accessibility, Accommodations, and Fairness Operational Working Group, which is drafting the PARCC accommodations policy. Computer-based testing under the PARCC assessments will provide a variety of ways of implementing universal design, and PARCC will use online accommodations to provide for increased access for students with disabilities. Although our focus up to now has been on working with all educators to develop a deeper understanding of the Common Core State Standards, we are engaged in internal conversations regarding the resources and professional-

development opportunities on the Common Core that are specifically designed for educators working with students with disabilities. It is important that the work with the PARCC consortium inform our training and our supports for assisting LEAs in identifying appropriate the learning and accommodation factors necessary to ensure that students with disabilities will have the opportunity to achieve to the college- and career-ready standards.

Ensuring our students are ready for college and careers

As part of our goal of linking standards, graduation requirements, and college-entry requirements, Rhode Island is using the Common Core to support greater PK-20 alignment and integration between the Rhode Island PK-12 and higher-education systems.

The R.I. Board of Governors for Higher Education (RIBGHE) has committed to launch a study of the new exit standards for high school and to work with RIDE to use individual student scores from the Rhode Island high-school assessments to determine placement of recent high-school graduates into initial credit-bearing courses (i.e., non-developmental courses) in English and mathematics at RIBGHE institutions (the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and the University of Rhode Island). This work is an initial step toward more significant vertical alignment between PK-12 and higher education within Rhode Island. In addition to this state effort, there are early-stage conversations taking place among the New England public colleges and universities planning to do similar work with exit standards across all of the NECAP states as well as across all five of the New England States (Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont) participating in the New England Secondary School Consortium.

RIDE continues to pursue initiatives that will ensure that our graduates are well prepared for success in college and in challenging careers. Rhode Island was honored this year to receive a \$75,000 grant to expand opportunities for College Board Advanced Placement (AP) courses in persistently low-achieving public high schools serving low-income students. The grant is from the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust. The Rhode Island Foundation will administer the funds, and RIDE is managing the program.

We are using the funds to support the training of teachers and teaching assistants to prepare them to teach AP courses. “The goal of the program is to utilize AP to help drive reform in these high schools and better serve the students who attend them, preparing these students for college or careers upon graduation,” wrote Richard M. Krasno, the executive director of the trust, in awarding the grant.

As Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist has noted, participation in AP courses and exams has been increasing in Rhode Island high schools, but we still see wide opportunity gaps across the state, with some schools offering 10 or more AP courses and with others, particularly in our urban districts, offering few or none.

This grant is helping Providence and other communities to close the opportunity gap and to provide rigorous and challenging courses to all students. Providence, in particular, has made and fulfilled a commitment to offer AP courses in each of its high schools.

During the 2010-11 school year, 3,102 Rhode Island public-school students took AP exams, an increase of 13.8 percent over the prior year. Students took a total of 4,956 exams, an increase of 11.3 percent. According to a report from the College Board, the range of AP course offerings varied widely across the state last year, with Classical High School (an exam-entry school in Providence) offering 19 courses, Portsmouth High School offering 16 courses, Barrington High School offering 14 courses, and North Kingstown High School offering 12 courses. At the other extreme, some high schools in Providence and in other urban communities offered only 1 or 2 AP courses.

Recognizing this inequity, the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust was inspired to make the aforementioned grant to Rhode Island by Commissioner Gist's commitment to ensuring that all students in Rhode Island will be prepared to succeed in postsecondary education, careers, and life.

To further ensure that Rhode Island students are prepared for college, careers, and life, Rhode Island has adopted progressive, rigorous, balanced, and widely heralded graduation requirements. Beginning in 2003, Rhode Island embarked upon a statewide secondary reform agenda that resulted in the development of an innovative performance-based component to the statewide graduation requirements. Over the past nine years, this system has undergone regular refinement. Now called *The Rhode Island Diploma System*, Rhode Island's graduation requirements reflect a clear set of policy goals:

1. Set a high and common standard for graduation. The regulations set high academic standards and measure student performance through coursework and the state assessment. Students are required to complete four years of English and math and three years of science instruction. At the same time, the Diploma System requires that LEAs teach students the essential 21st-century skills – teamwork, innovation, problem-solving, and communication – and are assessed through senior projects and portfolios.

2. Value and recognize all aspects of student achievement equally. Rhode Island is not a state that recognizes and values only the state assessment. Students must meet state and local requirements on all three of the graduation requirements: state assessments, coursework, and performance-based assessments. No single element is more or less important than the others.

3. Require intensive intervention for students and reward them for growth. Rather than establishing a single cut score on the state assessment, Rhode Island's graduation requirements focus on promoting growth for students who are at risk for academic failure. The regulations require schools and districts to provide additional support and interventions for struggling students.

4. Honor students who achieve at high levels. Students achieving at high levels are eligible to earn a Regents' commendation. All students are eligible to earn this distinction through a diploma system that rewards excellence and inspires all students to do their best work.

In February 2011, the Rhode Island Board of Regents voted to clarify and strengthen the role of the state assessment as one of the three measures within Rhode Island's Diploma System. Under these new requirements, students in the Class of 2014 – the rising juniors – will be responsible for reaching a performance level on the state assessment that corresponds to student readiness to enter community college without remediation. RIDE has been working closely with community-based organizations, school districts to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of and preparing for this change. This outreach effort has included [brochures](#), [frequently asked questions](#), and [student letters](#) in multiple languages. The strengthened role of the state assessments as part of Rhode Island's multiple measure system is designed to ensure that *all* Rhode Island graduates are prepared for the challenges they face beyond high school.

RIDE places a strong emphasis on the role of technical education as one element of a portfolio of portable skills that will ensure student success in college, careers, and life. Beginning in May 2011, RIDE began a comprehensive redesign of the statewide system of career and technical education. This redesign began with the rewriting of the career and technical education regulations, a set of regulations that were over 20 years old. Under the new regulatory scheme, career and technical education is staged to play a prominent role secondary education in Rhode Island. The revised regulations focus on:

1. Preparing learners for postsecondary education and careers resulting in employment that provides family-sustaining wages.
2. Supporting students' postsecondary success through planning, credentialing, industry partnerships, and articulation with higher education and training programs.
3. Investing in high-quality, highly effective career preparation programs offered through a diverse statewide delivery system.

Under the newly designed system of career and technical education, LEAs will be required to provide all students access to rigorous technical programs of study that yield industry-recognized credentials and promote student access into post-secondary education and training programs. The redesign of the system, coupled with the prospect of increased state funding, will help Rhode Island meet our goal of serving 30% of students in technical education programs.

In addition to the expansion of high quality, industry-specific career and technical education programs, RIDE is leading a multi-agency, statewide effort to adopt a work-readiness credential. When formalized, this credential will be earned concurrently with a diploma and will focus on providing students with direct instruction on workplace skills. RIDE, along with the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, the Governor's Workforce Board, and the local Chambers of Commerce have joined forces to ensure that the credential is useful, recognized, and connected to rigorous and meaningful instruction and career-readiness training for secondary school students.

Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide evidence corresponding to the option.

1.C High-Quality Assessments that Measure Student Growth

Option A	Option B	Option C
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The SEA is participating in one of the two State consortia that received a grant under the Race to the Top Assessment competition.</p> <p>i. Attach the State’s Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) under that competition. (Attachment 6)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> The SEA is not participating in either one of the two State consortia that received a grant under the Race to the Top Assessment competition, and has not yet developed or administered statewide aligned, high-quality assessments that measure student growth in reading/language arts and in mathematics in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school in all LEAs.</p> <p>i. Provide the SEA’s plan to develop and administer annually, beginning no later than the 2014–2015 school year, statewide aligned, high-quality assessments that measure student growth in reading/language arts and in mathematics in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school in all LEAs, as well as set academic achievement standards for those assessments.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> The SEA has developed and begun annually administering statewide aligned, high-quality assessments that measure student growth in reading/language arts and in mathematics in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school in all LEAs.</p> <p>i. Attach evidence that the SEA has submitted these assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review or attach a timeline of when the SEA will submit the assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review. (Attachment 7)</p>

Principle 2: Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support

2A *Develop and Implement a System of Recognition, Accountability, and Support*

2.A.i Provide a description of the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system that includes all the components listed in Principle 2, the SEA’s plan for implementation of the differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system no later than the 2012–2013 school year, and an explanation of how the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system is designed to improve student achievement and school performance, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students.

Rhode Island’s current accountability system was designed to comply with the No Child Left Behind Act, and it has served to highlight and expose achievement gaps at all grade levels and among all subgroups in our state. We have learned that schools identified for improvement through this system have very different profiles of performance. Moreover, schools in our suburban school districts centers are held to many fewer targets than their urban counterparts. This phenomenon has allowed many at-risk students in low-incidence populations to go unnoticed in our current system. Rhode Island wants to take advantage of this waiver opportunity to design and implement a system that exposes heretofore hidden gaps in achievement between schools’ overall performance and the achievement levels of their at-risk student populations. This perspective, coupled with the experience gained over ten years of NCLB accountability for schools and districts greatly shaped our proposed design in this waiver request. We know that schools identified under our current system are not equal in terms of the magnitude of their gaps, the degrees of under-achievement, or the progress that they are making. We believe it is essential to implement a system that is more nuanced and sophisticated in order to account for these differences so that we can be certain that the focus and priority schools are, in fact, the most persistently lowest performing in our state. We also are committed to providing more tailored data to schools to differentiate among the majority of schools that fall between our lowest and highest achieving. With these goals in mind, Rhode Island’s proposed accountability system includes the following features:

1. Analyzing state testing data in reading and mathematics from different perspectives in order to consider absolute performance, growth, gaps, and achievement at the highest levels of performance.

2. Acknowledging that schools make progress toward targets at different paces that may not completely align to the annual targets set for them. In addition to determining whether targets are met each year, the model determines the amount of progress schools make toward their 2017 goals.
3. Featuring graduation rates prominently within all high schools.

Since the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002, Rhode Island has preserved the core values of its state accountability system while designing modifications to meet the requirements of the act. Our current accountability system holds all schools in Rhode Island to identical criteria for achieving adequate yearly progress (AYP). We also define improvement for all schools in a rigidly consistent manner. We incorporated the provisions of the NCLB accountability guidelines regarding AYP into the Rhode Island accountability system in order to achieve compliance. We currently use an indexing of proficiency to make AYP determinations in order to classify schools. We established baselines for every school and LEA based on assessment data combined over three consecutive years.

For parents and the public, NCLB produced three significant benefits:

1. NCLB both forced and helped states to build robust data systems to support increased accountability requirements in ways that helped schools and districts get the data they need to improve outcomes for students.
2. NCLB shone a much-needed light on previously under-served populations, such as low-income children, whose test scores can be masked when looking at overall school performance.
3. “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP) gave the public a sense of whether individual schools were making progress in their efforts to improve curriculum, the quality of their teaching, school climate, and parent engagement, to cite some examples.

Conversely, NCLB created a series of inequities that actually served to impede meaningful reforms in under-performing schools. The rigid nature of single, statewide AYP measures based solely on the percent of students scoring “proficient” or better made it difficult to gauge whether student achievement was improving in schools with low test scores. Fairly large “*n*” sizes and uneven distribution of at-risk populations meant that some schools faced up to four times as many targets as others. Overly prescribed interventions and limitations that drove the use of funding often led to improvement efforts that had little effect. The inability of our NCLB accountability system to measure normative achievement gaps, or to measure the size of criterion-based gaps, made prescribing appropriate reforms difficult. Over time, NCLB requirements unintentionally became barriers to state and local implementation of differentiated supports, interventions, and rewards for our schools and LEAs.

Developing a State System System and Plan to Improve Achievement, Close Gaps, Improve Instruction

Rhode Island has proposed a differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system to be implemented immediately using its Fall 2011 state assessment results.

RIDE is embracing the opportunity that this flexibility request provides to redesign our accountability framework in a manner designed to ensure that all schools get the differentiated supports they need and deserve, as prescribed in state statute, articulated in our strategic plan (2009), and memorialized in the Rhode Island Basic Education Program regulations, which became effective on July 1, 2010. These policies and structures provide our state with a roadmap for systemic, sustained improvement that, when coordinated with flexibility regarding NCLB requirements and supported with Race to the Top-funded systems, will elevate our schools and LEAs to unprecedented achievement levels.

Since her arrival in 2009, Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's passion for excellence in education and her commitment to reform has transformed RIDE and every facet of the education system in the state. In her first year as commissioner, she visited every school district and met with parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders, and policy-makers across the state. The outcome of this was the completion and adoption of our strategic plan, *Transforming Education in Rhode Island*. The strategic plan outlines our five-year plan for improving outcomes for all students. The five priorities, which align with this request for flexibility, are:

1. Ensure Educator Excellence;
2. Accelerate All Schools Toward Greatness;
3. Establish World-Class Standards and Assessments;
4. Develop User-Friendly Data Systems; and
5. Invest Our Resources Wisely.

Incorporated in our strategic plan are the tenets of the Basic Education Program. The Basic Education Program (BEP) is a set of regulations that the Board of Regents promulgated pursuant to its delegated, statutory authority to determine standards for the Rhode Island public-education system in order to ensure the maintenance of local appropriation to support high quality education offerings for all students as required by the BEP. The purpose of the BEP is to ensure that every public-school student has equal access to a high quality, rigorous, and equitable array of educational opportunities, expressed as a guaranteed and viable curriculum, from PK-12. In order to effectuate meaningful implementation of improved instructional practice, as articulated in the BEP, RIDE must fulfill the following functions.

- establishing clear expectations for systems, educators, and students;
- providing systems with the capacity and resources to enable LEAs to meet state expectations;

- ensuring quality assurance and quality control of LEA efforts through an effective system of indicators, data collection, analysis, and public reporting; and,
- leveraging innovative partnerships to ensure fidelity of implementation and to overcome barriers to improvement.

One of the more salient aspects of our experience working with under-performing schools is the need to clarify the distinct roles that the SEA and local district leadership play. Limiting the RIDE role to the four functions listed above was a direct effort to reduce conflicting messages coming into a school and to clarify appropriate roles and responsibilities in order to help promote execution of core strategies with fidelity.

Accordingly, the BEP assigns a very different set of functions to the local education agency (LEA). The BEP, completely revised for 2010 so as to be based on output and outcome measures, is organized around seven LEA functions. These seven functions are research-based categories of LEA functioning that lead to student success. [See Appendix B for more information on the seven functions.] Each LEA is required to fulfill the requirements of the seven core functions in order to ensure that all of its schools are providing an adequate education to every student:

- a) *Lead the Focus on Learning and Achievement:* The LEA shall provide on-site direction that continuously guides site-based leadership; identify expectations and accountability for implementation of proven practices; and address barriers to implementation of identified educational goals.
- b) *Recruit, Support, and Retain Highly Effective Staff:* The LEA shall recruit, identify, mentor, support, and retain effective staff; build the capacity of staff to meet organizational expectations; and provide job-embedded professional development based on student need.
- c) *Guide the Implementation of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment:* The LEA shall provide access to rigorous, guaranteed, and viable curricula for all students; ensure differentiated instructional strategies, materials, and assessments; and build systems that provide opportunities for common planning and assessment.
- d) *Use Information for Planning and Accountability:* The LEA shall develop and implement proficiency-based comprehensive assessment systems; distribute results of measured school progress and student performance; and maintain responsive and accessible information systems.
- e) *Engage Families and the Community:* The LEA shall implement effective family and community communication systems; engage families and the community to promote positive student achievement and behavior; and provide adult and alternative learning opportunities integrated with community needs.
- f) *Foster Safe and Supportive Environments for Students and Staff:* The LEA shall address the physical, social, and emotional needs of all students; ensure safe school facilities and learning environments; and require that every student has at least one adult accountable for his or her learning.

- g) *Ensure Equity and Adequacy of Fiscal and Human Resources:* The LEA shall identify and provide requisite resources to meet student needs; allocate fiscal and human resources based on student need; and overcome barriers to effective resource allocation at the school level.

Describing the relative functions of the SEA and LEA carries with it an enormous benefit beyond its conceptual construct. The focus on functionality lends itself to an examination of how well an LEA needs to be performing in order to achieve a desired or requisite level of efficacy. RIDE literature often repeats the adage that the most important aspect of data-driven decision-making is the **decision** itself. Our unrelenting emphasis on critical decisions has allowed us to focus on the relevance of the data we collect. Data must be relevant to the decisions that need to be made. Improving the level of functioning within the systems that make up a school or LEA requires a series of well-informed decisions. Too often, resources, including human resources, are distributed through the education system without regard to improving core functional capacities. The BEP provides a framework within which we can make decisions against a backdrop of clear expectations coupled with consistent performance measures.

Through this waiver design and submission, RIDE has made a series of commitments that are predicated on a profound belief in the value of an unflinching and valid measurement and accountability system and upon bold, data-driven reform at district and school levels. RIDE is committed to re-inventing its system of measuring school performance in order to build a differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system that actually informs the decisions that administrators and teachers need to make to improve teaching and learning. RIDE is committed to maximizing the knowledge and insight that can be mined from student performance data in order to facilitate meaningful decision-making and in turn, improve student outcomes. Finally, RIDE is committed to the development of a system that uncovers Rhode Island's most acute performance problems and most inspiring successes with equal, unflinching rigor. Rhode Island's waiver application contains both surprising and, in places, controversial design decisions. But in every instance, those design decisions can be traced back these commitments and a profound philosophical investment in the power of data, classification, and differentiated accountability and intervention.

Rhode Island educators need more accurate information about exactly where student outcomes have been, over time – not just the percentage of students achieving proficiency. We are determined to shine the brightest and most focused possible light on achievement gaps among disaggregated groups of students. We need a sharp focus on low-incidence populations and we also want greater consistency in the number of targets schools face. Our commitment to multiple measures demands both single-year static measures and measures that reveal trends over time. As this aspect of our system became more complex, we made the decision to limit our school-classification system to the multiple measures available to us from the use of student-performance data. In turn, this allowed us much greater flexibility to turn to a wider range of qualitative and quantitative measures to guide the sequencing and intensity of support and interventions.

This flexibility request provides Rhode Island with a unique opportunity to bring new levels of accuracy and equity to the manner in which we measure school performance. When we developed our first generation *NCLB* accountability structure, RIDE looked at several factors before deciding on an *n* size of 45 for purposes of holding schools responsible for disaggregated student populations. We felt it was important at the time to minimize Type I and Type II errors given that schools would be identified for sanctions if they failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in any of their targets. This condition is no longer applicable in our current plan. Schools that fail to meet their annual targets do not necessarily have to be identified for improvement. We would also like to use the same *n* size for our other systems and reporting within the state. A value of 20 provides a more than adequate level of validity and reliability for accountability decisions. Just as important, lowering our *n* size furthers our policy goal of accurately identifying where significant achievement gaps exist, even in relatively low-incidence student populations.

As more fully explained below, Rhode Island is also proposing the use of “consolidated subgroups” to bring a more inclusive approach to measuring student performance at the school level. Our preliminary runs reveal that our suburban schools will generally be required to meet additional AMO’s, whereas our urban schools will generally face fewer, consolidated AMO’s. Of course, our reporting system will still break performance down into the disaggregations that comprise each consolidated subgroup, so as to ensure a completely accurate and unflinching picture of student performance. Further, any school that misses an AMO for two consecutive years will automatically be placed in the Warning Classification.

The Rhode Island plan will improve student achievement and school performance, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction.

RIDE proposes a multi-tiered accountability system that will not only more accurately identify improving schools, but will also ensure that all Rhode Island students are measured against the highest-performing students in the state. There are seven components to our proposed accountability system. The overarching goal is to ensure that schools can no longer mask underperformance of students who face special challenges. The accountability system also seeks to emphasize schools that succeed in elevating a large proportion of their students to our highest proficiency level, *proficient with distinction*. Only by drawing attention to our lowest and highest performers can we hope to diagnose and properly treat our struggling schools while leveraging the best thinking of those schools that have consistently and successfully prepared students for success in college, careers, and life.

The components of RIDE’s proposed accountability system are as follows:

1. Improve the absolute proficiency of all students in all schools in reading and mathematics (minority, free/reduced-price lunch, English Learners, students with disabilities);

2. Reduce the percent of students not proficient in mathematics and reading in half by 2016-17 in all schools and LEAs (All Students);
3. Set individualized school-specific and district-specific level Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for all schools in reading and mathematics for the all student groups and for all subgroups and programs (minority, free/reduced-price lunch, English Learners, students with disabilities);
4. Recognize schools that exceed proficiency standards in reading and mathematics (All Students)
5. Improve growth in reading and mathematics in all elementary and middle schools (All Students, minority, free/reduced-price lunch, English Learners, students with disabilities);
6. Reduce the percent of students not graduating by half by 2016-17, using 4-year, 5-year, and 6-year cohort graduation calculations and set graduation-rate Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) (All Students); and
7. Increase high-school scaled-score growth on the NECAP mathematics and reading assessments.

It is important to note that, in all instances, our proposed accountability system is in alignment with – or more rigorous than – the targets that we articulated in the Rhode Island Race to the Top goals.

The following parameters remain unchanged in this proposed accountability system:

- The definition of public school for accountability purposes is the same definition as public school for general purposes in Rhode Island: “A publicly funded school, operated by a local city or town school committee or school board, or operated by the State through a Board of Trustees, or a public charter school established pursuant to Chapter 77 of Title 16 of the General Laws, or a school program operated by the Department for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF).”
- Our existing state assessment program is implemented statewide and legislatively mandated through The Paul W. Crowley Student Investment Initiative. (RIGL 16-7.1) We administer assessments annually, assessing students in grades 3 through 8 plus grade 11 in reading and mathematics and assessing writing in grades 5, 8, and 11 using the NECAP assessments. The NECAP assessments in both reading and mathematics report student results in the following categories for all schools: Proficient with Distinction (4), Proficient (3), Partially Proficient (2), and Substantially Below Proficient (1).
- [InfoWorks Live!](#) (formerly, *Information Works*) is Rhode Island’s state report card. In the current (2011-12) school year, InfoWorks will continue to include assessment data, teacher-quality information, disaggregations, and survey data on students, teachers, parents, and administrators.

- All students in Rhode Island public schools are tested according to statewide policy. Students may participate with or without accommodations, and students with disabilities who qualify (less than 1 percent of the student population) may take the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment. Rhode Island includes these results in its accountability system. Students who have been in the state prior to the October 1 enrollment count of the prior year are included in the accountability system. Students who arrive in an LEA or school after the October 1 enrollment count of the prior year are included in the state assessment reports but excluded from the accountability system. Our proposal does request a waiver from including newly arrived ELs (less than one academic year) from the fall mathematics assessment in the same way they are excluded from the reading assessments as allowed under NCLB. Most students who are new to the country begin schools in September and have very little time to become oriented to their new academic performance before beginning NECAP testing on October 1st.
- Rhode Island will continue to report disaggregated data by ESEA subgroups and will continue to determine whether each subgroup meets the AMO.
- We apply consistently statewide the criterion for defining what constitutes a “full academic year.” The full academic year is set at the October 1 enrollment-count date (which is the date designated in state law to calculate state aid to districts). For NECAP tests that students take in October, we assign scores to the location of each student at the end of the prior school year. The full academic year is then defined as being enrolled in the same school (or LEA) from October 1 to the end of that prior school year. Students who have been continuously enrolled are counted. Students who have not been continuously enrolled at the school but have remained in the LEA (in another school) are counted in the LEA AYP. A student who is not in the school or LEA for a continuous entire school year will not be counted for school level or LEA accountability but will be reported in the state results.
- The state assessment system draws from a department-wide demographic system in which each student has a centrally recorded racial category, IEP status, English Learner status, and free or reduced-price lunch status. This system enables RIDE to determine the proficiency levels of each student subgroup. We have an individual-student identifier system, which makes possible a calculation of subgroup participation rates and has improved the accuracy of disaggregated data. RIDE will continue to calculate the proficiency levels and participation rates of disaggregated subgroups within each school and LEA.
- We review LEAs at three levels (elementary, middle, high school) and subject LEAs to the same AMO requirements as schools.
- The U.S. Department of Education has approved the Rhode Island assessment system. The vendors for these assessments have produced technical studies,

which demonstrate validity, reliability and psychometric integrity of the assessments. The assessments were aligned with our content standards. RIDE will subject the new PARCC to the same technical rigor as we have done with current assessments.

Over the course of the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years, LEAs across the four NECAP states will be transitioning to the Common Core State Standards. Although the pace and sequencing of changes to curriculum and instruction will vary across LEAs and schools within and across the NECAP states, all four states expect LEAs and schools to be prepared to fully implement the Common Core State Standards during the 2013-14 school year. During the transition period, we will continue to administer the NECAP reading, writing, and mathematics assessments in the fall of 2012 and 2013, and these assessments will remain aligned with our current standards (GLEs and GSEs).

Student Achievement

Developing a consistent and logical approach to our accountability design

The manner in which Rhode Island's proposed accountability system differs from the current accountability system and how it will better ensure success for all Rhode Island students is set forth in this section. One of the most limiting aspects of NCLB is the manner in which targets, school performance and interventions are conflated into a "one size fits all" model. The flexibility waiver allows states to separate the setting and attainment of AMO's from the measurement of school performance. It further allows states to establish a truly diagnostic approach to determining school-specific supports and interventions that reflect both more accurate measures of school performance and other critical readiness factors that impact improvement efforts. Rhode Island's plan is specifically designed to maximize these critical areas of flexibility in order to accelerate improvement in our lowest performing schools.

Rhode Island's Strategic Plan includes a set of goals for all districts, schools, and subgroups in the state: to reduce the proficiency gap by half by 2017, thus reducing by half the proportion of students who are not college and career ready. Rhode Island proposes to establish Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for each school in the state using this methodology. Meeting this goal will require all schools and districts to accelerate progress for all students, particularly those who are furthest behind. Through the hard work and dedication of their teachers and students, many Rhode Island schools and districts have demonstrated substantial progress in addressing their proficiency gaps. To measure progress toward that goal and classify schools in an accountability and assistance level, we are proposing to create a Composite Index Score, (CIS), which combines a set of metrics that include our current best indicators of progress towards college-and career readiness: progress on gap-closing as measured

by our state assessments in reading and mathematics. AMO targets will be differentiated for each district, school, and subgroup depending on its starting point in the baseline year, 2010–11, with the goal in each case to cut in half the proportion of students who are not on track to college and career readiness (performing at least at the Proficient level). As a result, districts, schools, and subgroups that are furthest behind are expected to make the strongest gains and thus close achievement gaps.

Rhode Island will continue to issue and report Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) determinations by establishing school specific AMOs for students in the aggregate, low income students, students with disabilities, English Learners, and the state’s major racial and ethnic subgroups. The AMOs will require each school to be publically accountable for reducing the proficiency gap by half by 2017 as AMOs are determined by subtracting baseline data, (2010-11 NECAP), from 100 and dividing that number in half and then into six equal intervals. This process was used to determine AMOs for each school and subgroup. Annual district and school reports will be available on our web site and included in our *InfoWorks!* report cards for each school and district. Schools that persistently fail to attain AMOs will be placed into one of RIDEs three lowest accountability levels (Warning, Priority or Focus). In addition, RIDE will continue to report out the Attendance Rates for our K-8 schools on our school and district report cards, although Attendance will no longer be used for accountability purposes.

Using these school-specific AMOs as a baseline, Rhode Island’s accountability system is based on an index comprised of seven metrics. Each metric divides the range of scores into five levels of performance. These five levels will allow us to distinguish among the span of performance within in each metric so that we can, properly identify schools at the extreme margins and to make the scoring system more differentiated in the middle. Each of Rhode Island’s schools and districts will have an index score ranging from 20 to 100 points. The scores will be earned within each of seven components. When each of the 7 weighted components are added together, the result is the schools’ and districts’ score is out of 100.

Table 2 below provides a summary of the seven components and the weights assigned to each measure or metric. The individual scores from each subcomponent will be added together to arrive at a total score for each school. We will then rank the schools by this total score (20-100) in order to begin the identification process for priority, focus, and commended schools. Beyond these seven metrics, the classifications will factor in an individual subgroup that missed an AMO for two consecutive years, any significant gaps in performance, and participation rates in reading and mathematics, at the district, school, state, and subgroup levels.

Table 2: ESEA Flexibility Design Weights			
Measure	Components	Elementary / Middle Schools	High Schools
Absolute Percent Proficient	All Students Minority + Poverty IEP + ELL	30	30
Progress To 2017 Target	All Students	10	10
Consolidated Subgroup Performance Gaps Against Performance Reference Group	Minority+Poverty	30	30
	IEP+ELL		
Percent of Tested students in Distinction Level	All Students	5	5
Growth	All Students	25	0
	Minority+Poverty		
	IEP+ELL		
HS Graduation Rates	All Students		20
HS Scaled Score Change	All Students		5
TOTAL		100	100

The composite index score (CIS) provides sufficient data to place schools and districts into one of six levels so that RIDE can provide differentiated recognition, accountability, and supports. The levels are:

1. Commended Schools
2. Leading Schools
3. Typical Schools
4. Warning Schools
5. Focus Schools
6. Priority Schools

Cut points within each category were assigned within the following framework:

1. The highest levels of performance reflect current achievement data in each category. They outline achievable yet aspirational goals for each school.
2. The lowest levels of performance also reflect the current unacceptably low data we have in each category.
3. The middle ranges attempt to differentiate among the ranges of school performance based on the most recent data sets we have for schools.

Our current accountability system allows many schools – particularly in our suburbs - to mask the poor performance of our most vulnerable students; those with disabilities and English Learners. This phenomenon occurs because many of our schools do not meet the minimum n size of 45 for each subgroup. Concurrently, many of our urban schools report small performance gaps because overall performance is so low at the school level. To account for these two issues, we propose to collapse all reported subgroups into three subgroups and to lower the n size to twenty students for component analysis. To ensure that gaps are not due to poor overall performance, we also introduce a Performance Reference Group (PRG) for each LEA, which includes the highest performers. Identifying and addressing achievement gaps of Rhode Island’s most vulnerable students are at the heart of our Strategic Plan as well as our accountability design.

The three consolidated groups used in the CIS and justification for each are described below.

Performance Reference Group (PRG): The PRG is made of students who are not economically disadvantaged, not in English Learner (EL) programs and not receiving Individualized Education Program (IEP) Services. This is the highest performing group of students in our state and the group against which all other groups will be compared. The PRG is also the yardstick by which we measure performance gaps within the CIS. A PRG will be set for each LEA for reading and mathematics at the elementary, middle, and, high school levels. The decision was made to implement a consistent approach that would apply to all schools statewide by developing an LEA level comparison rather than a school level comparison because many schools did not have a sufficient population size (i.e. $n = 20$) to calculate subgroup specific gaps.

Consolidated Program Subgroup: This subgroup includes English Learners (ELs) including former English Learners that are being monitored and students with disabilities (including students who take the alternate assessment). The decision was made to consolidate both programs after exploring other options to ensure that as many students as possible were informing the accountability data for each school and district. Initial analyses was conducted separately for each program. This analyses revealed that many schools and students would not be included in the accountability system because of the minimum n requirement of 45. We then reduced the n size to 20 and found that, while it improved our ability to include more schools and students, it was not at a level that captured a sufficient number of Rhode Island’s students. Most notably only 29% of schools would be held accountable for the performance of students receiving EL services. This was an improvement but still far too low. By combining two groups into one larger subgroup, the data demonstrates that we are able to hold 81% of schools accountable for the performance of these students. We are confident we will

highlight and respond to gaps in student achievement that have been previously overlooked. In nearly eighty-one percent of all Rhode Island schools, there are less than 20 English Learner students. Under the current system, these schools would not be held accountable because of the small n size. The table below shows that the consolidated subgroup increases the number of schools included in accountability from 54 to 227 for the ELL subgroup and from 211 to 227 for the IEP subgroup.

School Included in Accountability Determination	# of Schools	% of Schools
IEP Subgroup	211	78.36
ELL Subgroup	54	19.14
Consolidated ELL and IEP Program Subgroup	227	80.49

In addition to including more schools in the accountability system, we examined the reasonableness of combining the two program groups into one subgroup. The Pearson correlation coefficient measures the correlation or strength of relationship between two variables; in this case performance. As is indicated below, there is a very strong relationship between the individual program subgroups and the consolidated subgroups. We are confident that the consolidated program subgroup is a valid proxy for the individual program groups. Further, we plan to conduct a separate analysis of individual subgroup's performance to identify subgroups that are not meeting their AMOs. This will identify any instances in which the consolidated subgroup masks the performance of subgroups.

Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Math	Reading
IEP Subgroup Proficiency Consolidated Program Subgroup Proficiency	0.923**	0.928**
ELL Subgroup Proficiency Consolidated Program Subgroup Proficiency	0.605**	0.607**

**** Correlation is significant at the .01 level using a two-tailed Pearson Correlation Coefficient**

Consolidated Minority and Economically Disadvantaged Subgroup:

This consolidated subgroup includes all federal racial minorities as prescribed by the National Forum on Education Statistics (Minority) plus Free and Reduced-price Lunch students (FRL). As with the Consolidated Program Subgroup, combining these groups ensures that these students will be accounted for in low incidence schools. As the table below shows, consolidating Minority and Free/Reduced Lunch students results in the inclusion of 269 of the 282 schools.

School Included in Accountability Determinations	# of Schools	% of Schools
Black Subgroup	75	27
Hispanic Subgroup	121	54
Economically Disadvantaged Subgroup	248	88
Consolidated Minority and Economically Disadvantaged Subgroup	269	95

There is a strong correlation in student achievement between poverty and racial/ethnic minorities and we are confident that this further supports the consolidation of these groups.

Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Math	Reading
Black Subgroup Proficiency Consolidated Minority and Economically Disadvantaged Subgroup Proficiency	0.74**	0.63**
Hispanic Subgroup Proficiency Consolidated Minority and Economically Disadvantaged Subgroup Proficiency	0.83**	0.8**
Free/ Reduced Lunch Subgroup Proficiency Consolidated Minority and Economically Disadvantaged Subgroup Proficiency	0.97**	0.96**

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level using a two-tailed Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Table 4 below shows selected subgroup performance in our state assessments over the past three years. Apart from the Asian subgroup, each of the other subgroups included in the consolidated subgroups have similar performance. The Asian subgroup performs at a significantly higher level, but their populations are too small to make any difference in the consolidated subgroup performance. Moreover, Asian students in our urban communities have similar performance results as their Black and Hispanic peers, further supporting the case to include Asians in the Consolidated Minority and Economically Disadvantaged subgroup.

Although the policy and psychometric rationale behind the combination English learners and students with IEPs is both defensible and sound, RIDE is acutely aware of the challenging and problematic optics of the combination. The waiver development period included hours of intense internal and external debate that eventually turned on a small set of powerful questions.

“Is RIDE’s commitment to creating an accurate and sensitive measurement system that truly maximizes school district responsibility for traditionally underserved students matched with the institutional courage to put forth the design that best meets this goal?”

“Can RIDE develop and put forth an application that acknowledges and meaningfully responds to the legitimate historical, perceptual, and educational concerns that are raised through the consolidation of students with IEPs and Els within a single subpopulation?”

“Can RIDE engage in earnest, honest dialogue with our local advocacy community and demonstrate that the consolidated subpopulation, though disquieting on its face, will help ensure that all Rhode Island schools are held accountable for our low-incidence, traditionally-underserved subpopulations?”

When, and only when, it was clear that the answer to each of these difficult questions was “yes” did RIDE submit this waiver application for federal consideration.

Table 4: Subgroup Performance on NECAP Reading and Math												
Student Groups	Reading						Mathematics					
	'09 % Prof.	'10 % Prof	'10 SE	'11 % Prof	'11 SE	Difference 10-11	'09 % Prof	'10 % Prof	'10 SE	'11 % Prof	'11 SE	Difference 10-11
State Average	70	71	.17	73	.16	+2	54	55	.18	56	.18	+1
Am. Indian	55	56	2.17	57	2.26	+1	38	35	2.08	39	2.22	+4
Asian	75	75	.94	76	.94	+1	62	62	1.04	64	1.05	+2
Black	54	54	.67	57	.65	+2	31	33	.63	35	.62	+2
Hispanic	51	52	.41	53	.40	+2	31	35	.39	36	.38	+1
FRL	55	56	.28	59	.27	+2	37	39	.27	41	.27	+2
IEP	29	29	.43	30	.45	+1	19	19	.37	18	.37	-1
LEP	24	24	.79	25	.70	0 (<0.5)	16	17	.65	16	.57	-1
Student Groups	Reading						Mathematics					
	2009 % Prof.	'10 % Prof	2010 SE	'11 % Prof	'11 SE	Difference 2010-2011	'09 % Prof	'10 % Prof	'10 SE	'11 % Prof	'11 SE	Difference 2010-2011
State Average	70	71	.17	73	.16	+2	54	55	.18	56	.18	+1
Am. Indian	55	56	2.17	57	2.26	+1	38	35	2.08	39	2.22	+4
Asian	75	75	.94	76	.94	+1	62	62	1.04	64	1.05	+2
Black	54	54	.67	57	.65	+2	31	33	.63	35	.62	+2
Hispanic	51	52	.41	53	.40	+2	31	35	.39	36	.38	+1
FRL	55	56	.28	59	.27	+2	37	39	.27	41	.27	+2
IEP	29	29	.43	30	.45	+1	19	19	.37	18	.37	-1
LEP	24	24	.79	25	.70	0 (<0.5)	16	17	.65	16	.57	-1

Statewide group performance on NECAP Reading and Mathematics assessments.¹

¹With the exception of Standard Errors (SE), all numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

How We Measure School Performance Rhode Island’s Proposed Accountability System

Absolute Proficiency: How many students have attained proficiency or better?

This measure indicates the percent of students in each school who have attained a level of proficient or better on the state assessments in mathematics and reading.

Rhode Island’s proposed system acknowledges that high academic achievement for all students is the primary goal of our educational enterprise. As such, it continues to play a significant role in our revised ESEA flexibility waiver proposal. It carries a weight of thirty percent (30%) in our design. The state administers the New England Comprehensive Assessment Program (NECAP) to all students in grades 3-8 and 11 in math and reading. The expectation is that all students will reach proficiency. Students who are proficient “demonstrate minor gaps in the prerequisite knowledge and skills needed to participate and perform successfully in instructional activities aligned with the grade level/ grade span expectations at the current grade level.”

From these assessments, students receive scale scores (between 0 – 80 points) and one of four accompanying proficiency levels. Approximately one percent of Rhode Island students participate in the Alternate Assessment, our assessment for students with disabilities. Results from these two assessments are combined to determine the absolute percent proficient metric. Our assessments achievement levels are outlined in the table below.

Table 3: Performance Levels on Rhode Island State Assessment	
Level	Description
Level 4	Proficient with Distinction Students performing at this level demonstrate the prerequisite knowledge and skills needed to participate and excel in instructional activities aligned with Grade level and grade span expectations. These students are on track to succeed in post-secondary endeavors.
Level 3	Proficient Students performing at this level demonstrate minor gaps in the knowledge and skills needed to participate and perform successfully in instructional activities aligned with the grade span and grade level expectations. It is likely that any gaps in the prerequisite knowledge and skills demonstrated by these students can be addressed by the classroom teacher during the course of quality classroom instruction.
Level 2	Partially Proficient Students performing at this level demonstrate gaps in the knowledge and skills needed to participate and perform successfully in instructional activities aligned with the grade 9-10 GSEs. Additional instructional support may be necessary for these students to perform successfully in courses aligned with grade expectations.
Level 1	Substantially Below Proficient Students performing at this level demonstrate extensive and significant gaps in the prerequisite knowledge and skills needed to participate and perform successfully in grade appropriate instructional activities. Additional instruction and support is necessary for these students to meet the proficiency standards.

RIDE will calculate the Absolute Percent Proficient metric by determining the percentage of students at or above proficiency for each school and LEA in the state for three groups of students. The Absolute Percent Proficient metric will be computed for all students, students who are in racial or ethnic minority subgroups along with student receiving free or reduced lunch; and for student who receive either IEP or ELL services. These percentages are used to assign points to each school based on derived cut points.

Reading performance is consistent across all school levels. As such, one set of cut scores was appropriate and relevant to all schools. A goal of ninety percent or higher in reading for all schools is ambitious yet attainable. Schools with fewer than 45% of their students proficient in reading represent the lowest levels of achievement in our state and demonstrate need for intensive support and intervention. Conversely, there has been a wide variation of math performance across school levels. As a result of these variations, there are three sets of cut scores for elementary, middle and high school

levels. While the cut points are not normalized, they were selected to take into account historical performance.

The percent of students who are proficient for each of these groups are independently calculated in reading and then in mathematics. Using their mean scores, these groups are then assigned points from 1 to 5 based on the cut points described in the table below. For the Absolute Proficiency Measure, there are 6 of these values, three for each of the groups from reading and three for each of the groups from mathematics. The average of these six values, which vary from 1 to 5 is then calculated. If the average score is 5, it will translate to all the 30 points for this measure. The equation below is used to assign Absolute Proficiency Measure points in each school.

Points Assigned to Absolute Proficiency Measure = (Average Score * 30)/5

Absolute Proficiency Metric Cut Scores

		1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points	5 Points
Absolute Percent Proficient for All Students and for All Subgroups	Reading	< 45	≥ 45,< 60	≥ 60,< 80	≥ 80,< 90	≥ 90
	Elementary Math	< 35	≥ 35,< 50	≥ 50,< 70	≥ 70,< 90	≥ 90
	Middle Math	< 30	≥30,< 50	≥ 50,< 70	≥ 70,< 85	≥ 85
	HS Math	< 10	≥ 10,< 30	≥ 30,< 45	≥ 45,< 70	≥ 70

Progress: To what degree is the school approaching its 2017 targets?

This measure monitors whether each school as a whole is progressing at a pace that will position them to meet its 2017 targets for proficiency levels in mathematics and reading.

Our current accountability system establishes Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) for each subgroup, school, and LEA that is identical within each level of schooling and subject area. Each school and LEA must meet a state target that is based on the 100-percent proficiency goals that No Child Left Behind set for 2014. As such, schools are evaluated in a binary manner as either meeting or not meeting an annual target. In practice some schools miss targets by a small margin while others have made little or no progress at all. Our proposed system addresses this issue by prioritizing schools that have missed gaps by wider margins. We do this by monitoring the percentage of progress each school is making toward its 2017 targets.

RIDE will establish individualized targets for schools and LEAs that will reduce by 50 percent each school's gap to 100-percent proficiency by 2016-17. In order to perform this calculation, RIDE will use 2010-11 data as a baseline. This metric is measured as follows:

- 1) Define Gap as the difference in performance between the 2010-11 baseline year and the 2016-17 target.
- 2) Define Progress as the difference between current year performance and the baseline year of 2010-11.
- 3) Calculate the metric as $100 * \text{Progress} / \text{Gap}$

Each year, schools will be placed into one of five levels. Cut points for the highest level are selected to ensure that schools are on track to meet their 2016-17 targets. The lowest cut point signifies schools that are least likely to meet their 2016-17 targets and will capture schools that lose ground. The intermediate cut points are set to differentiate across the range of progress schools are making towards their 2016-17 targets. The reading and math points (1-5) are averaged to calculate a school score. This component constitutes 10 percent of the weighted accountability system across all 3 levels (EMH).

Progress Metric Cut Scores

		1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points	5 Points
Progress to 2017 Target	Reading	< -3	$\geq -3, < 0$	$\geq 0, < 8$	$\geq 8, < 16$	≥ 16
	Math					

Gap-closing: Is the school serving all students, including those with disabilities and English Learners?

This measure indicates whether all student groups in each school are closing achievement gaps. For each school, this measure compares the scores of a high-performing group of students (students who are not economically disadvantaged y, do not have disabilities, and do not receive EL services.) against the performance of two other student groups: (1) minority students plus students who are economically disadvantaged and (2) students with disabilities plus English Learners.

Our current accountability system allows many schools – particularly in our suburbs - to mask the poor performance of our most vulnerable students; those with disabilities and English Learners. This phenomenon occurs because many of our schools are unable to meet the minimum n size of 45 for each subgroup. Concurrently, many of our urban schools report small performance gaps because overall performance is so low at the school level. To account for these two issues, we propose to collapse all reported subgroups into three subgroups and to lower the n size to twenty students. To ensure that gaps are not due to poor overall performance, we also introduce a Performance Reference Group (PRG) for each LEA, which includes the highest performers in the school district. A PRG will be set for each LEA for reading and mathematics at the elementary, middle, and, high school levels. When there are too few students to calculate a PRG or if there is an insignificant gap between the LEA level PRG and its subgroups, a statewide PRG will be used. Identifying and addressing achievement gaps of Rhode Island’s most vulnerable students are at the heart of our Strategic Plan as well as our accountability design.

To arrive at the score for the Gap-Closing metric, we will subtract the Consolidated Minority/ Economically Disadvantaged Subgroup and the Consolidated Program Subgroup from the Performance Reference Group (PRG) for both reading and mathematics. In this instance, reading and mathematics will each receive a score, which translates to 4 scores overall (2 for the Consolidated Program Group gap and 2 for Consolidated Minority/Poverty Group gap). We will then rank the four scores and assign each school a score between 1 and 5. To receive 5 points, a school must have exceptionally small gaps for students. There are a handful of these schools and they represent proof points, and for all other schools in our state this will remain a reach. A score of 1 represents extraordinarily large gaps that reflect the reality of our current data. The identified cut points allow us to differentiate among levels of performance regarding achievement gaps.

Points Assigned to Subgroup Gap Measures = (Average Score * 30)/5

This component is heavily weighted at 30% within our overall model because RIDE recognizes that overall performance is simply not good enough. Each and every student must be counted – and this can only happen when gaps are addressed at every level and for each and every underserved student. By consolidating these groups rather than considering each student demographic and programmatic group individually, we are able to hold all but thirteen schools accountable for subgroup proficiency gaps – a clear sign to schools that all students matter.

Proficiency Gap Metric Cut Scores

		1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points	5 Points
Consolidated Subgroup Gaps against Performance Reference Group	Minority /Poverty math	≥ 35	≥ 30,< 35	≥ 20,< 30	≥ 10,< 20	< 10
	Minority /Poverty reading					
	Program math	≥ 65	≥ 50,< 65	≥ 30,< 50	≥ 15,< 30	< 15
	Program reading					

** When any sub score is not available because n is less than twenty, the average score excludes that sub score.*

Distinction: How many students have attained distinction?

This measure indicates the percent of students in each school who have attained a level of distinction on the state assessments in mathematics and reading.

RIDE's theory of action articulates that when schools and educators are supported, all students will achieve at high levels. Current data makes clear that we are not supporting students' progress to the highest levels of achievement as indicated on

NECAP results. Currently sixteen percent (16%) and twenty-one percent (21%) of students have achievement levels in the *Proficient with Distinction* category in math and reading, respectively. By examining and rewarding schools that are elevating a large percentage of students to the highest standards, Rhode Island can learn from and recognize publicly those schools that believe good simply isn't good enough.

All other accountability measures proposed in this waiver sum proficient and proficient with distinction in calculation determinations. RIDE wants to recognize and commend schools that not only ensure students are proficient, but expect them to achieve at the highest levels. This metric is designed to incentivize high expectations for our students. We determine this metric by dividing Level 4 students (Proficient with Distinction) into the total number of students tested, for reading and mathematics individually. We will then rank the scores and assign each school a score between 1 and 5. This measure accounts for 5 percent of the accountability system across all levels (EMH). The identified cut points below were developed to reflect our current rates of proficient with distinction for both math (16%) and reading (21%).

Proficient with Distinction Metric Cut Scores

		1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points	5 Points
Percent of Tested students in Distinction Level	Reading	< 5	≥ 5, < 15	≥ 15, < 30	≥ 30, < 40	≥ 40
	Math	< 5	≥ 5, < 15	≥ 15, < 25	≥ 25, < 35	≥ 35

Growth (Elementary, Middle): Are all students making progress?

This measure indicates whether, on average, students in each elementary and middle school are making sufficient annual growth based on their scores on state assessments in mathematics and reading. This measure examines the scores at the student level in each school and compares each student's scores over consecutive years. This measure evaluates growth for three groups of students: (1) all students, (2) minority students plus students living in poverty, and (3) students with disabilities plus English Learners. (Note: We cannot use this measure for high schools because students take the state assessments during only one year in high school.)

Schools' absolute performance in 2010-11 is wide-ranging. The absolute performance is important but not the only lens we will use to determine schools needing urgent attention. Our proposed accountability system will factor in a growth metric that acknowledges schools that demonstrate strong growth even though they may not reach their absolute proficiency targets. Simultaneously, we will highlight schools that are stagnant despite high performance. Rhode Island will use the Student Growth

Percentile (SGP) methodology developed by Damian Bettebenner.² This methodology was selected because it accounts for each student’s prior academic history. As such each student’s growth is compared to his or her academic peers.

For this measure student level percentile records in reading and in mathematics have been combined to increase the number of records available for determining median percentiles for each of the three groups (All students, Minority/Poverty and Program) that make up the components. A median percentile score is determined for each of these groups. Points from 1 to 5 are then assigned to each of these groups based on their median percentile scores and the cut point described in the table below. The mean or average of these three numbers which vary from 1 to 5 is then calculated. If the average score is 5, it will translate to all the 25 points for this measure. An average score of 1 will translate to 5 of the 25 points assigned to this measure. The equation below is used to assign Student Growth Percentile Measure points to each school. The average score is multiplied by 25 (the weight of the measure). Then, that amount is divided by 5 (the maximum number of points for the measure).

Points Assigned to Student Growth Percentile Measure = (Average Score * 25)/5

Each student’s reading and math SGPs are combined to calculate a school’s total growth metric. By doing so, student subgroup populations are large enough to calculate the median SGP for each school. An SGP is calculated for all students, the Consolidated Program Subgroup, and the Consolidated Minority/Poverty Subgroup. We assign a score of one to five, based on RIDE-developed cut scores, for the 3 median scores. We calculate this component for elementary and middle schools only, and it accounts for 25 percent of the weighted accountability system.

		1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points	5 Points
Growth	All students	< 35	≥ 35, < 45	≥ 45, < 55	≥ 55, < 65	≥ 65
	Minority / Poverty Subgroup					
	Program Subgroup					

* When any sub score is not available because n is less than twenty, the average score excludes that sub score.

Graduation (high schools): Are all students ready for success?

This measure indicates for high schools the 4-year, 5-year, and 6-year graduation rates, taking into account transfers into and out of the school.

² Bettebenner, D. W. (2009). Norm-and criterion-referenced student growth. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 28(4):42–51.

When NCLB was first introduced, we established a statewide baseline measure for the high-school graduation rate. The procedure for defining the baseline paralleled the procedure for defining the baseline for the academic measures. Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, RIDE adopted the NGA adjusted cohort formula based on the tracking of individual students. We established a new state baseline from which we defined a Graduation Rate Annual Target growth trajectory.

As of last year, RIDE revised its accountability notebook to include a five-year graduation rate. The higher of a four-year adjusted cohort rate or a combined four- and five-year rate, weighted at 60 percent and 40 percent, respectively is used for accountability. RIDE proposes in this request to add a six-year graduation rate. This 6-year rate is important as more Rhode Island high schools retain and graduate our most vulnerable students. The introduction of a six year rate will require an adjustment to our combined weighting. We propose a composite score of 50% of a four year adjusted cohort rate and 25% of both the five year and six year graduation rates. A school's graduation rate for the purposes of this model is the higher of the four year and composite graduation rates.

The graduation score consists of two components: one measures absolute rate, while the other considers growth toward a 100-percent graduation rate expressed as an Annual Target:

a. Graduation Rate

To calculate the graduation rate, RIDE uses the 2010-11 4-, 5-, and 6-year cohort graduation rates. The highest of the 4-year cohort graduation rate and the composite of the 4-, 5-, and 6-year cohort graduation rates (weighted .50, .25 and .25 respectively) is used to compute the graduation rate measure.

b. Graduation Rate Annual Targets

Using the 2010-11 cohort graduation rate as a baseline, the formula, Annual Target = $100 - (2010-11 \text{ graduation rate})/2$ is the gap that each school must close by 2016-17. That gap is divided by 6 to arrive at each school's individual Annual Target. We will assign each school a score from one to five according to the cut scores below. This component accounts for 20 percent of the weighted accountability system, at the high-school level only.

	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points	5 Points
HS Graduation Rates	< 65	$\geq 65 < 75$	$\geq 75 < 85$	$\geq 85 < 90$	≥ 90

** To encourage schools to make extreme efforts to graduate students, schools whose graduation rates are higher than their Annual Target or schools that have a graduation rate higher than the state average may receive one additional point.*

Calculating schools total points for the graduation rates measure is a several step process. First, the composite and 4-year graduation rates are calculated. Using the higher of the two graduation rates a school is assigned points (1-5) based on the table above. Then an additional point may be added if the school met their graduation rate annual target. A school could receive up to 6 points. Finally the weighted points are calculated using the formula below. The total points are multiplied by 20 (the weight of the measure). Then, that amount is divided by 6 (the maximum number of points for the measure).

$$\text{Points Assigned to Graduation Rate Measure} = (\text{Total points} * 20)/6.$$

Improvement (high schools): Are students improving annually?

This measure indicates for high schools whether the grade-11 scores on state assessments in mathematics and reading are improving each year.

High-school scale-score change:

Because our state assessment is only administered once at the high-school level (in 11th grade), a growth score is not available. As a proxy, RIDE proposes using the change in average scale scores at the 11th grade to measure annual improvement. To calculate this measure, RIDE will subtract the 2011-12 mean scaled score from the 2010-11 mean scaled scores for both mathematics and reading. We will assign points (one to five) based on the cut scores in the table below. This measure will constitute five percent of the weighted accountability system, at the high-school level only.

HS Scaled Score Change	Reading	< -3	≥ -3 < -1	≥ -1 < 1	≥ 1 < 3	≥ 3
	Math					

ASSIGNING SCHOOLS TO ACCOUNTABILITY LEVELS

Rhode Island’s proposed accountability system will place schools into one of its six levels in rank order from the highest to lowest CIS. Two levels, Typical Schools and Warning Schools will be informed by additional data. Each level is briefly introduced in section and connected to a comprehensive diagnostic and intervention system in subsequent sections of this application. Our methodology fairly and accurately identifies and ranks schools while adhering to all ESEA waiver requirements. Most notably, this unified federal and state accountability model places primacy on three critical questions about each of its schools.

1. Is student achievement in reading and mathematics unacceptably low?
2. Are there intolerable gaps in student performance?
3. Is there little or no academic progress in improving student achievement or increasing graduation rates?

Schools that answer yes to all three questions emerge as Rhode Island’s priority and focus schools. We believe that it is the combination of these factors that require the most urgent action, resources, and attention at the state and district levels.

A school’s total composite score is the sum of the seven weighted metrics described in Table 2: ESEA Flexibility Design Weights. Figure 1 below presents the distribution of schools across each of Rhode Island’s six levels of performance according to their Composite Index Score (CIS) as plotted by their total CIS out of one hundred possible points. [See Appendix A for a rank-ordered list of all Rhode Island schools with details on point accumulation for each component of the CIS.] Warning Schools are schools with index scores below 50 and are not identified as priority or focus. In addition, any school that fails to meet the 95% participation rate or that have individual metrics that are at low levels in one of the following -- absolute proficiency, gaps, growth, or graduation rates -- are placed into the Warning Level regardless of the CIS, subject to the cut scores set forth below:

1. An Absolute Proficiency Metric of less than or equal to 10; or
2. A Gap Score Metric of 15 or less; or
3. A Growth Score Metric of 7.5 or less; or
4. A combined Graduation and High School Scaled Score Change of 10 or less or
5. Fail to attain any AMO for two consecutive years

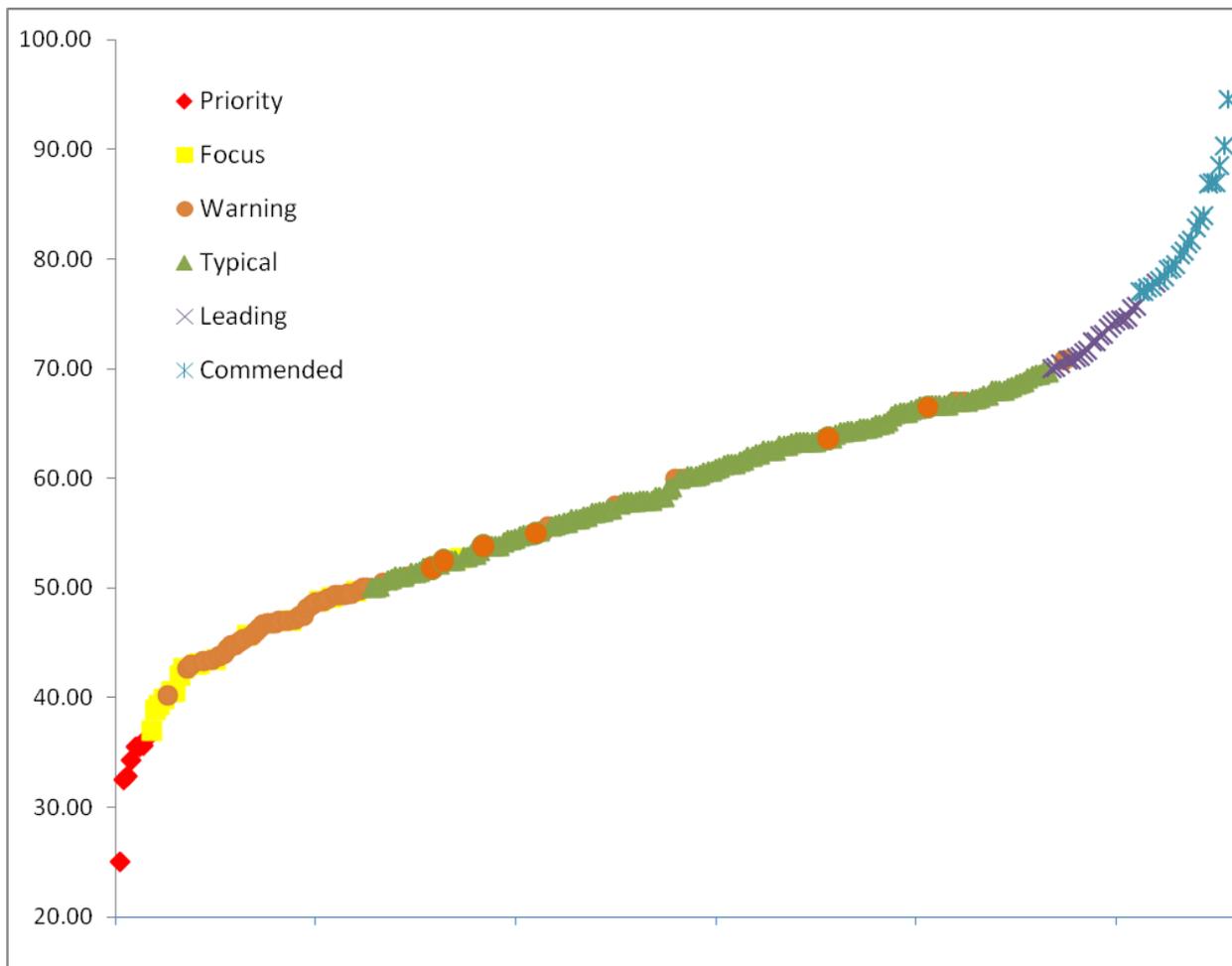
RIDE is especially concerned about participation rates for reasons of both accuracy and equity. Outside of the composite index score based on the components listed herein, each school will be responsible for testing at least 95% of its eligible students at each grade level. Failure to hit this target in a single year will result in a “Warning” classification, regardless of scores in the component measures. RIDE is considerably more concerned with schools that have continuing difficulty to meet the Participation target. For that reason, schools that fail to meet the Participation target for two consecutive years will be automatically assigned a “Focus” classification. Schools that fail Participation for three consecutive years will be assigned a “Priority” classification, again, regardless of other school-level performance measures. A one-year anomaly in this area may be understandable; multiple years of missing Participation rate targets will be considered unacceptable.

RIDE will identify and classify 45 schools as Warning Schools in the current year.

The combined powers of the utilization of the CIS plus the additional criteria enable RIDE to accurately identify schools that have either *widespread* low levels of performance and growth and large achievement gaps or *isolated but serious* problems in the areas of overall achievement, low growth, or low graduation rates. The resultant distribution highlights the ability of RIDE’s proposed system to differentiate among the breadth of performance across all Rhode Island schools. The range is from 25 to 94.5. Further, the levels are designed to create ambitious yet attainable targets for schools.

Figure 1 provides compelling visual support for the accuracy and sensitivity of Rhode Island’s proposed system of measuring school performance. It is virtually impossible for a school that is underserving its students to escape notice. We are extremely confident that this comprehensive approach to measuring school performance will provide an accurate picture of student achievement from a number of different perspectives. Of course, knowing that a school is struggling, and where, is still a far cry from knowing exactly what needs to be addressed to remedy the situation.

Figure 1: Rhode Island School Classification by CIS



Individualizing Supports and Interventions

The Rhode Island system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support creates incentives and support to close achievement gaps for all subgroups. An effective accountability system requires information from multiple sources to inform analysis of the many aspects of education systems. Internal accountability for

continuous improvement requires an understanding of the complex and overlapping operations at work in schools and school systems. The Basic Education Program is explicit about LEA responsibilities in this regard: “Each LEA shall develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate an accountability system, using information from multiple sources, to inform analysis of the many aspects of the education system. Relevant data shall consist of a combination of contextual and demographic information, measures of student learning, curriculum and instruction strategies and practices, and perceptual or evaluative data.”

It is counterintuitive that we expect students to have an individualized learning plan, individualized educational program, personal and academic portfolios, transition plans, and personal literacy plans while we have not sufficiently helped schools and LEAs develop individualized plans based on *their* specific needs. Our recent experiences with Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools (PLAs) have taught us that concentrated effort on diagnosis, though time-consuming, can have meaningful and lasting results. Even were diagnoses to be perfect, there needs to be a systematic way to monitor frequently and gauge when supports and interventions fail to meet anticipated objectives. NCLB provided little funding for this monitoring, but our Office of Transformation, recognizing this gap in capacity, has re-tooled its staffing to ensure that monitoring and evaluation are ongoing functions of RIDE.

RIDE proposes to build off of these lessons learned to put in place a transparent, predictable, and sustainable system of differentiated accountability, support and interventions, supports and rewards. The accountability system will:

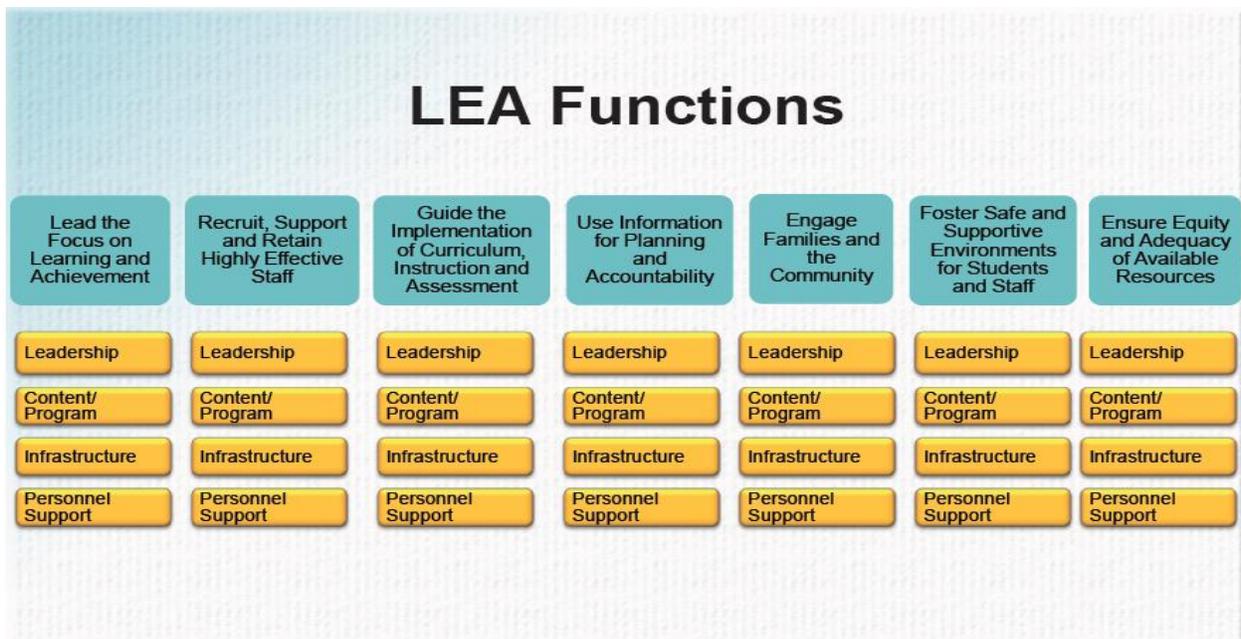
1. Include the processes and written plans for a comprehensive assessment system and for systemic problem solving;
2. Specify policies, procedures, and strategies for public reporting that comply with state and federal reporting requirements and that ensure broadly accessible and timely dissemination of information;
3. Establish procedures by which an LEA can conduct a thorough self-study of the LEA functions and capacities for continuous improvement, using criteria that the Commissioner of Education establishes; and,
4. Include development of a plan that demonstrates how the LEA will use self-study findings to inform allocation of resources, strategic planning, and differentiated supports to schools.

The revised Basic Education Program (BEP) consists of a set of measurable expectations for the seven functions described above. Meta-analysis of national critiques of school and LEA improvement efforts revealed that four *capacities* must be present in order to achieve success in any of the functions. Unfortunately, there is significantly more research that documents failed improvement efforts than successful ones. In a review of more than two-dozen studies, RIDE analysts were able to pinpoint

the failure in any instance as resulting from insufficient capacity in one of four critical areas, which we labeled the “four capacities”:

1. Leadership;
2. Content/Program;
3. Personnel Supports; and
4. Infrastructure.

In order to achieve results, each LEA “Function” (see matrix below) must be supported in all four capacity areas. We can then map and apply consistently across the state the performance measures for each capacity in each functional area. The summary below provides additional information about the 28 performance areas.



For the first time, Rhode Island has a system of measures that we can use to pinpoint gaps in performance by the adults in the education system, as well as gaps in the support structures designed to improve student performance. Tracking student performance can give us an accurate picture of how well a school or LEA is performing. It takes other sources of data to inform where and why the education system is not improving.

Each of the 28 “boxes” in the performance matrix represents a function and capacity that schools and LEAs must fulfill if they are to prepare all students for college, challenging careers, and life. Because each box in the matrix is measurable, each school and LEA can determine where they are struggling or excelling in a certain capacity or function. We developed our Surveyworks data, including student, parent, teacher, and administrator perception data, to be in alignment with the seven functions.

We have mapped our Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA) to the functions as well. In short, RIDE is committed to opening the black box, and, in doing so, to differentiating the underlying reasons for school and LEA performance in unprecedented ways.

The performance matrix will be invaluable for schools because, for the first time, systems will be able to examine all of their data in relation to one another. Currently, one can make judgments regarding suspension rates and percentage of students who report they have been bullied. But one cannot necessarily place a value judgment on dollars tied to in-school suspension initiatives and bullying programs. With this matrix, schools can analyze results in conjunction with the resources attached to those outcomes. In this way, RIDE can systematically: a) help schools target limited funding in meaningful ways; b) compare their results with peer schools to determine whether they could reallocate resources based on best practice; and, c) study return-on-investment for programs at individual schools and initiatives statewide. Finally, the BEP is the tool that LEAs can leverage when negotiating their budgets with school boards and town councils. It is clear to many districts already that the BEP performance measures are a way to protect school programs from massive budget cuts in a time when cities and towns are slashing budgets daily.

The performance matrix will give each school a score for each of the 28 boxes (which can then be aggregated up to an LEA matrix). For priority schools, RIDE will work with the schools and LEAs to examine the matrix and determine their greatest weaknesses. From a menu of moderate to invasive capacity interventions, the LEA will select those interventions that correspond to the weaknesses, as the matrix has determined. Although the LEA selects the option, RIDE must approve the interventions to ensure that the interventions that the LEA selects correspond with needs as reflected in the data. Ultimately, the measures inside each of the boxes are the outcomes the school seeks to improve in the short term in order to improve achievement outcomes for all students in the long term. It is imperative that the data in the matrix includes short-, medium-, and long-term evidence points so that schools can determine early and often whether they are moving in the right direction. Focus schools will follow the same process. The range of interventions available to focus schools would be expanded, as their needs may suggest less invasive interventions and supports.

English Learners and Students with Disabilities

The Rhode Island system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support includes interventions to improve the performance of English Learners and students with disabilities.

All students with disabilities participate fully in the statewide assessments (sometimes with testing accommodations) or they are tested using the Alternate Assessment system if they meet the eligibility criteria. Less than 1 percent of all students are eligible to participate in the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment system. Thus, all students with disabilities are included in the state accountability system.

With a statewide student identifier system in place (2005), we can assign test results of students who have recently exited special education to this subgroup for purposes of disaggregation in determining AMO for that group. Students who receive section 504 services are not included in determining the students-with-disabilities disaggregations. The assignment of exited students to the special-needs disaggregated group is for two years. This concept is similar to the way English-Learner-exited students are handled in disaggregations. The introduction of the statewide student-identifier system ensures greater accuracy in our ability to account for all students.

Rhode Island mandates the assessment of all students including students who have limited English-language abilities. Rhode Island has adopted the definition of a Limited English Proficient student in Title IX of NCLB, Part A Definitions, Section 9101. Students who are learning English are assessed with the NECAP exams, with accommodations as needed, just like those who do not receive Limited English Proficient (LEP) services (except that students who have been in the United States for less than one year are not assessed in reading). In addition, English Learners are assessed in English-language proficiency (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) at all grade levels - K through 12. Rhode Island developed English-language proficiency standards in partnership with WIDA. To maximize the alignment with WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards, Rhode Island adopted a new English-language proficiency assessment (ACCESS) in Spring 2006. Rhode Island has Title III AMAO targets for students on this exam. Students who receive LEP services, like all other students, take the NECAP assessments for accountability purposes. In addition to this, English Learners take the ACCESS English-language proficiency test.

Implementation Plan

Rhode Island has provided a plan that ensures the system will be implemented no later than the next school year (2012-13).

The BEP, in concert with our Strategic Plan and our Race to the Top Scope of Work (SOW), neatly aligns our goals and expectations with the accountability principles outlined by CCSSO. Common Core standards together with the consortium PARCC assessments will ensure that performance goals are aligned with college and career readiness. Our redesigned accountability system will provide better data for RIDE to provide differentiated recognition and support. Multiple measures of student outcomes, including absolute performance, in addition to growth and gap reduction across all subgroups, will help our schools and LEAs target instructional improvements. Our revised comparison group ensures that we will have a clearer roadmap to support our students with the greatest challenges.

Improvements to our data systems, enhanced by Race to the Top and the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, will allow us to provide real-time data to our teachers and administrators and user-friendly information to parents, students, and policy-makers. We will make these same data available to researchers and others so that they can diagnose and evaluate programs and services. Our proposed differentiated recognition, accountability, and support structures will strengthen the capacity of schools and LEAs by targeting interventions, external support, training, extended learning opportunities, and professional development based on accurate, valid, and reliable data. These differentiated structures will help us keep our focus on our lowest-performing schools and on closing achievement gaps. Finally, these efforts

combined will elevate our reform work to a new level by encouraging and supporting innovation, meaningful evaluation, and continuous improvement for all Rhode Island schools.

2.A.ii Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide the corresponding information, if any.

Option A

The SEA includes student achievement only on reading/language arts and mathematics assessments in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system and to identify reward, priority, and focus schools.

Option B

If the SEA includes student achievement on assessments in addition to reading/language arts and mathematics in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system or to identify reward, priority, and focus schools, it must:

- a. provide the percentage of students in the “all students” group that performed at the proficient level on the State’s most recent administration of each assessment for all grades assessed; and
- b. include an explanation of how the included assessments will be weighted in a manner that will result in holding schools accountable for ensuring all students achieve college- and career-ready standards.

2.B Set Ambitious but Achievable Annual Measurable Objectives

Select the method the SEA will use to set new ambitious but achievable annual measurable objectives (AMOs) in at least reading/language arts and mathematics for the State and all LEAs, schools, and subgroups that provide meaningful goals and are used to guide support and improvement efforts. If the SEA sets AMOs that differ by LEA, school, or subgroup, the AMOs for LEAs, schools, or subgroups that are further behind must require greater rates of annual progress.

Option A	Option B	Option C
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Set AMOs in annual equal increments toward a goal of reducing by half the percentage of students in the “all students” group and in each subgroup who are not proficient within six years. The SEA must use current proficiency rates based on assessments administered in the 2010–2011 school year as the starting point for setting its AMOs.</p> <p>i. Provide the new AMOs and an explanation of the method used to set these AMOs.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Set AMOs that increase in annual equal increments and result in 100 percent of students achieving proficiency no later than the end of the 2019–2020 school year. The SEA must use the average statewide proficiency based on assessments administered in the 2010–2011 school year as the starting point for setting its AMOs.</p> <p>i. Provide the new AMOs and an explanation of the method used to set these AMOs.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Use another method that is educationally sound and results in ambitious but achievable AMOs for all LEAs, schools, and subgroups.</p> <p>i. Provide the new AMOs and an explanation of the method used to set these AMOs.</p> <p>ii. Provide an educationally sound rationale for the pattern of academic progress reflected in the new AMOs in the text box below.</p> <p>iii. Provide a link to the State’s report card or attach a copy of the average statewide proficiency based on assessments administered in the 2010–2011 school year in reading/language arts and mathematics for the “all students” group and all subgroups. (Attachment 8)</p>

2.C Reward Schools

2.C.i Describe the SEA’s methodology for identifying highest-performing and high-progress schools as reward schools . If the SEA’s methodology is not based on the definition of reward schools in *ESEA Flexibility* (but instead, e.g. based on school grades or ratings that take into account a number of factors), the SEA should also demonstrate that the list provided in Table 2 is consistent with the definition, per the Department’s “Demonstrating that an SEA’s Lists of Schools meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions” guidance.

RIDE will identify Reward (or “Commended”) Schools as a subset of higher performing schools classified as “Leading Schools.” Leading schools will be schools with a Composite Index Score (CIS) between 70 and 100 unless they have the additional designation as a Commended School. Our Leading Schools cut across all grade levels and regions of the state.

Commended Schools in the Rhode Island System are the state’s Title I schools that are beating the odds as identified under the proposed accountability system. The system is designed to be particularly sensitive at the highest and lowest ends of performance. Commended Schools include the top 5% of the Title I schools that are grouped within other non-Title I schools will be highlighted as Commended Schools. They have the highest total CIS in the state and do not have any significant subgroup gaps. Their CIS ranges from 79 to 94.5 points based on the 2011-12 achievement data. The Commended Schools demonstrate a range of strong performance metrics by either demonstrating the highest overall performance without having significant achievement gaps OR by having the strongest performance or graduation gains without having any significant achievement gaps. In addition, any Commended School that is a high school must have among the highest graduation rates in the state.

Commended Schools will be identified because of their combination of strong metrics in three critical areas: overall achievement, closing gaps, or strong growth. By utilizing rank-ordered CIS ratings to identify Commended schools, Rhode Island is able to identify these schools while paying particular attention to the three aforementioned metrics. Eleven of the twenty-two Commended schools received the maximum 30 points in subgroup gaps, indicating that they have either closed the achievement gap or have amongst the smallest achievement gaps in Rhode Island. Five of the 22 schools received 27 points or more in the absolute proficiency, making them amongst the highest achieving in Rhode Island. Twelve of the twenty-two commended schools have demonstrated growth at the elementary or middle level or graduation rates that earned points of 20 or higher. Taken as a group, Commended Schools serve as proof points that schools of all levels, sizes, and demographics can achieve at the highest levels while at the same time closing the achievement gap. Leading and Commended Schools account for approximately 16% of our schools statewide.

2.C.ii Provide the SEA’s list of reward schools in Table 2.

2.C.iii Describe how the SEA will publicly recognize and, if possible, reward highest-performing and high-progress schools.

RIDE will publicly recognize both the highest performing and the high progress schools in Rhode Island by awarding a certificate, notifying the public and the media, and holding an awards ceremony at the Rhode Island State House, all in keeping with current and recent practice in Rhode Island.

Since 2001 – before the passage of NCLB – RIDE has been recognizing schools for both exceptionally high achievement and exceptional improvement. Recognized schools are distinguished as “Regents Commended Schools,” a classification that comes with public recognition by RIDE, the media, Rhode Island Board of Regents, the Governor’s Office, and members of the General Assembly.

Under the terms of this waiver application and in keeping with over a decade of practice, Reward Schools will be publicly classified as “Regents Commended Schools” and will receive a certificate signed by the Chairman of the Board of Regents and by the Commissioner of Education. In the spring of each year, RIDE, in consultation with the R.I. School Superintendents Association (RISSA) and the R.I. Association of School Principals (RIASP), will participate in a public ceremony at the Rhode Island State House to honor the Regents Commended Schools. This annual state house event, which routinely involves the Governor and key elected officials, will utilize the new classification and accountability system to recognize High Performing and High Progress Schools

By maintaining a strong emphasis on trend-based evidence of progress, gap closure, and high performance, these areas of commendation are in keeping with the both overall guidelines set forth in ESEA section 1117(b)(1)(B) and the overall design of Rhode Island’s proposed new accountability and classification system.

We are confident that the selection and promotion of Regents Commended Schools has the overall beneficial effect of advance student achievement across the state, not merely in Regents Commended Schools. All schools aspire to this commendation. Through recognizing both progress and high performance, this distinction is within reach of all schools, regardless of their current achievement level. Schools receiving this award have used the opportunity to invite their entire school community to the awards ceremony and they have followed up with local ceremonies and recognitions and well

as with display of the commendation certificate in prominent locations in their schools – all of which can build a sense of community accomplishment, pride, and continuous pursuit of excellence.

Table 5: Planning for Recognition of Reward Schools

<i>Milestone or Activity</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Party Responsible</i>	<i>Evidence</i>	<i>Resources</i>	<i>Obstacles</i>
ID of SY11-12 reward schools	2/12	RIDE	N/A	Staff time	None
Award ceremony	5/12	RIDE, Board of Regents, Governor, General Assembly leadership	N/A	Staff time	None
Identification SY 12-13 reward schools	2/13	RIDE	N/A	Staff time	None
Award ceremony	5/13	RIDE, Board of Regents, Governor, General Assembly leadership	N/A	Staff time	None
Identification of SY13-14 reward schools	2/13	RIDE	N/A	Staff time	None
Award ceremony	5/14	RIDE, Board of Regents, Governor, General Assembly leadership	N/A	Staff time	None

2.D Priority Schools

2.D.i Describe the SEA’s methodology for identifying a number of lowest-performing schools equal to at least five percent of the State’s Title I schools as priority schools. If the SEA’s methodology is not based on the definition of priority schools in *ESEA Flexibility* (but instead, e.g. based on school grades or ratings that take into account a number of factors), the SEA should also demonstrate that the list provided in Table 2 is consistent with the definition, per the Department’s “Demonstrating that an SEA’s Lists of Schools meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions” guidance.

Rhode Island currently has a strong system for identifying and intervening in our lowest performing schools and districts. The waiver will enable us to integrate our state system with federal accountability requirements and, in turn, expand the supports available to those proposed system. We will continue to include these indicators and add additional, more sensitive indicators to identify schools that are struggling to improve student outcomes.

At this time, Rhode Island has twelve schools that are identified as our Tier I persistently lowest achieving schools and thirteen schools that are considered to be “served” under the final requirements of School Improvement 1003(g). These schools were identified in a methodology that considered many of the metrics we intend to include in our Priority Schools identification. All PLA Tier I and II schools that are currently being “served” under 1003(g) will be classified as “priority” schools for the purposes of classification under this waiver.

The Priority Schools will account for 5% of all Title I schools in Rhode Island plus one additional non-Title I school, resulting in the identification of five schools that have not been previously required to implement comprehensive reform. The Priority Schools are those with the lowest Composite Index Score, (CIS). The Commissioner will have discretion to classify a school as a Priority School based on a number of factors, including resource availability and other information collected beyond the CIS. Please see section 2A for detailed information about the measures and cut scores associated with the CIS.

In our proposed system, five additional schools will be identified as Priority Schools, for a total of eighteen, including our previously served persistently lowest achieving schools. These schools exceed the number equal to 5% of our Title I schools and are our lowest performing schools as reflected by both the multiple measures that inform the CIS, as well as the lowest performing schools as measured by absolute proficiency in reading and mathematics. These eighteen schools:

- Demonstrate extraordinarily low absolute proficiency rates in reading, (31%- 47% proficient) and mathematics (2%-31% proficient).
- Demonstrate the largest gaps in student achievement in reading and mathematics, ranging from 37 to 75 percentage point gaps.
- Show low rates of academic growth compared to schools with students of similar academic histories or low graduation rates.
- Missed most of their Annual Measurable Objectives by large margins.

Their composite index scores range from 25 to 36.33.

2.D.ii Provide the SEA’s list of priority schools in Table 2.

2.D.iii Describe the meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles that an LEA with priority schools will implement.

Overall Design Goals of the Intervention System

RIDE has developed an intervention plan for all LEAs with priority schools that is aligned to the seven federal turnaround principles, derived from a meta-analysis of recent research on school and district turnaround, includes specific and concrete strategies to support the needs of English Learners and students with disabilities, and is reflective of Rhode Island’s experiences in large scale reform over the past ten years.

To that end, the intervention system is designed to be:

- **Diagnostic, requiring that –**
 - a. LEAs review and employ a rich set of qualitative and quantitative data to select and implement interventions that are responsive to the strengths and weaknesses of each identified school; and,
 - b. The SEA issues commissioner approval of selected intervention models and strategies based upon their demonstrable connection to the strengths and weaknesses of each identified school.
- **Targeted, providing –**
 - a. LEAs and schools with targeted, focused, and surgical intervention options and strategies that address the unique needs of identified schools and the student populations within each school, and,
 - b. The SEA the opportunity to work with LEAs to ensure that the intervention model and strategies are feasible, ambitious, scalable, appropriate.
- **Empirically based, providing –**
 - a. LEAs the ability to select from a managed list of bold and empirically-proven interventions derived from a metanalysis of school turnaround research over the last five years; and,
 - b. The SEA with the ability to align resources and systems and coordinate state-level services to improve the effectiveness, coherence, and efficiency of the RIDE support.

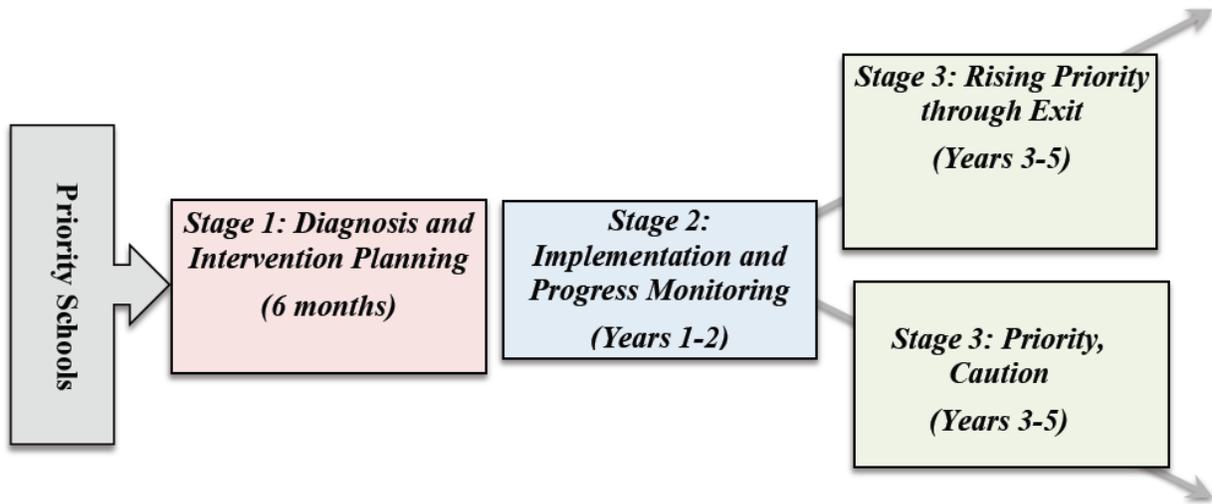
- ***A catalyst for bold reform, ensuring that*** –
 - a. All identified schools construct a plan for rapid and bold reform that addresses systemic weaknesses, including comprehensive changes to systems of curriculum, instruction and assessment; governance; and in many cases, flexibility within the collective bargaining agreement, and
 - b. The SEA intervention system establishes clear and bold expectations and parameters and the conditions and criteria for success.
- ***Outcomes-driven, requiring that*** – Regular and intensive progress monitoring by both the SEA and LEA through a carefully chosen and mutually understood set of leading and student outcomes measures

RIDE’s proposed intervention system further reflects the policy priorities that underpin the design of the accountability system, with a relentless focus on:

- (1) Identification and intervention in schools demonstrating low or no progress toward improved student outcomes;
- (2) Identification and intervention in schools with large and growing or stagnant achievement gaps between the performance reference group and student subpopulations; and
- (3) Low levels of absolute achievement for all students and student subpopulations.

Priority Schools: A Three-Stage Intervention System

Priority school reform efforts will be organized into three distinct stages, enabling both the LEA and SEA to effectively target resources and monitor progress in a manner appropriate to the stage. An overview of these stages can be seen in Figure 2; the requirements and goals of each stage are described in the remainder of this section.

Figure 2: Three Stages of Intervention System for Priority Schools**Stage One: Diagnosis and Intervention Planning (6 months from identification)**

Stage One provides LEAs and identified schools six months to make critical decisions about their intervention approach, develop a comprehensive plan, and establish performance targets that will be used throughout their period of identification. During this phase, there are several key tasks:

- (1) RIDE administration of the diagnostic screen and a SEA/LEA data meeting during which the results are discussed;
- (2) LEA selection of an intervention model;
- (3) RIDE approval of the intervention model;
- (4) LEA development of a school reform and resourcing plan, including establishing performance targets; and
- (5) SEA approval of the school reform and resourcing plan.

Table 6 summarizes the key function of each of the five tasks associated with *Stage One: Diagnosis and Intervention Planning* and further detail is presented below.

Table 6: Stage One Tasks and Functions, by Agency				
Task	Intended Function	SEA	LEA	School
Task 1: Diagnostic Screen & Data Meeting	Analyze and review performance, culture, climate and student outcome data (including full disaggregation of student outcome data at subpopulation levels)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Document the strengths/weaknesses of priority school(s) and LEA(s) serving them	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Establish clear expectations for LEA decision-making and required connection to school performance data	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Task 2: Selection of intervention model	LEA selection of intervention model and associated intervention strategies		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	LEA submission of intervention model selection, along with relevant data and rationale, to Commissioner for approval		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Task 3: Intervention model approval	Commissioner review and approval of LEA model, including a review to ensure that all plans meet the seven federal turnaround principles	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Hold LEAs accountable for demonstrating the connection between results of diagnostic screen and intervention model selection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Task 4: Development of LEA school reform and resourcing plan	LEA development of school reform plan		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Develop strategies for resourcing reform plan, including the use of SES and PD reserves, transferability, and other flexibility associated with waiver	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Establish (at the LEA level) performance targets including leading and outcome measures for each major intervention strategy		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Task 5: School reform and resourcing plan approval	Commissioner review and approval of LEA school reform plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Commissioner review and approval of LEA performance targets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Hold LEAs accountable for demonstrating connection between results of diagnostic screen, intervention model, and the details of the school reform plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	RIDE approval of resourcing plan, including LEA utilization of reinvestment of SES and PD reserves, transferability, and other flexibility associated with waiver	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

The Diagnostic Screen and Data Meeting

RIDE will develop and administer a comprehensive diagnostic screen for each priority school. This diagnostic screen demonstrates RIDE's commitment, through this waiver application, to a comprehensive and granular disaggregation and vigorous interrogation

of school level data with a focus on identifying root causes of underperformance. In addition to many other indicators, this diagnostic screen is the home of highly detailed review of disaggregated sub-population performance.

This screen will include a wide array of information including, but not limited to:

- (1) School climate, including suspension and referral data;
- (2) Student attendance, truancy, and chronic absenteeism data;
- (3) Students in grades 6-12 identified through the early warning system;
- (4) Parent, student, and faculty survey data;
- (5) English Learner data including
 - a. Student achievement and growth rates on the ACCESS test for ELs, Rhode Island's English language proficiency assessment
 - b. Exit rates for English Learners
 - c. Achievement rates of exited and monitored English Learners;
 - d. Disproportionate identification of English Learners as students with disabilities;
 - e. District alignment to WIDA standards and utilization of empirically proven instructional programs to provide English Learners with content-rich, linguistically appropriate learning environments.
- (6) Teacher evaluation, attendance, and performance data;
- (7) Achievement and outcome data for students with disabilities, including:
 - a. Least restrictive environment data,
 - b. Student transition patterns,
 - c. Progress of students with IEPs
 - d. Consolidated summary of all federal indicators for IDEA; and
 - e. Data collected through on-site monitoring reports for schools and districts;
- (8) LEA expenditure analysis including comparisons of the identified schools' FY11 investments in:
 - a. Administrative overhead expenses against statewide average;
 - b. Investment per pupil in instructional materials against the statewide average; and
 - c. Investment in instructional staff per pupil against the statewide average;
 - d. Investment in services to student subpopulations against the statewide average.

The diagnostic screen will provide LEAs with a clear normative and criterion-based view of their priority school or schools' performance and organizational strengths and weaknesses. This view into school and district serves three important functions.

First, it harnesses RIDE's capacity to support LEAs by delivering a high-quality, comprehensive, and accurate needs analysis. With a RIDE-managed diagnostic screen, all priority schools will receive diagnostic data that (1) includes measures beyond the reach and/or of capacity of LEAs, (2) assures that all student subpopulation

performance will be disaggregated down to the most granular form possible, (3) links system performance with expenditure data, and (4) connects the data collected through federal programs to LEA decisions about intervention systems and strategies.

Second, by *leading* the identification process with a state-administered diagnostic screen, the state can hold LEAs accountable for all intervention decisions that follow. Rather than naming schools and simultaneously collecting an improvement plan *along with* evidence of LEA completion of a needs assessment, this system will require shared acknowledgement of the results of the screening process *before* LEAs begin selecting intervention strategies. This sequence, coupled with the insertion of required Commissioner-level approval of priority school intervention plans, enables RIDE to hold LEAs highly accountable to the results of the diagnostic screen.

Finally, the diagnostic screen will be built to reflect the architecture of Rhode Island's Basic Education Program (BEP), the most influential and wide-sweeping education regulation in Rhode Island. The BEP utilizes a matrix of seven LEA functions and four LEA capacities to create 28 critical areas of LEA performance. [See Appendix B for the 28 BEP performance measures.]

The 28 performance areas of the BEP reflect a matrix that spans seven LEA functions, which are closely aligned to the seven turnaround principles:

- a) *Lead the Focus on Learning and Achievement:* The LEA shall provide on-site direction that continuously guides site-based leadership; identify expectations and accountability for implementation of proven practices; and address barriers to implementation of identified educational goals.
- b) *Recruit, Support, and Retain Highly Effective Staff:* The LEA shall recruit, identify, mentor, support, and retain effective staff; build the capacity of staff to meet organizational expectations; and provide job-embedded professional development based on student need.
- c) *Guide the Implementation of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment:* The LEA shall provide access to rigorous, guaranteed, and viable curricula for all students; ensure differentiated instructional strategies, materials, and assessments; and build systems that provide opportunities for common planning and assessment.
- d) *Use Information for Planning and Accountability:* The LEA shall develop and implement proficiency-based comprehensive assessment systems; distribute results of measured school progress and student performance; and maintain responsive and accessible information systems.
- e) *Engage Families and the Community:* The LEA shall implement effective family and community communication systems; engage families and the community to promote positive student achievement and behavior; and provide adult and alternative learning opportunities integrated with community needs.
- f) *Foster Safe and Supportive Environments for Students and Staff:* The LEA shall address the physical, social, and emotional needs of all students; ensure safe school facilities and learning environments; and require that every student has at least one adult accountable for his or her learning.

- g) *Ensure Equity and Adequacy of Fiscal and Human Resources:* The LEA shall identify and provide requisite resources to meet student needs; allocate fiscal and human resources based on student need; and overcome barriers to effective resource allocation at the school level.

The crosswalk of these seven LEA functions to the four BEP capacities will provide LEAs and priority schools with an overall picture of their performance, strengths, and weaknesses. The diagnostic screen will generate an LEA and school-level report with overall conclusions in the four LEA capacities described in the BEP:

- (1) *Leadership:* the capacity to mobilize people to focus and tackle hard issues, thrive, and be accountable for improving the educational system
- (2) *Content:* the capacity to establish and implement high quality, rigorous, and meaningful learning standards, curriculum, assessment, and instruction that leads to student success in college, careers, and life
- (3) *Infrastructure:* the capacity to organize, coordinate, and allocate the necessary resources and information to support a high-performing education system
- (4) *Personnel Supports:* the capacity to organize and create responsive, active, and dynamic growth and development mechanisms for improving adult learning and practice.

RIDE will design and administer the diagnostic screen utilizing current data collections. However, LEAs have access to school-level data that are not part of RIDE's current data collection system, yet still contribute toward a rich picture of overall system performance. To that end, LEAs will be encouraged to augment the results of the diagnostic screen with additional data that will support valid inferences and root cause analysis. For all priority schools, the results of the RIDE-administered screen, coupled with LEA additions, will be presented and discussed at an initial "SEA/LEA data meeting." This meeting, along with the data and reports that inform the discussion, will serve as the foundation for the next task in Stage One.

LEA Selection of an Intervention Model

After the results of the diagnostic screen are shared, the LEA will have 90 business days to select their intervention model. RIDE's proposed intervention approach reflects a combination of the most powerful elements of the 1003(g) requirements and the seven federal turnaround principles. Although the four 1003(g) intervention models brought problematic rigidity, they were successful in requiring LEAs to engage in hard conversations with stakeholders, scrutinize systems and practices, review investment decisions, and initiate bold change with urgency.

RIDE's intervention system attempts to maintain this sense of productive urgency and commitment to bold reform while at the same time, introducing greater LEA opportunity to construct a clear connection between the *reasons* for school underperformance and the selected intervention strategies. To that end, Rhode Island's intervention system will continue with a model-based approach to school intervention. LEAs will be required to select one of three intervention models for each Priority school. Implementation for all priority schools will begin during the 2012-2013 school year and full implementation in all Priority schools begin no later than the 2013-2014 year.

Description of the Three Models

Closure: School closure occurs when an LEA closes the identified school and enrolls the students who attended that school in other public schools within the state that are higher achieving. These other schools should be within a reasonable proximity to the closed school and may include, but are not limited to, charter schools or new schools for which achievement data are not yet available.

This model remains consistent with the requirements set forth under School Improvement 1003(g).

Restart: A restart model is one in which an LEA converts a school or closes it and reopens a new school under one of the following mechanisms: (1) a regional collaborative organized pursuant to RIGL Chapter 16-3.1; (2) a charter school operator or a charter management organization or similarly independent entity that materially changes school operations; (3) an education management organization that has been selected through a rigorous review process; or (4) the creation of a joint Labor/Management Compact detailing reciprocal obligations that create a new management structure with shared decision-making designed to fully address the needs of each student in the school and which fully complies with all other applicable requirements.

A restart model must enroll, within the grades it serves, any former student who wishes to attend the school.

Approval of a restart model requires the Commissioner to agree that the entity chosen by the LEA, through a process that adheres to local and state procurement requirements, is sufficiently vetted to reasonably ensure that the performance of the school under its management will significantly outperform the past performance of the school on measures to be determined by the Commissioner of Education. RIDE will develop a list of pre-approved CMO's and EMO's that meet the requisite state criteria, although nothing shall prevent an LEA from forwarding a specific CMO or EMO to the

Commissioner, notwithstanding the state’s development of a pre-approved list of such providers.

Rhode Island’s proposed restart model is consistent with the requirements set forth under School Improvement 1003(g). Furthermore, schools choosing the restart model will be required to construct a school reform plan that covers all seven federal turnaround principles, a condition of Commissioner approval.

Regardless of the nature of their restart, schools implementing this model will be required to implement three core school improvement strategies supported through Race to the Top and/or state educational regulations:

- (1) Full staff participation in training to support **school-wide transition to the Common Core State Standards**, including:
 - a. An aggressive schedule for transition to the CCSS including statewide study of the standards;
 - b. Development and/or adoption of CCSSO-aligned curriculum; and
 - c. Scaling of CCSSO exposure activities to every teacher in every building by the 2012-2013 academic year

- (2) Full staff participation in **Rhode Island’s educator and administrator evaluation** system, including:
 - a. Rigorous evaluation of every teacher in Rhode Island by the conclusion of the 2012-2013 academic year; and
 - b. Utilization of a RIDE-approved teacher evaluation system that utilizes student growth data.

- (3) **Utilization of a comprehensive data system** used to inform daily instruction and school planning, including an
 - a. Instructional management system that provides an array of CCSS-aligned assessment and instructional tools;
 - b. Curriculum and lesson planning development and sharing tools;
 - c. Student growth visualization tool that enables teachers to view and track student progress;
 - d. Comprehensive classroom-based RTI tools that enable highly granular tracking of interventions and student response to intervention, including specialized modules for English Learners and students with disabilities; and
 - e. Early warning system that identifies students manifesting early signs of dropout beginning in the 6th grade.

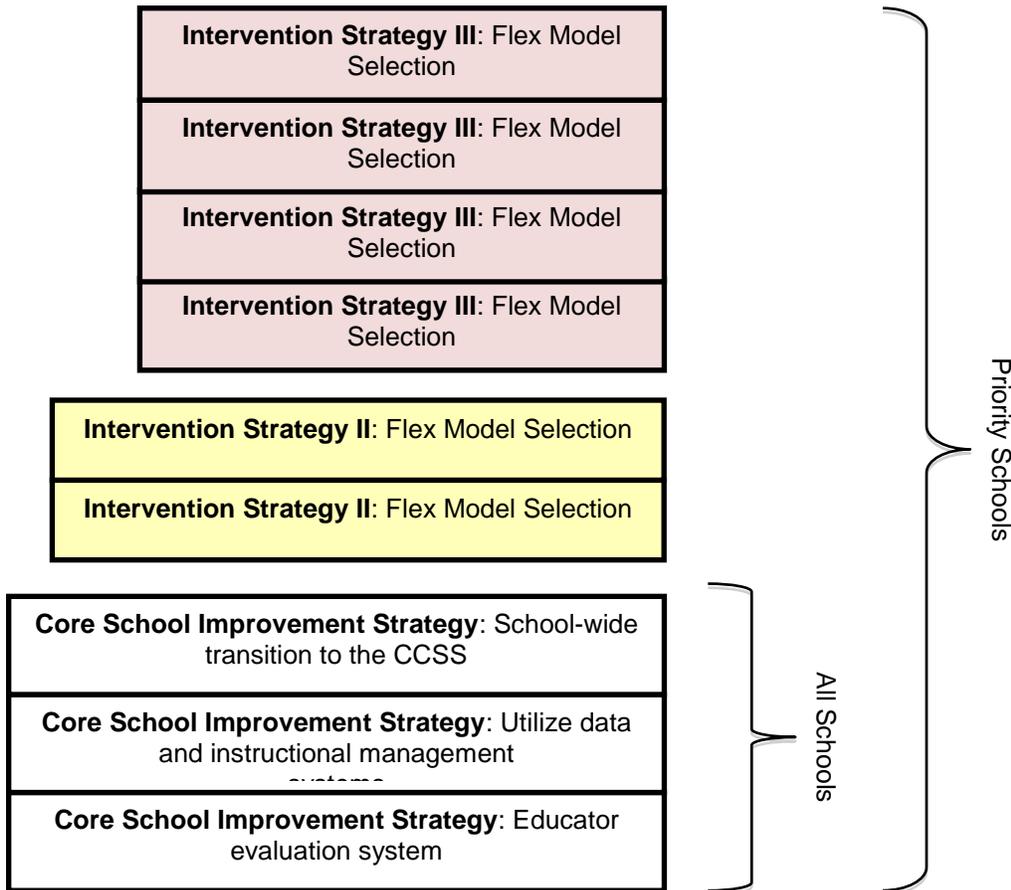
Flex Model:

The Flex Model requires districts to select a comprehensive package of intervention strategies from a RIDE-developed and managed list of 28 empirically proven intervention strategies. The LEA selection of the strategies must be: (1) coherent, (2) comprehensive, (3) responsive to the results of the diagnostic screen, and (4) ambitious but achievable.

The Flex Model was designed to reflect the basic principles of response to intervention (RTI) by classifying 28 intervention strategies into three tiers based upon their intensity and scope. The Flex Model will require priority schools to select and implement no fewer than nine intervention strategies of their choice. The nine strategies include three (3) Tier I, or *core school improvement strategies*; two (2) Tier II, or *intervention II strategies* that provide important supplements to a comprehensive reform plan; and four (4) Tier III, or *intervention III strategies*.

See Figure 3 for a summary of the Flex Model’s tiered approach to intervention.

Figure 3: Tiered Intervention through the Flex Model



Core school improvement strategies are required of all Rhode Island schools through either state regulation or commitments made under Race to the Top. Priority schools will have additional accountability and regular performance monitoring of their implementation of three core school improvement strategies:

Core Improvement Strategy One: Full staff participation in training to support school-wide transition to the Common Core State Standards, including:

- a. An aggressive schedule for transition to the CCSS including statewide study of the standards;
- b. Development and/or adoption of CCSS-aligned curriculum; and
- c. Scaling of CCSS exposure activities to every teacher in every building by the 2012-2013 academic year.

Core Improvement Strategy Two: Full staff participation in Rhode Island’s educator and administrator evaluation system, including:

- a. Rigorous evaluation of every teacher in Rhode Island by the conclusion of the 2012-2013 academic year; and
- b. Utilization of a RIDE-approved teacher evaluation system that utilizes student growth data.

Core Improvement Strategy Three: Utilization of a comprehensive data system used to inform daily instruction and school planning, including an

- a. Instructional management system that provides an array of CCSS-aligned assessment and instructional tools;
- b. Curriculum and lesson planning development and sharing tools;
- c. Student growth visualization tool that enables teachers to view and track student progress;
- d. Comprehensive classroom-based RTI tools that enable highly granular tracking of interventions and student response to intervention, including specialized modules for English Learners and students with disabilities; and Early warning system that identifies students manifesting early signs of dropout beginning in the 6th grade.

Through full implementation of the three required core improvement strategies, all priority schools will be addressing five of the seven turnaround principles.

Alignment of Core Improvement Strategies and Seven Turnaround Principles						
Core Strategy	Turnaround Principle i	Turnaround Principle ii	Turnaround Principle iii	Turnaround Principle iv	Turnaround Principle v	Turnaround Principle vi
One				X		
Two	X	X				
Three				X	X	X

Intervention III strategies are classified as intensive reform strategies, characterized by one or more of the following:

- (1) Revision to the terms of the collective bargaining agreement or past practice; and/or;
- (2) Comprehensive changes to the leadership and/or governance structure of the school; and/or;
- (3) Comprehensive changes to the system of curriculum, instructional practices, and assessment.

Intervention II strategies are empirically proven approaches to school turnaround and/or improvement that address discrete, identified needs of schools, staff, or students. Intervention II strategies vary in intensity and scope and are characterized by one or more of the following characteristics:

- (1) Requires additional resourcing to support implementation; and/or
- (2) Supplements – rather than comprehensively redesigns – a system of curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, student support, leadership, or family and community engagement; and/or
- (3) Addresses a unique and discrete identified need within the school.

The list of strategies and requirements for priority schools are described in detail in Table 7 on the following page.

Table 7: Flex Model Intervention Strategy Options for Priority Schools

<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Support</i>	<i>Infrastructure</i>	<i>Content</i>
Intervention III Strategies: Priority schools select one from each area			
L-III.1: Removal of building principal and replacement with a leader with experience and/or training in turnaround environments	S-III.1: Require at least 30 hours of focused professional development with a focus on instructional strategies to support students with disabilities and English Learners	I-III.1: Implement staff recommitment process to substantially different working conditions, including definition of school hours, job assignment, and job duties	C-III.1: Implement comprehensive improvement of instructional approaches for struggling students including focused professional development and a system for student progress monitoring
L-III.2: Restructure building leadership team to dramatically increase time available for instructional leadership	S-III.2: Hire building-level instructional specialists to support educators to serve English Learners, students with disabilities, and other students at risk for failure	I-III.2: Dramatically increase common planning time and implement a system for its effective utilization, both horizontally and vertically	C-III.2: Review student course-taking patterns and make substantial changes to school schedule and student placement to ensure access to rigorous academic core
L-III.3: Provide building administrators the authority and autonomy to hire, manage teacher placement, budget, and school schedule	S-III.3: Implement a system of peer support and assistance to support the needs of educators	I-III.3: Review and change student enrollment and placement processes to increase family engagement & improve student outcomes	C-III.3: Implement a culturally competent support system to improve safety, reduce suspensions, increase attendance, and support all students
Intervention II Strategies: Priority Schools select two strategies from areas of their choice			
L-II.1: Evaluate the principal and connect him or her with a mentor or appropriate resources to ensure ability to lead the school reform work	S-II.1: Implement a comprehensive drop-out prevention and reentry program	I-II.1: Complete an external audit of the use of school funds to guide staffing decisions and implement findings	C-II.1: Increase advanced coursework opportunities for students
L-II.2: Evaluate, assess, and diagnose the performance of the existing school leadership team and take appropriate job action	S-II.2: Implement a comprehensive ramp-up program for students at-risk of failure or subpopulations with the largest achievement gaps	I-II.2: Reallocate resources to increase support for direct instruction of students at risk for failure	C-II.2: Assign additional instructional coaches or other core content focused, job-embedded support for teachers
L-II.3: Contract with a vendor or partner with a track record of success to support the leadership team in school turnaround	S-II.3: Implement culturally competent family and community engagement program focused on instruction and academic performance	I-II.3: Develop and implement support systems for student transition into kindergarten and/or across break grades	C-II.3: Offer virtual education options for both at-risk and advanced students
L-II.4: Identify one leader to routinely monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the core curriculum/instruction and services to traditionally underserved students	S-II.4: Hire full time parent/community engagement specialist to implement family and community engagement that is systemic, sustained, and integrated with school improvement	I-II.4: Establish a comprehensive system to support struggling teachers with content and pedagogy, especially teachers of students with disabilities and English Learners	C-II.4: Implement an instructional monitoring system to ensure that the curriculum is being fully implemented and traditionally underserved students have access to academic core
L-II.5: Assign family/community outreach to member of leadership team and hold him/her accountable	S-II.5: Establish flexible or expanded learning opportunities with a focus on students at risk for failure	I-II.5: Implement a culturally competent tiered system of support focused on student psycho-social health	C-II.5: Increase student access to career, technical, or credentialing programs

Rhode Island and national experience with LEA behavior when addressing the requirements of Section 1116 and the 1003(g) indicates that most LEAs will select the Flex Model for their Priority and Focus schools. The anticipated popularity of the Flex Model requires that the intervention strategies included are:

- (1) Aligned to the seven federal turnaround principles;
- (2) Empirically-proven, and responsive to the needs of both students and schools;
- (3) Feasible and scalable within systems of radically difference sizes and needs;
- (4) Focused on the needs of students with disabilities and English Learners;
- (5) Grouped in a manner that demands difficult decisions but high-yield opportunities for affected LEAs.

Intervention System Alignment to Seven Federal Turnaround Principles

RIDE’s intervention system is aligned to and fully covers the seven federal turnaround principles. Schools selecting the restart model will be required to submit a school reform plan that covers the seven turnaround principles and will be required to implement the three core school improvement strategies described above. Schools selecting the Flex Model will be selecting from a list of intervention strategies that have already been aligned to the seven turnaround principles. A crosswalk of the 28 intervention strategies of the Flex Model with the seven turnaround principles is provided in Table 8, below.

Table 8: Crosswalk of Flex Model Intervention Strategies and Seven Turnaround Principles								
<i>Federal Turnaround Principle</i>	<i>Strategy</i>							
Principle 1: Leadership	L-III.1	L-III.2	L-II.1.3	L-II.1	L-II.2	L-II.3	L-II.4	L-II.5
Principle 2: Effective teachers	S-III.1	S-III.2	S-III.3	C-II.2	I-II.4	Core 2		
Principle 3: Redesigning school day, week, year	I-III.1	I-III.2	C-III.2	S-II.5	I-II.3	C-II.3		
Principle 4: Instructional program	C-III.1	C-III.2	C-II.5	C-II.4	C-II.3	C-II.1	Core 1 & 3	
Principle 5: Using data	S-III.3	I-III.3	S-III.2	I-III.2	I-II.1	C-II.4	Core 3	
Principle 6: School climate	I-III.3	C-III.3	S-II.5	S-II.1	S-II.2	I-II.5	Core 3	
Principle 7: Family and community engagement	S-II.3	S-II.4	L-II.5					

Commissioner Approval of the LEA Selection of a School Intervention Model

After selecting a school intervention model, the LEA must submit their selection and its rationale to the Commissioner for review and approval. The authority of Commissioner to approve or reject LEA model selection is currently part of RIDE’s system for intervening in persistently lowest-achieving schools and codified in both state statute and regulation.

In the event that an LEA selects the Flex Model, the LEA must submit the package of six selected intervention strategies— along with three core improvement strategies- for each priority school. The Commissioner will have thirty business days to review the selection and approve or reject the model selection. It will be during this period that LEAs will be held rigorously accountable to the results of the diagnostic screening process and coverage of all seven turnaround principles. Intervention model selections that fail to boldly and clearly address the student and system needs jointly identified through the diagnostic screening process and data meeting will not be approvable.

LEA Development of a School Reform Plan

After Commissioner approval of the LEA intervention model, LEAs will be provided another 90 business days to develop a comprehensive, three-year school reform plan that includes the following elements:

- (1) A detailed plan for the implementation of their selected model that fully and comprehensively addresses all seven turnaround principles;
- (2) A resourcing plan for their selected model, including detailed information about the sustainable, scalable investment of newly available funding and fund flexibility afforded through the waiver;
- (3) Detailed timelines and milestones for year 1 and quarterly milestones for years 2-3;
- (4) Leading indicators and student outcomes measures for each major element of their school reform plan. For LEAs selecting the Flex Model, leading indicators and student outcome targets will be required for each of the selected intervention strategies.

Stage 2: Implementation and Progress Monitoring (Years 2-3)

During the second stage of implementation of the school reform plan, Priority schools will be in early implementation (Year 1) and full implementation (Year 2). During this period, regular and intensive progress monitoring will mark the SEA/LEA relationship. This stage includes three tasks.

- (1) Implementation of the intervention model;
- (2) Quarterly review of leading indicators and implementation status; and
- (3) Regular communication and collaboration.

Table 9 summarizes the key functions of each of the five tasks associated with *Stage One: Diagnosis and Intervention Planning* and further detail is presented below.

Table 9: Stage Two Tasks and Functions, by Agency				
Task	Intended Function	SEA	LEA	School
Task 1: Implementation of the Intervention model	Implementation of strategies included in approved school reform plan		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Establishment of performance monitoring system to enable regular review	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Task 2: Quarterly review of indicators & implementation status	Design and execution of quarterly performance review meetings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	LEA presentation of progress against targets, leading indicators, and strategy implementation status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	RIDE overall assessment of LEA implementation for all priority schools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Set and maintain clear expectations for system performance and consequences for success and failure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Task 3: Regular Communication and Collaboration	Hold monthly meetings with LEA leadership teams supporting priority schools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Minimize administrative burden and expedite services for all LEAs serving priority schools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Collaborative problem-solving to eliminate administrative, bureaucratic, or regulatory barriers to implementation of School Reform Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Implementation of the Intervention Model

Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, all Priority schools will be in the early implementation period and required to implement a significant number – though not all – the intervention strategies that are part of their selected and approved school intervention model. [See Appendix C for a detailed implementation timeline for Priority and Focus schools.]

LEAs that were previously required to reserve up to equivalent of 20% of their Title I award for supplemental educational services and 10% for professional development under ESEA section 1116 will be provided the flexibility to reinvest the equivalent of the reserve. This will be done in close collaboration with RIDE staff and must adhere to the following broad parameters:

- Focused on clearly defined school and district improvement strategies that are explicitly connected to the improvement plans for Priority, Focus, and Warning schools;
- Responsive to the needs of traditionally underserved populations, including English learners and students with disabilities (when applicable); and
- Focused upon direct services to students and classroom teachers.

LEAs reinvesting previously held reserves will do so through the state consolidated application and must meet these broad requirements in addition to all other Title I Part A requirements to receive RIDE approval.

Schools selecting the Restart or Flex Model will be required to establish a rich and detailed set of annual performance targets that correspond to each major element of their model. These will serve as the foundation for the quarterly progress monitoring that will be maintained throughout stage two.

Quarterly Review of Leading Indicators and Implementation Status

The majority of SEA resources will be dedicated to intensive quarterly progress monitoring of implementation and tracking the leading indicators included in each school reform plan. This progress monitoring will take the form of quarterly data meetings between the SEA and LEA. During these quarterly data meetings, LEAs will be expected to present their progress against the performance targets established in the school reform plan.

During the early implementation year (SY12-13), Priority schools will be held accountable for:

- (1) Implementation targets, i.e. establishment of systems, delivery of professional development, investment of resources; and
- (2) Leading indicators, i.e. student attendance rates, referral and suspension rates, and parent/family participation and engagement rates

During the early implementation year, all Priority schools will be expected to achieve at least 80% of their established improvement targets.

During the second year of Stage 2 (SY13-14), all Priority schools will be fully implementing all elements of their intervention model. Consequently, the nature of the performance targets for each school will also shift to include:

- (1) Implementation targets,
- (2) Leading indicators, and
- (3) Student outcome data, i.e. state assessments results, graduation rates, ELLs exiting programs, etc.

During the second year of full implementation, all Priority schools will be expected to achieve at least 80% of their established improvement targets.

Stage 3: Rising Priority Through Exit and Priority, Caution (Years 3-5)

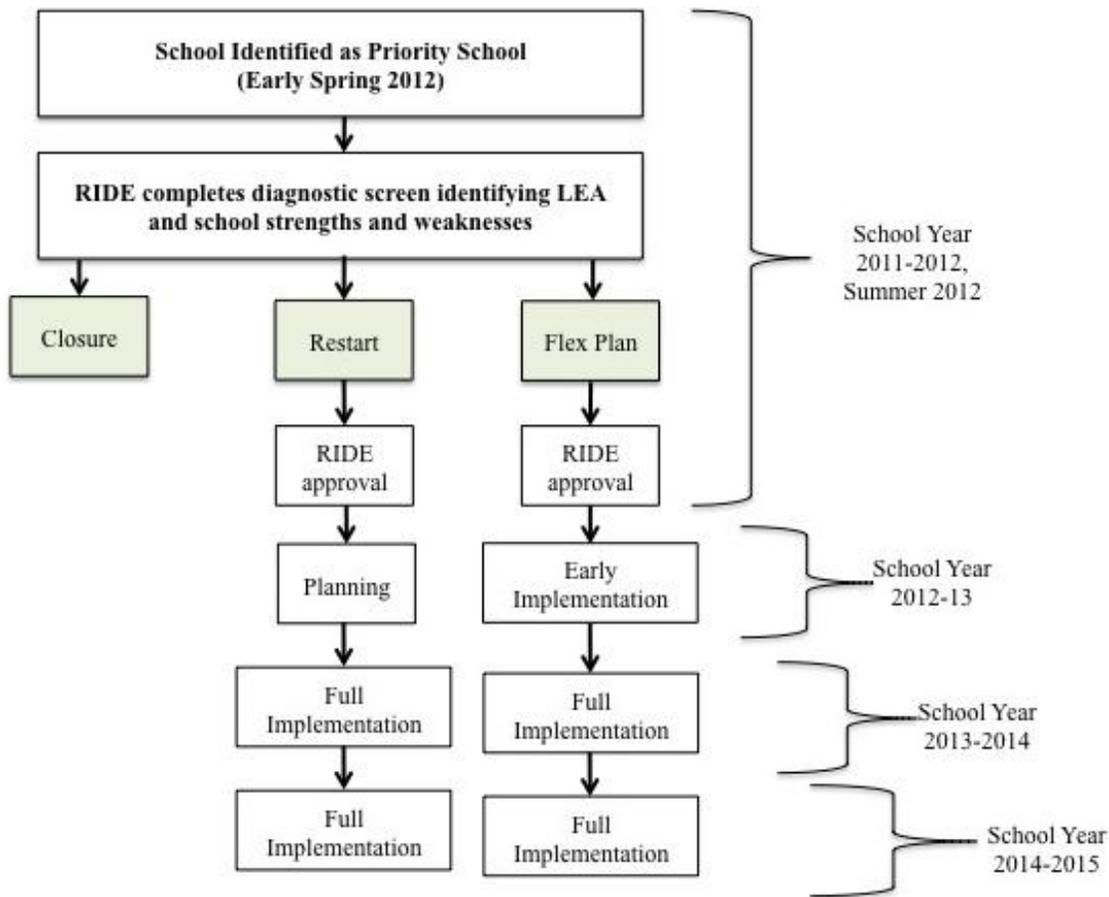
During the third stage of the intervention system, all Priority schools will be into their third year of implementation and second year of full implementation of their school intervention model. For more information about stage three, please see section 2(d)iv.

2.D.iv Provide the timeline the SEA will use to ensure that its LEAs that have one or more priority schools implement meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles in each priority school no later than the 2014–2015 school year and provide a justification for the SEA’s choice of timeline.

The proposed intervention system ensures that all Priority schools will be in early implementation – actively implementing most elements of their selected intervention model – by the 2012-2013 school year. All priority schools will be in full implementation by the 2013-2014 school year.

RIDE will be formally identifying only one cohort of Priority schools under the life of this waiver application. However, during the waiver period, Focus schools may be accelerated into Priority status. The timeline governing this single cohort of Priority schools is summarized in Figure 4 below. [See Appendix C for a more detailed implementation timeline for Priority schools.]

Figure 4: Implementation Timeline for Priority Schools



Stage One: Diagnosis and Intervention Timeline

- (1) Early Spring 2012: All Priority schools identified and diagnostic screen administered
- (2) Late Spring 2012: All Priority schools select intervention model
- (3) Summer 2012: All Priority schools develop their school reform plan
- (4) Summer 2012: RIDE approves school reform plans

Stage One Timeline Justification

National research on school turnaround and in particular, on the implementation of the four intervention models required under 1003(g) has indicated that schools need adequate time to plan and resource bold, comprehensive reform plans. Under this timeline, the first six months after identification are dedicated to urgent yet deliberate planning. This timeline is affected by two major factors:

- (1) *Rhode Island is a Fall Testing State.* Unlike most of the nation, Rhode Island administers the state assessment in October and releases results in February of each year. This annual cycle affects the timing of Rhode Island's ability to name Priority schools.
- (2) *Waiver approval will delay Rhode Island's ability to classify schools.* Although Rhode Island traditionally classifies schools in February, classification decisions for the 2011-2012 school year will be delayed until USED makes final decisions about Rhode Island's waiver application.

Stage Two: Implementation and Progress Monitoring Timeline

- (1) September 2012: All Priority schools begin early implementation of plan
- (2) School year 2012-2013: Early implementation with quarterly progress monitoring
- (3) June 2013: Year-end review
- (4) September 2013: All priority schools fully implement model
- (5) School Year 2013-2014: Full implementation with quarterly progress monitoring
- (6) June 2014: Year-end review

Stage Two Timeline Justification

The implementation timeline affords LEAs a year of "early implementation" during which most, but not all, elements of their approved model must be implemented. This early-implementation period is included for two reasons:

- (1) *Not all intervention strategies should be implemented simultaneously.* National research has shown the importance of appropriately and thoughtfully staging elements of a major reform initiative to ensure that the overall scope of the effort is well timed, manageable, and coherent. The early implementation year enables LEAs to appropriately time the various elements of their reform efforts.
- (2) *Rhode Island Statutory requirements governing staffing changes affect LEA implementation timelines.* Currently, teachers facing potential layoff must receive formal notice by March 1. This deadline puts unreasonable strain on LEAs that, by that date, will have yet selected intervention model. Through an early implementation period, LEAs can plan ahead for staffing changes.

Stage Three: Implementation Through Exit Timeline

- (1) School year 2014-2015: Full implementation with quarterly progress monitoring
- (2) June 2015: Year-end review
 - a. First year that Priority schools are classified into “Rising” and “Caution” status based upon performance
 - b. First possible year that a Priority school could exit through successful implementation and growth (1/2 year of planning, 1 year of early implementation, and 2 full years of implementation)
 - c. First possible year that a Priority school could experience additional state intervention due to failure to implement and/or stagnant or falling performance
- (3) School year 2015-16: Full implementation with quarterly progress monitoring

Implementation of RIDE’s proposed intervention system for Priority schools will require extensive preparation and planning, some of which is already well underway. In order to meet aggressive timelines for a projected mid-spring 2012 identification, RIDE and LEAs will need to adhere to a rigid implementation plan. Table 10 below summarizes the key milestones, responsible parties, and obstacles we anticipate.

Overall Timeline for Implementation

RIDE will meet the federal requirement that all priority schools are fully implementing all elements of their approved plan and covering all seven turnaround principles by the 2013-2014 academic year. The chart below provides a summary of the timeline for implementation in Rhode Island.

School Type	SY 12-13	SY-13-14	SY14-15	SY15-16
Cohort 1 PLA schools (5 schools)	Full implementation (Year 2)	Full implementation (Year 3)	Eligible for exit	
Cohort 2 PLA schools (8 schools)	Full implementation (Year 1)	Full implementation (Year 2)	Full implementation (Year 3)	Eligible for exit
Priority Schools newly named (5 schools)	Early Implementation	Full implementation (Year 1)	Full implementation (Year 2)	Full implementation (Year 3)

Table 10: Planning for Intervening in Priority Schools

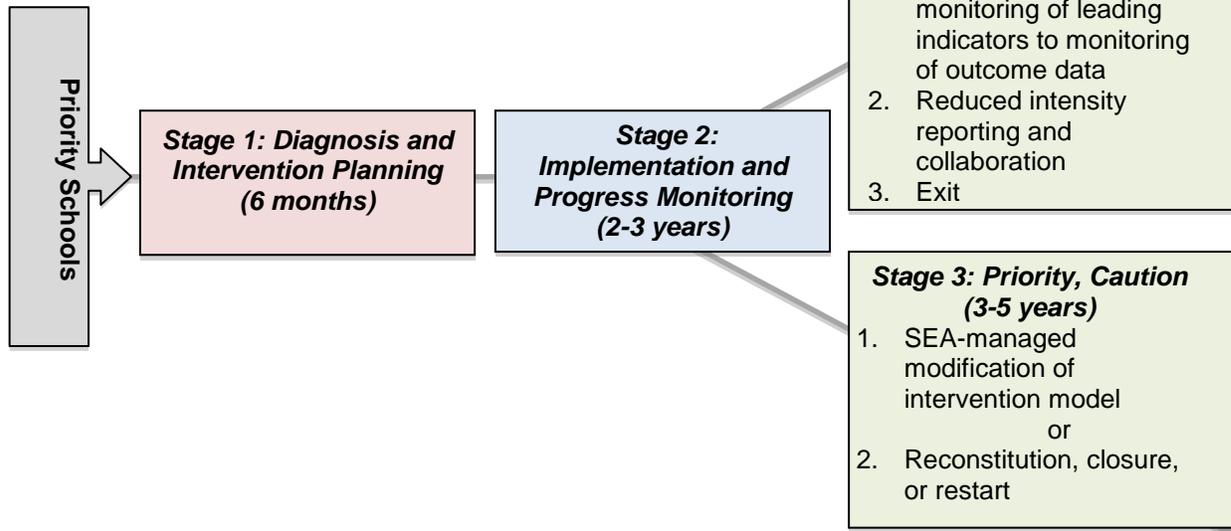
<i>Milestone or Activity</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Party Responsible</i>	<i>Evidence</i>	<i>Resources</i>	<i>Obstacles</i>
ID of SY12-13 priority schools	2/12	RIDE	CIS system	Staff time	Develop communication strategy with/for LEAs
Public announcement of priority schools	5/12	RIDE	N/A	Redesigned school report cards; completed communication materials	None
Revisions to consolidated application for federal funds	2/12 – 4/12	RIDE	Revised application and training materials	Staff time; funds for changes to web-based application	Completion of training and TA for affected LEAs on new flexibilities
Training for affected LEAs	4/12	RIDE	N/A	Staff time	None
Completion of diagnostic screening tool	2/12 – 4/12	RIDE	Complete screen	Staff time, funding for development	Staff time and funding
Administration of diagnostic screen & data meetings	5/12	LEAs and RIDE	Complete reports & meetings	RIDE and LEA staff time	RIDE staff time & capacity
LEA intervention model selection	6/12	LEA	Submission of model selection	LEA staff time	None
RIDE approval of intervention model	5/12	RIDE	Approval/rejection letters	RIDE and LEA staff time	None
LEA development of school reform plan	6/12 – 9/12	LEA	Submission of School reform plan	LEA staff time	LEA staff time & capacity
RIDE approval of school reform plan	9/12	RIDE	Approval/rejection letters	RIDE and LEA staff time	RIDE and LEA staff time & capacity
Implementation of school reform plan	9/12 – 9/13	LEA	Evidence of implementation	RIDE and LEA staff time	RIDE and LEA staff time and capacity
Quarterly progress monitoring	9/12 – 9/13	LEAs and RIDE	Quarterly reports and meetings	RIDE and LEA staff time; performance monitoring tools	RIDE and LEA staff time and capacity; funding for monitoring tools

2.D.v Provide the criteria the SEA will use to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement exits priority status and a justification for the criteria selected.

Exit Based Upon Performance

Exit from Rhode Island's intervention system occurs in Stage 3 of an LEA's implementation of a school intervention model, which covers years three through five (school years 14-15, 15-16, and beyond.) See Figure 5 below for an overview of the stages and the criteria for exit. The system is designed to be rigorous, exiting schools only upon sustained improved performance and in no case earlier than the 2015-2016 school year. Rhode Island will ensure that there are meaningful consequences for priority and focus schools that do not make adequate progress after full implementation of interventions. While the ability to ensure the efficacy of multi-year interventions remains a critical missing element of the ESEA, Rhode Island enjoys significant State statutory authority to "reconstitute" schools and districts that fail to meet established targets for three years.³ This somewhat draconian tool underscores the need for accurate information about improvement efforts on an ongoing basis. Accordingly, our proposed design also recognizes that mid-term judgments about performance are important tools in differentiating schools that are ambitiously, rigorously and successfully implementing their intervention plan from those that are failing to implement a model and/or reach performance targets.

³ See, R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-7.1-5 **Intervention and support for failing schools.** – (a) The Board of Regents shall adopt a series of progressive support and intervention strategies consistent with the Comprehensive Education Strategy and the principles of the "School Accountability for Learning and Teaching" (SALT) of the board of regents for those schools and school districts that continue to fall short of performance goals outlined in the district strategic plans. These strategies shall initially focus on: (1) technical assistance in improvement planning, curriculum alignment, student assessment, instruction, and family and community involvement; (2) policy support; (3) resource oversight to assess and recommend that each school has adequate resources necessary to meet performance goal; and (4) creating supportive partnerships with education institutions, business, governmental, or other appropriate nonprofit agencies. If after a three (3) year period of support there has not been improvement in the education of students as determined by objective criteria to be developed by the board of regents, then there shall be progressive levels of control by the department of elementary and secondary education over the school and/or district budget, program, and/or personnel. This control by the department of elementary and secondary education may be exercised in collaboration with the school district and the municipality. If further needed, the school shall be reconstituted. Reconstitution responsibility is delegated to the board of regents and may range from restructuring the school's governance, budget, program, personnel, and/or may include decisions regarding the continued operation of the school. The board of regents shall assess the district's capacity and may recommend the provision of additional district, municipal and/or state resources. If a school or school district is under the board of regents' control as a result of actions taken by the board pursuant to this section, the local school committee shall be responsible for funding that school or school district at the same level as in the prior academic year increased by the same percentage as the state total of school aid is increased.

Figure 5: Exit from Priority Status

Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, priority schools will be classified into one of two categories: “Rising Priority” and Priority, Caution.” This differentiation will be made on the basis of the school performance against the targets set forth in their approved plan. Priority schools that, over the course of the first 2 ½ years of planning and implementation have met 80% or more of their performance targets will be classified as “Rising Priority,” indicating that the implementation of their reform agenda is on-track and that they are moving toward exit.

Alternatively, schools that have failed to reach the 80% threshold in reaching their improvement targets will be classified as “Priority, Caution.” Priority caution indicates that the reform agenda is falling off-track and that, without improvement, will be at risk for more intensive state intervention as authorized under Rhode Island General Law.

The differentiation of Priority schools based upon mid-term performance is intended to provide LEAs and schools with *early indications* of their progress against the performance commitments set forth in their reform plan. In addition, it creates incentives for ambitious, urgent, and sustained implementation of the school reform plan during the first 24 months of implementation, a period that national research has found to be central to successful, durable improvement.

Exit Criteria

Priority schools may not exit classification status before the conclusion of the 2015-2016 year, holding schools to 3 full years of full model implementation. The long period of classification ensures that all schools eligible for exit have provided adequate evidence of *sustained, durable, significant improvement*.

Eligibility for exit requires schools to meet two requirements:

- (1) The school must have reached at least 80% of their performance targets annually for the first three years of implementation. These performance targets include:
 - a. *Implementation targets*, i.e. establishment of systems, delivery of professional development, investment of resources;
 - b. *Leading indicators*, i.e. student attendance rates, referral and suspension rates, and parent/family participation and engagement rates; and
 - c. *Student outcome data*, i.e. state assessments results, graduation rates, ELLs exiting programs, etc.
- (2) Priority schools must reach 90% of their AMOs – including all missed targets substantially contributing to their original Priority status – for two consecutive years, **or**

A two-year long shift in rank ordering based upon composite index score that moves them into the “typical” category.

2.E Focus Schools

2.E.i Describe the SEA’s methodology for identifying a number of low-performing schools equal to at least 10 percent of the State’s Title I schools as “focus schools.” If the SEA’s methodology is not based on the definition of focus schools in *ESEA Flexibility* (but instead, e.g. based on school grades or ratings that take into account a number of factors), the SEA should also demonstrate that the list provided in Table 2 is consistent with the definition, per the Department’s “Demonstrating that an SEA’s Lists of Schools meet ESEA Flexibility Definitions” guidance.

Focus Schools will also be identified by its Composite Index Score, (CIS) and by lowest absolute proficiency and by the largest subgroup gaps. RIDE has done extensive data runs that conclusively show that any and all schools that meet the federal definitions for Focus schools are in fact identified by our proposed methodology. We are confident that this methodology meets the requirements of ESEA as our indexing system and these two indicators account for largest subgroup performance gaps and lowest absolute performance and identifies those schools by:

- Holding all schools in our state accountable for gaps in student achievement because of our combined subgroups and our lower minimum *n* of 20.

- Providing an additional lens on student subgroup performance by accounting for growth within subgroups as part of the growth metric.
- Continuing to include absolute performance as part of the identification of focus schools. This matters in Rhode Island because so many of our schools beyond the Priority Schools have extraordinarily low performance for all students. These schools typically serve primarily students living in poverty from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Additionally many students in the Focus Schools receive English language or special education services.
- Including high schools that have graduation rates below 60% for two consecutive years.

Rhode Island will have 12 Focus Schools representing more than 10% of our Title I schools. These twelve schools have data that show:

- Gaps in student performance that range from 27.2 to 77.8 percentage points.
- Absolute performance rates in the single digits in mathematics (eight schools range from 2% to 8% proficiency) and all have reading achievement rates between 37% and 55%.
- Levels of growth that make it impossible for students to become proficient if the rate remains constant.

2.E.ii Provide the SEA's list of focus schools in Table 2.

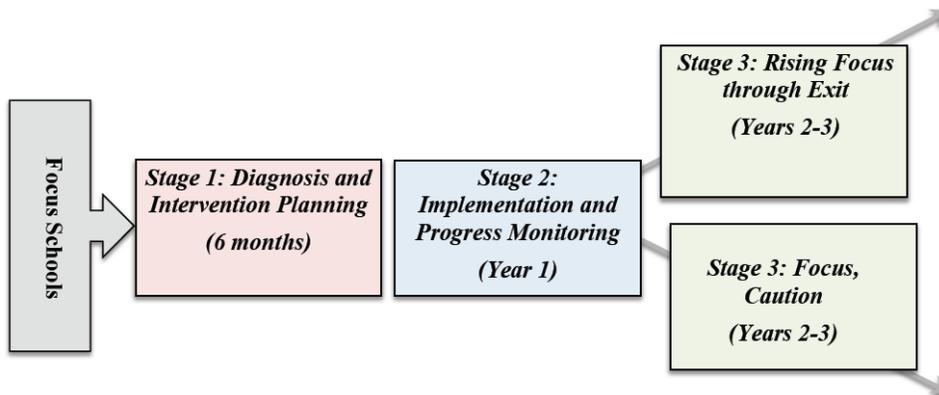
2.E.iii Describe the process and timeline the SEA will use to ensure that its LEAs that have one or more focus schools will identify the specific needs of the SEA's focus schools and their students and provide examples of and justifications for the interventions focus schools will be required to implement to improve the performance of students who are the furthest behind.

Focus Schools Intervention System

Rhode Island's proposed intervention system treats the category of Focus schools as one of both opportunity and responsibility for the SEA and LEA. Consequently, Focus schools travel through the same rigorous process described in Section 2(d)iii. Figure 6 below shows the three stages of implementation for Focus schools. These stages mirror those of Priority schools with two important differences:

- (1) Focus schools are eligible for exit after 2 ½ years of implementation (SY13-14), one year earlier than Priority schools; and
- (2) Focus Schools have bi-annual data meetings and performance monitoring from RIDE; Priority schools have quarterly data meetings and performance monitoring from RIDE.

Figure 6: Three Stages of Intervention, Focus Schools



Focus Schools Diagnostic Screening

Because Focus schools, like Priority schools, are identified based heavily upon their achievement and performance gaps, Focus schools receive the same diagnostic screening services provided to Priority schools. Please see Section 2diii for more information about the nature of the diagnostic screen.

Focus Schools Intervention Model Selection

LEAs serving Focus schools will be required to select intervention strategies that are clearly responsive to the results of the diagnostic screen. Consequently, all Focus schools with ELLs and students with disabilities exhibiting significant achievement gaps will be required to select intervention strategies that specifically address the needs of these student subpopulations.

Like Priority schools, Focus schools must select from one of three intervention models within 90 days of identification. Regardless of their intervention model selection, all

Focus schools will be required to implement the following three *core school improvement strategies*.

- (1) Full staff participation in training to support school-wide transition to the Common Core State Standards, including:
 - a. An aggressive schedule for transition to the CCSS including statewide study of the standards;
 - b. Development and/or adoption of CCSS-aligned curriculum; and
 - c. Scaling of CCSS exposure activities to every teacher in every building by the 2012-2013 academic year

- (2) Full staff participation in Rhode Island’s educator and administrator evaluation system, including:
 - a. Rigorous evaluation of every teacher in Rhode Island by the conclusion of the 2012-2013 academic year; and
 - b. Utilization of a RIDE-approved teacher evaluation system that utilizes student growth data.

- (3) Utilization of a comprehensive data system used to inform daily instruction and school planning, including an
 - a. Instructional management system that provides an array of CCSS-aligned assessment and instructional tools;
 - b. Curriculum and lesson planning development and sharing tools;
 - c. Student growth visualization tool that enables teachers to view and track student progress;
 - d. Comprehensive classroom-based RTI tools that enable highly granular tracking of interventions and student response to intervention, including specialized modules for English Learners and students with disabilities; and
 - e. Early warning system that identifies students manifesting early signs of dropout beginning in the 6th grade.

The table below provides additional information on RIDE’s capacity to support school implementation of the three core improvement strategies in support of traditionally underserved students.

Strategy	RIDE Support
<p>(1) Full staff participation in training to support school-wide transition to the Common Core State Standards, including:</p>	
<p>a. An aggressive schedule for transition to the CCSS including statewide study of the standards;</p>	<p>Study of the Standards workshops: Study of the Standards workshops train core groups of teachers on the ELA and/or Mathematics standards</p>
<p>b. Development and/or adoption of CCSS-aligned curriculum; and</p>	<p>Model Curricula: The Intensive Curriculum alignment work will have standards- aligned curricula in the four core content areas: science, mathematics, social studies and English Language Arts.</p>
<p>c. Scaling of CCSS exposure activities to every teacher in every building by the 2012-2013 academic year</p>	<p>IMS – The IMS houses the CCSS as well as all curricula that have been created and loaded by the district, any other district(s) in Rhode Island, or by the state. Interim Assessment System - The Interim Assessments system will provide assessment opportunities of CCSS materials in ELA and mathematics. This will help educators gain exposure to the content and assess where their students need further instruction on CCSS material.</p>
<p>(2) Utilization of a comprehensive data system used to inform daily instruction and school planning, including an</p>	<p>IMS – The IMS will:</p>
<p>a. Instructional management system that provides an array of CCSS-aligned assessment and instructional tools;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contain the CCSS. • contain CCSS-aligned curricula (created by the district and/or a consortium of districts). • contain CCSS-aligned interim assessments (fixed-form/state generated, teacher-created from blueprint, and teacher-created from individual item bank).
<p>b. Curriculum and lesson planning development and sharing tools;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • house lesson plans connected to standards (local and/or statewide). Lesson plans are created by teachers and may contain instructional strategies, resources, links, multimedia, etc.
<p>c. Student growth visualization tool that enables teachers to view and track student progress;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allow curricula (including all attached lesson plans) to be shared with the district or across districts
<p>d. Comprehensive classroom-based RTI tools that enable highly granular tracking of interventions and student response to intervention, including specialized modules for English Learners and students with disabilities; and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allow teachers to group students by a large variety of criteria, create instructional/intervention plans tailored to individual students’ or groups of students’ needs, track student response to instruction/interventions, and share all of the above with each other. • contain an early warning system that will identify students who are at risk for dropping out of school based on several metrics triggering specific interventions .
<p>e. Early warning system that identifies students manifesting early signs of dropout beginning in the 6th grade.</p>	<p>Formative assessment training modules – These modules will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ be available to all educators through the IMS. ○ establish a common understanding of the purpose and components of the formative assessment process. ○ deepen educators’ understanding of how to plan for, use, and analyze data generated by formative assessments. ○ encourage collaboration among educators through a Community of Practice model.

	<p>Data Use Professional Development – Data Use PD will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training to district and school leaders on the use of data to drive instruction • Be data-source neutral, allowing educators to reflect on a variety of data • Be tiered to meet all participants at their current levels of data use • Focus on providing schools with the infrastructure, culture, and knowledge for sustaining data use • Build upon current RtI practices • Build knowledge on analyzing data in aggregated and disaggregated forms to address the needs of subgroups (ELLs and SWDs)
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Focus schools may select: (1) school closure, (2) restart, or (3) the Flex Model. Closure and restart models are identical for Focus and Priority schools.

Focus schools selecting the Flex Model face a similar set of options to those faced by Priority schools. However, Focus schools must select seven intervention strategies – compared to the nine required of Priority schools – as part of their school reform plan. Focus schools implementing the Flex Model must select and implement no fewer than seven intervention strategies of their choice. The seven strategies include three (3) Tier I, or *core school improvement strategies*; two (2) Tier II, or *intervention II strategies*, that provide important supplements to a comprehensive reform plan; and two (2) Tier III, or *intervention III strategies*.

Please see Table 11 for more information about the requirements of the Flex Model for Focus schools.

Table 11: Flex Model Intervention Strategy Options for Focus Schools

<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Support</i>	<i>Infrastructure</i>	<i>Content</i>
Intervention III Strategies: Focus schools select two from areas of their choice			
L-III.1: Removal of building principal and replacement with a leader with a experience and/or training in turnaround environments	S-III.1: Require at least 30 hours of focused professional development with a focus on instructional strategies to support students with disabilities and English Learners	I-III.1: Implement staff recommitment process to substantially different working conditions, including definition of school hours, job assignment, and job duties	C-III.1: Implement comprehensive improvement of instructional approaches for struggling students including focused professional development and a system for student progress monitoring
L-III.2: Restructure building leadership team to dramatically increase time available for instructional leadership	S-III.2: Hire building-level instructional specialists to support educators to serve English Learners, students with disabilities, and other students at risk for failure	I-III.2: Dramatically increase common planning time and implement a system for its effective utilization, both horizontally and vertically	C-III.2: Review student course-taking patterns and make substantial changes to school schedule and student placement to ensure access to rigorous academic core
L-III.3: Provide building administrators the authority and autonomy to hire, manage teacher placement, budget, and school schedule	S-III.3: Implement a system of peer support and assistance to support the needs of educators	I-III.3: Review and change student enrollment and placement processes to increase family engagement & improve student outcomes	C-III.3: Implement a culturally competent support system to improve safety, reduce suspensions, increase attendance, and support all students
Intervention II Strategies: Focus Schools select two strategies from areas of their choice			
L-II.1: Evaluate the principal and connect him or her with a mentor or appropriate resources to ensure ability to lead the school reform work	S-II.1: Implement a comprehensive drop-out prevention and reentry program	I-II.1: Complete an external audit of the use of school funds to guide staffing decisions and implement findings	C-II.1: Increase advanced coursework opportunities for students
L-II.2: Evaluate, assess, and diagnose the performance of the existing school leadership team and take appropriate job action	S-II.2: Implement a comprehensive ramp-up program for students at-risk of failure or subpopulations with the largest achievement gaps	I-II.2: Reallocate resources to increase support for direct instruction of students at risk for failure	C-II.2: Assign additional instructional coaches or other core content focused, job-embedded support for teachers
L-II.3: Contract with a vendor or partner with a track record of success to support the leadership team in school turnaround	S-II.3: Implement culturally competent family and community engagement program focused on instruction and academic performance	I-II.3: Develop and implement support systems for student transition into kindergarten and/or across break grades	C-II.3: Offer virtual education options for both at-risk and advanced students
L-II.4: Identify one leader to routinely monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the core curriculum/instruction and services to traditionally underserved students	S-II.4: Hire full time parent/community engagement specialist to implement family and community engagement that is systemic, sustained, and integrated with school improvement	I-II.4: Establish a comprehensive system to support struggling teachers with content and pedagogy, especially teachers of students with disabilities and English Learners	C-II.4: Implementation of instructional monitoring system to ensure that the curriculum is being fully implemented and traditionally underserved students have access to academic core
L-II.5: Assign family/community outreach to member of leadership team and hold him/her accountable	S-II.5: Establish flexible or expanded learning opportunities with a focus on students at risk for failure	I-II.5: Implement culturally competent tiered system of support focused on student psycho-social health	C-II.5: Increase student access to career, technical, or credentialing programs

The Needs of English Learners and Students with Disabilities

The intervention strategies included in the Flex Model were crafted to place rigorous yet proven intervention requirements on districts and identified schools with extremely low levels of academic achievement and growth of students with disabilities and English Learners. All LEAs with large and persistent achievement gaps selecting the Flex Model will be required to select intervention strategies and craft a school reform plan that addresses the educational needs of students with disabilities and English Learners. This requirement will take three forms.

First, the diagnostic screen has been intentionally developed to yield targeted information about the educational needs and performance of students with disabilities and English Learners.

To that end, LEAs and identified schools will receive targeted information about EL performance, including:

- (1) Highly disaggregated state assessment results including item analysis and student growth percentiles for EL performance over time;
- (2) ACCESS scores and ELP achievement (whenever possible);
- (3) The performance of ELs in program and exited monitoring students,
- (4) The rates of student exit from program;
- (5) Disproportionality; and,
- (6) EL access to linguistically appropriate curriculum, rich in both academic content and language acquisition supports.

LEAs and identified schools will receive targeted information about the performance of students with disabilities including:

- (1) Disaggregated performance data from the state assessment;
- (2) Graduation and Dropout rates;
- (3) Participation and Performance on State Assessment;
- (4) Suspension & Expulsion Rates by Disability and Race;
- (5) FAPE, percent of children served in the regular education setting; and,
- (6) Disproportionality.

Second, LEAs serving identified schools will be required to select intervention strategies that are clearly responsive to the instructional needs of their disaggregated subpopulations. The Flex Model was designed explicitly to focus on the needs of students with disabilities and English Learners; over 60% of the 28 strategies specifically address the unique educational needs of these students. Table 12 below summarizes these intervention strategies.

Table 12: Flex Model Intervention Strategies that Support English Learners and Students with Disabilities

<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Support</i>	<i>Infrastructure</i>	<i>Content</i>
Intervention III Strategies			
	S-III.1: Require at least 30 hours of focused professional development with a focus on instructional strategies to support students with disabilities and English Learners		C-III.1: Implement comprehensive improvement of instructional approaches for struggling students including focused professional development and a system for student progress monitoring
	S-III.2: Hire building-level instructional specialists to support educators to serve English Learners, students with disabilities, and other students at risk for failure		
		I-III.3: Review and change student enrollment and placement processes to increase family engagement & improve student outcomes	C-III.3: Implement a culturally competent support system to improve safety, reduce suspensions, increase attendance, and support all students
Intervention II Strategies			
	S- II.1: Implement a comprehensive drop-out prevention and reentry program		
	S-II.2: Implement a comprehensive ramp-up program for students at-risk of failure or subpopulations with the largest achievement gaps	I-II.2: Reallocate resources to increase support for direct instruction of students at risk for failure	
	S-II.3: Implement culturally competent family and community engagement program focused on instruction and academic performance		C-II.3: Offer virtual education options for both at-risk and advanced students
L-II.4: Identify one leader to routinely monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the core curriculum/instruction and services to traditionally underserved students	S-II.4. Hire full time parent/community engagement specialist to implement family and community engagement that is systemic, sustained, and integrated with school improvement	I-II.4: Establish a comprehensive system to support struggling teachers with content and pedagogy teachers of students with disabilities and English Learners	C-II.4: Implement an instructional monitoring system to ensure that the curriculum is being fully implemented and traditionally underserved students have access to academic core
L-II.5: Assign family/community outreach to member of leadership team and hold him/her accountable	S-II.5: Establish flexible or expanded learning opportunities with a focus on students at risk for failure	I-II.5: Implement culturally competent tiered system of support focused on student psycho-social health	

Third, Focus schools will be subject to intensive progress monitoring throughout the term of their identification. This progress monitoring will include the performance of all student subpopulation including students with disabilities and English Learners.

Finally, Focus schools will be required to implement a management system for response to intervention (RTI.) Through Race to the Top, RIDE is providing a comprehensive web-based system for RTI management called EXCEED RTI. EXCEED RTI organizes the content into *domains* (Reading, Math, etc.) and *areas of concern* (AOC.) For each tracked student, EXCEED RTI provides information about the AOC and recommends interventions to support the student. These represent empirically proven strategies for both students with disabilities and English Learners. LEAs will have the option to select interventions from a menu or add additional strategies. EXCEED RTI includes measurement tools to help teachers identify students in need of intervention. These measurement tools have various benchmarks and cut scores and screeners that provide helpful visuals for the user to quickly identify students in need of intervention and student response to intervention.

Focus School Timeline for Implementation

The proposed intervention system ensures that all Focus schools will be in early implementation – actively implementing most elements of their selected intervention model – by the 2012-2013 school year. All focus schools will be in full implementation by the 2013-2014 school year.

RIDE will be formally identifying only one cohort of Focus schools under the life of this waiver application. However, during the waiver period, Focus schools may be accelerated into Priority status. [Additional information about the timeline for implementation can be found in Appendix C.]

Stage One: Diagnosis and Intervention Timeline

- (1) Early Spring 2012: All Focus schools identified and diagnostic screen administered
- (2) Late Spring 2012: All Focus schools select intervention model
- (3) Summer 2012: All Focus schools develop their school reform plan
- (4) Summer 2012: RIDE approves school reform plans

Stage Two: Implementation and Progress Monitoring Timeline

- (1) September 2012: All Focus schools begin early implementation of plan
- (2) School year 2012-2013: Early implementation with bi-annual progress monitoring
- (3) June 2013: Year end review

Stage Three: Implementation Through Exit Timeline

- (1) September 2013: All Focus schools fully implement model
- (2) School Year 2013-2014: Full implementation with bi-annual progress monitoring

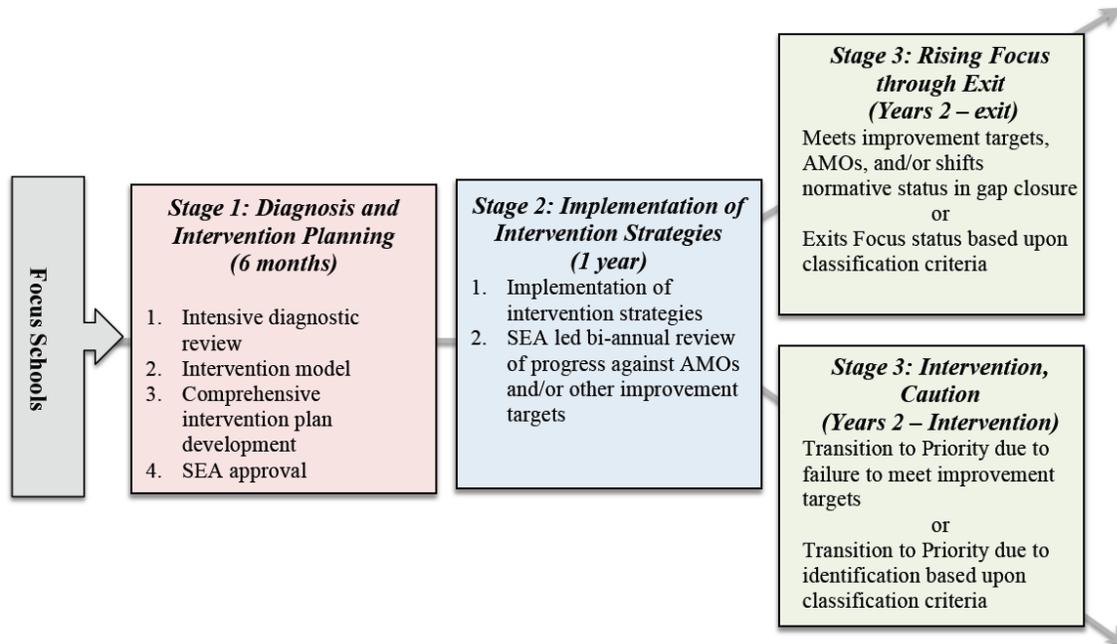
- (3) June 2014: Year end review
 - a. First year that Focus schools are classified into “Rising” and “Caution” status based upon performance
 - b. First possible year that a Focus school could exit through successful implementation and growth (1/2 year of planning, 1 year of early implementation, and 1 full year of implementation)
 - c. First possible year that a Focus school could be moved into Priority status due to failure to implement and/or stagnant or falling performance
- (4) School year 2014-2015: Full implementation with bi-annual monitoring
- (5) June 2015: Year-end review

2.E.iv Provide the criteria the SEA will use to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps exits focus status and a justification for the criteria selected.

Classification Differentiation Based Upon Performance

Exit from Rhode Island’s intervention system occurs in Stage 3 of an LEA’s implementation of a school intervention model, which covers years two through five (school years 13-14, 14-15, and beyond.) The system is designed to be rigorous, exiting schools only upon sustained improved performance and in no case earlier than the 2014-2015 school year. However, the design also recognizes that mid-term judgments about performance are important tools in differentiating schools that are ambitiously, rigorously and successfully implementing their intervention plan from those that are failing to implement a model and/or reach performance targets.

Beginning in 2013-2014 school year, priority schools will be classified into one of two categories: “Rising Focus” and “Focus, Caution.” This differentiation will be made on the basis of the school performance against the targets set forth in their approved plan (Stage 1 in Figure 7 below.) Focus schools that, over the course of the first year of planning and implementation have met 80% or more of their performance targets will be classified as “Rising Focus,” indicating that the implementation of their reform agenda is on-track and that they are moving toward exit.

Figure 7: Exit from Focus Status

Alternatively, schools that have failed to reach the 80% threshold in reaching their improvement targets will be classified as “Focus, Caution.” Focus Caution indicates that the reform agenda is falling off-track. Focus schools that are classified and persist for more than two years as “Focus, Caution” schools will be advanced into Priority status.

The differentiation of Focus schools based upon mid-term performance is intended to provide LEAs and schools with *early indications* of their progress, create incentives for and reward ambitious reform, and establish clear consequences for failure to aggressively implement the approved school reform plan.

Exit Criteria

Focus schools may not exit classification status before the end of the 2014-2015 year, holding schools to two full years of full model implementation. The long period of classification ensures that all schools eligible for exit have provided adequate evidence of *sustained, durable, significant improvement*.

Eligibility for exit requires schools to meet two requirements:

- (1) The school must have reached at least 80% of their performance targets annually for the first two years of implementation; and

- (2) The schools must reach 90% of their AMOs – including all missed targets contributing to their original Focus status – for one year; **or**
- (3) A substantial shift in composite index score such that their CIS ranking moves them into “typical” status.

2.F Provide Incentives and Supports for other Title I Schools

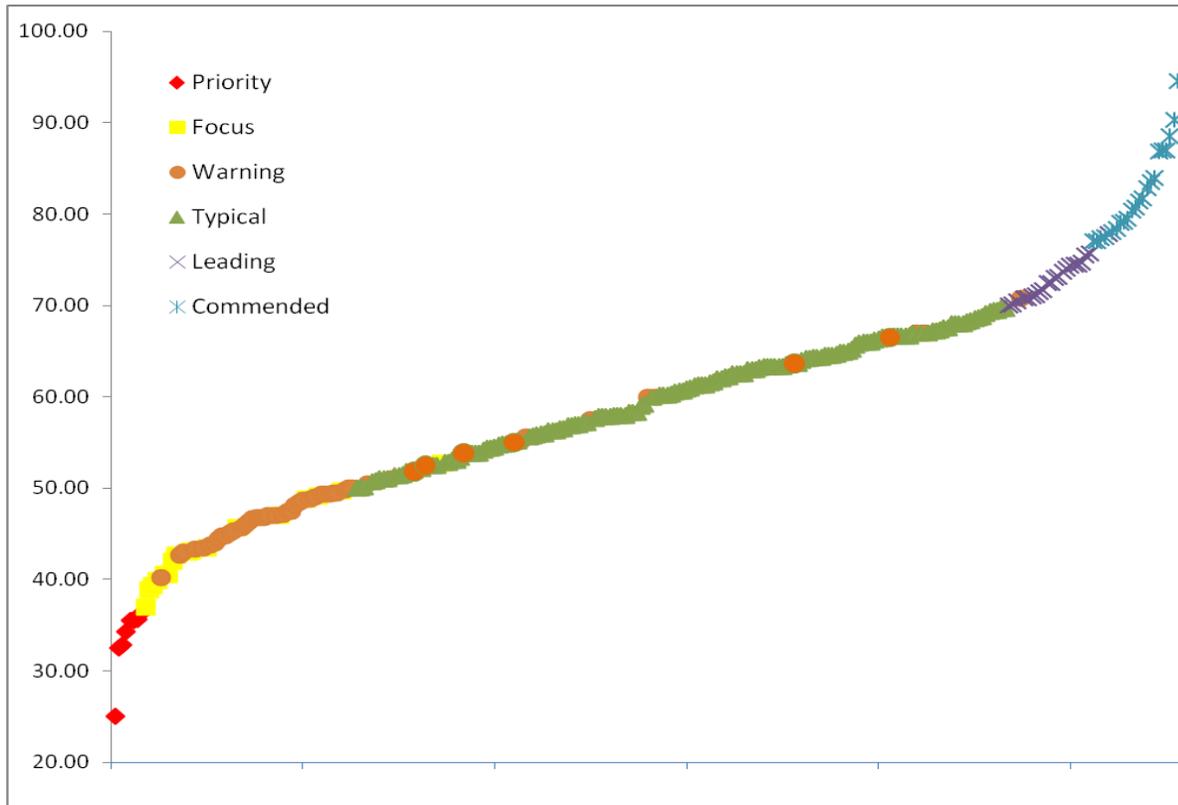
2.F Describe how the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system will provide incentives and supports to ensure continuous improvement in other Title I schools that, based on the SEA’s new AMOs and other measures, are not making progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps, and an explanation of how these incentives and supports are likely to improve student achievement and school performance, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students.

The State System of Support for Low-Performing Districts and Schools

Classification of Low-Performing Schools

Rhode Island has developed a classification system that breaks all Rhode Island schools into six levels. These levels utilize criteria to classify schools into meaningful groups based upon their performance. Beyond mere classification, this approach is designed to enable meaningful support and intervention in low performing schools beyond those in Priority or Focus status.

Figure 8 below presents the distribution of schools across each of Rhode Island’s six levels of performance according to their Composite Index Score, (CIS), as well as four “catch all” rules for achievement gaps, low growth, low graduation rates, or failure to achieve 95% participation in state testing.

Figure 8: Classification of Rhode Island Schools by Composite Index Score

Warning Schools

RIDE will identify and classify 45 schools as Warning Schools. Warning schools will be so classified if they have a Composite Index Score (CIS) between 38.50 and less than 50. It will also include any school that meets one or more of the six following conditions:

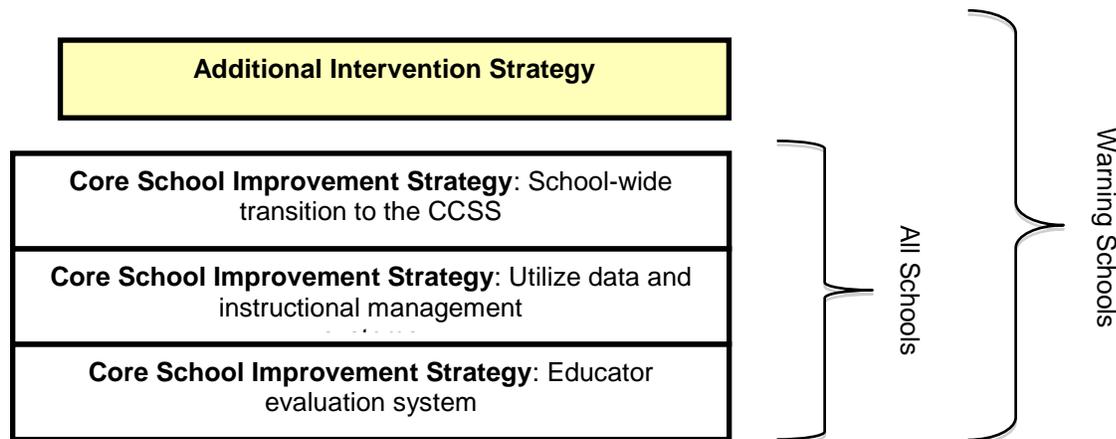
1. An Absolute Proficiency Metric of 9 or less; or
2. A Gap Score Metric of less than 15 ; or
3. A Growth Score Metric of 7.5 or less; or
4. A combined Graduation and High School Scaled Score Change of 10 or less; or
5. Any school that did not test 95% of their students in either reading or mathematics
6. Missing the same AMO for three consecutive years.

The combined powers of the utilization of the CIS plus the additional criteria enable RIDE to accurately identify schools that have either *widespread* low levels of performance and growth and large achievement gaps or *isolated but serious* problems in the areas of overall achievement, low growth, or low graduation rates.

Identification and Intervention in Warning Schools

RIDE will intervene in Warning schools through a combination of a mandatory school-level diagnostic screen and the requirement that each warning school implement a limited-scale improvement plan. Warning schools will not be required to select a full intervention model, but rather will be required to implement the three core school improvement strategies and one additional intervention strategy of their choice. Schools may choose from the strategies included in the Flex Model or may identify another empirically-proven strategy of equal intensity. Please see Figure 9 for a model of the intervention requirement for Warning schools.

Figure 9: Intervention Requirements for Warning Schools



As with Focus and Priority schools, RIDE will require that the intervention strategy selected by the Warning schools is responsive to the results of their diagnostic screen and focuses on their areas of most acute need. In the event that schools are identified as Warning schools on the basis of their graduation rates, they will be required to implement an intervention strategy targeted at reduction of drop out and improvement of graduation rate. In the event that they are identified on the basis of continuously missing one or more AMOs for three consecutive years, the school will be required to implement an interventions strategy or strategies keyed to the missed target(s).

Support for All Low Performing Schools

The Rhode Island Department of Education operates the *Academy of Transformative Leadership* (ATL), a Race to the Top funded project designed to create a comprehensive, empirically-proven service center for all low-performing and struggling schools throughout Rhode Island. The ATL is run from within RIDE’s Office of School Transformation and Innovation. The ATL delivers services through a combination of staff support, core state and regional partnerships, and a rich array of vendors under contract by RIDE.

The ATL offers a wide array of services to all Rhode Island schools, but focuses on low-performing Title I schools that will be identified under the accountability and classification described in this waiver application.

The key support services delivered through the ATL include:

1. *The turnaround leaders program*, which creates a pipeline of highly trained school leaders prepared to work in turnaround environments;
2. *The Summer Professional Development Institute*, which provided 2 weeks of rigorous training to five-person teams from struggling schools;
3. *Additional Professional Development Modules*, which offer targeted professional development of various lengths and on various topics;
4. *The State and Regional Partnership Hub*, which connects schools to key community-based organizations,
5. *Technical Assistance for LEAs Supporting for Students with Disabilities and English Learners* through a core partnership with the New England Regional Education Laboratory;
6. Management of an *Approved Provider List*, which connects LEAs to vendors that have been pre-approved by RIDE based upon their track record of success in supporting schools and districts through turnaround; and
7. *Diagnostic Screening Services*, which makes the diagnostic screen used for Focus and Priority schools available to any struggling school in Rhode Island.

See the summaries below for more information about the support system delivered through the ATL.

Support One: Turnaround Leaders Program		
<i>Function</i>	<i>Clients</i>	<i>Resourcing</i>
Train turnaround leaders for service in PLA and Priority Schools	PLA schools, cohorts 1 and 2	Race to the Top
Provide job-embedded coaching for leaders trained in Turnaround Leaders Program	Priority Schools Focus Schools	Local Funds Federal Funds
Provide state-approved alternative pathway to administrative certification		
Support Two: Summer Institute		
<i>Function</i>	<i>Clients</i>	<i>Resourcing</i>
2 weeks of intensive summer training for leadership teams from PLA, Priority, and Focus schools	PLA schools, cohorts 1 and 2 Priority Schools Focus Schools	Race to the Top Other Federal Funds
Support Three: Professional Development Modules		
<i>Function</i>	<i>Clients</i>	<i>Resourcing</i>
Providing LEAs and schools with professional developments of modules to build school leadership team capacity	All Title I schools	Race to the Top
Modules range from 3 day training sessions to 20 minute virtual tutorials		
Support Four: State and Regional Partnership Hub		
<i>Function</i>	<i>Clients</i>	<i>Resourcing</i>
RIDE managed partnership hub to connect schools to relevant community-based, higher education, and technical assistance partners	All Title I schools	Title I
Statewide system of support required under Title I		
Support Five: Technical Assistance for LEAs Supporting for Students with Disabilities and English Learners		
<i>Function</i>	<i>Clients</i>	<i>Resourcing</i>
Technical assistance, professional development, networking, research, and best-practice guidance to support ELs and students with disabilities.	All Title I schools	No cost: Regional Education Laboratory

Support Six: Approved External Provider List		
<i>Function</i>	<i>Clients</i>	<i>Resourcing</i>
RIDE managed list of approved external providers with track record of success in serving low-performing schools and closing achievement gaps	All schools	N/A
Support Seven : Diagnostic Screening Services		
<i>Function</i>	<i>Clients</i>	<i>Resourcing</i>
RIDE administered diagnostic screen designed to yield criterion-based and normative information about district and school performance	All Title I schools	State Funds

2.G Build Capacity to Improve Student Learning

- 2.G Describe the SEA’s process for building SEA, LEA, and school capacity to improve student learning in all schools and, in particular, in low-performing schools and schools with the largest achievement gaps, including through:
- i. timely and comprehensive monitoring of, and technical assistance for, LEA implementation of interventions in priority and focus schools;
 - ii. ensuring sufficient support for implementation of interventions in priority schools, focus schools, and other Title I schools identified under the SEA’s differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system (including through leveraging funds the LEA was previously required to reserve under ESEA section 1116(b)(10), SIG funds, and other Federal funds, as permitted, along with State and local resources); and
 - iii. holding LEAs accountable for improving school and student performance, particularly for turning around their priority schools.

Explain how this process is likely to succeed in improving SEA, LEA, and school capacity.

RIDE is focusing on capacity building at the LEA and SEA through six strategies that cover capacity building, progress monitoring of reform initiatives, quality assurance and accountability, the role of external partners, resource investment, and reduction of administrative and paperwork burdens.

Strategy One: Building SEA and LEA Capacity through Clarity of Roles

Over the past two years, RIDE has been striving to narrow and clarify the role of the agency relative to districts and schools. These efforts have taken two forms. First, the Basic Education Program sets forth four functions for the Rhode Island Department of Education in relationship to all school districts. These functions confine the role of the SEA only to duties that are either the *exclusive purview* of a state agency (such as policy development and promulgation, regulation and monitoring, and federal fund management) or to duties that are *most effectively or efficiently* delivered by a state agency (such as construction of statewide systems, addressing statewide barriers to reform, and connecting LEAs to state-level partners and resources.)

Within the context of the intervention system described in this application, RIDE will maintain a focus on these four functions through a set of service commitments made **by** RIDE's **to** LEAs and the identified schools they serve. These SEA commitments, which have already been formally adopted by the Commissioner and publicly distributed to affected LEAs, focus on:

- Differentiated SEA support for the lowest-performing districts and the schools they serve;
- Reduction of administrative burden, minimize or remove bureaucratic barriers, and reduce paperwork requirements;
- Setting clear performance expectations and establishing monitoring, accountability, and performance management systems that track LEA and school performance;
- Ensuring adequacy of resources and prudent, allowable, and appropriate investment of resources in Rhode Island's lowest performing schools.

[See Appendix D for a copy of RIDE's commitment to Priority and Focus districts and the schools they serve.]

Strategy Two: Comprehensive Monitoring System for LEAs and Identified Schools

Over the past ten years, RIDE has monitored school and district improvement initiatives through a system that has relied primarily upon LEA self-reporting of implementation successes and challenges. This self-reporting system has been punctuated with annual reporting of key student outcome measures, primary state assessment results, graduation rates, and other similarly aggregate metrics. Although these measures are crucial in monitoring the *overall* effects of comprehensive reform initiatives, they do not provide equally important short-cycle, leading indicators that enable early stage judgment about the effectiveness of both intervention selection and execution.

Under the proposed intervention system described in this waiver application, RIDE’s new approach to progress monitoring will be comprehensive, regular, and appropriate to the developmental stage of the reform initiative. To that end, RIDE will:

- (1) Assign each intervention strategy both leading and outcome measures that will enable targeted performance monitoring from early implementation to school exit;
- (2) Dedicate substantial SEA resources to *early and mid-stage* progress monitoring of leading and outcomes measures, with a gradual release of performing monitoring in years 3-5 for Priority schools that are consistently meeting performance targets; and,
- (3) Differentiate school classification status beginning as early as Year 2 for Focus schools and Year 3 for Priority schools, allowing for:
 - a. Focus and Priority schools to be recognizing as “Rising” due to consistently reaching improvement targets, or
 - b. Focus and Priority schools to be recognized as “Caution” due to failure to implement the intervention model and/or failure to reach performance targets.

Using this more granular approach to progress monitoring with a heavy emphasis on early and mid-stage implementation, RIDE will ensure successful LEA implementation of intervention models and improved student outcomes.

Strategy Three: Alignment of Diagnostic, Intervention, and Progress Monitoring Efforts into Four Areas that Build LEA Capacity

Although RIDE has routinely required a comprehensive needs assessment processes before awarding state and federal grant funding to LEAs, these needs assessments have usually been LEA-designed and LEA-administered. Under the new intervention system, RIDE will be taking full responsibility for a foundational, comprehensive diagnostic screening process for Priority and Focus schools. This screening process will provide:

- (1) The SEA, LEA, and identified school with a comprehensive criterion-based and normative view of their performance;
- (2) A diverse and broad concrete baseline against which to both measure school progress; and
- (3) A basis upon which the SEA can make data-informed judgments about the scope, breadth, intensity and nature of the interventions LEAs select for Priority schools.

Under development for the last three years, this diagnostic screen is derived from the Basic Education Program, state education regulations promulgated in 2009 that classify all LEA responsibilities into 28 critical performance measures. [See Appendix B for a one-page overview of the 28 performance measures.] In addition, as a Race to the Top winner, RIDE has completed the first stage of construction of a comprehensive, statewide data system that draws a diverse, highly granular array of data from LEAs. This LEA-generated data, coupled with the data already collected for performance

monitoring and federal reporting, will enable RIDE to enhance the depth, breadth, and accuracy of the diagnostic screen and efficiently implement the process for all identified schools.

The results of this diagnostic screen will yield information in 28 areas, each of which is classified into four LEA Capacities: (1) Leadership, (2) Content and Instruction, (3) Infrastructure, and (4) Personnel Supports. These four LEA capacities are well known and understood throughout Rhode Island LEAs. Therefore, the four LEA capacities serve as the organizing structure for the diagnostic screen, intervention strategies, and RIDE’s performance monitoring system. See Table 13 below for more information about the use of the four capacities in intervention strategy performance management.

Table 13: The Role of the LEA Capacities in Performance Management

Diagnostic Screen Results	Intervention Strategy Selection	Monitoring System Performance Indicators
Overall Leadership Capacity	Leadership Interventions	Leadership Performance Indicators
Overall Capacity of Personnel Supports	Personnel Supports Interventions LEA Infrastructure Interventions	Personnel Performance and Support Indicators Infrastructure Indicators
Overall Capacity of LEA Infrastructure		
Overall Capacity of Content and Instruction	Content and Instruction Interventions	Quality of Academic Content and Instructional Indicators

Strategy Four: Rigorous Process for External Partners

Through state regulation, RIDE is responsible for establishing a rigorous review process for external providers that result in a list of stated approved providers. These providers may provide services that include: (1) technical assistance for LEAs and schools; (2) external management organizations; (3) charter management organizations; and (4) direct service providers.

RIDE’s external provider review process is staffed by both program and fiscal specialists and includes the following criteria:

1. Does the provider have a history of providing effective services in turnaround environments?
2. Does the provider demonstrate an understanding of the local context and do they have relevant experience in similar environments?
3. Can the provider document fiduciary health and evidence of their ability to increase the scale of the services at the level and pace proposed?
4. Does the provider utilize empirically proven practices?
5. Is the provider committed to *sustainable, scalable* services that are intentionally designed to build LEA capacity (when applicable)?
6. Are the proposed costs allowable, reasonable, prudent, and based on a transparent basis?

Strategy Five: Focused, Coordinated and Wise Investment of Federal, State, and Local Resources

RIDE will focus on supporting LEAs in resourcing all intervention efforts in close collaboration with LEAs. Through this collaboration, RIDE will ensure that local, state, and federal resources are planned and invested to ensure sufficient support for implementation in priority schools of meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles. This collaboration will focus on four areas.

Area One: Cost Coverage

In the area of “Cost Coverage” RIDE provides support to LEAs to ensure that resourcing plans include all necessary expenditure categories and are of sufficient size and scope to support the full implementation of all of the selected interventions over a period of no less than three years

Area Two: Spending Alignment

In the area of “Spending Alignment” RIDE provides support to LEAs to ensure that proposed expenditures are clearly detailed and aligned to the proposed intervention(s) in both amount of funds allocated for specific activities and timing of spending. RIDE will exercise applicable authority to ensure that there are no extraneous expenditures and the budget will support the interventions outlined in the application and School Reform Plan.

Area Three: Reasonableness

In the area of “Reasonableness” RIDE will support LEAs to ensure that budget expenditures appear reasonable, are clearly justified, necessary, and allowable to support the implementation of the intervention model.

Area Four: Integration and Sustainability

In the area of “Integration and Sustainability” RIDE will support LEAs to ensure a strategic use and alignment of resources; specifically, RIDE staff will identify sources and amounts (either new or repurposed) of local and federal funds that will complement designated grant funds to support timely implementation of the intervention. This will include close collaboration with LEAs serving Focus and Priority schools to plan and manage all funds covered under ESEA, ensuring that the flexibilities afforded under the waiver are maximized to support the needs of low-performing schools.

Strategy Six: Reduction of Administrative Burden

RIDE has already begun to implement an agency-wide plan to reduce administrative and paperwork burdens on districts and schools, shift the SEA/LEA relationship *away from* compliance and toward active use of data and performance monitoring. To that end, RIDE is deeply engaged in the following work.

Streamline data reporting requirements for LEAs; Provide state level data analysis tools.

RIDE is in the process of comprehensively rebuilding all state education data systems. As part of this effort, RIDE has consolidated data reports where possible, reduced redundancies in data collections, and integrated data systems into a more user accessible data communication system.

RIDE is currently implementing an enterprise data system to reduce burdens to the schools and districts in data collections and to facilitate the use of collected data to improve instruction and student learning. The agency's data system includes a data warehouse and a suite of decision support systems that store and provide access to individual student and teacher level data. Additionally, these systems include data verification and error-checking routines and a system for ensuring assignment of unique identifiers to individual students, which is a critical component in maintaining individual level longitudinal data.

We continue to expand the use of easy to use Web-based data applications with a built-in Automated Data Transfer agent (ADT) for timely and quality collection and reporting. We have provided services and trainings to hundreds of State and district administrators, data and IT managers, program coordinators and data clerks. We continue our ongoing process of eliminating redundant data collections, including thousands of duplicate records in enrollments, student membership and program eligibility.

RIDE recently developed a Web-based meta-data repository system to further reduce burdens on schools and districts and to provide a consistent and reliable means of access to data. State and local users may query this online system for data elements and embedded code-sets by keyword, entity, domain and data event names, and by program areas and data owners. Users may use the built-in tools to build record layout sheets and data submission templates. Analysts, data administrators and developers can apply the meta-data in system integration, data validations and in creation of enterprise data management and reporting systems.

Current burden reduction projects include the development of a single sign-on system, electronic sign-off of all submitted and an automated appeal process to enable districts to submit requests for post-collection data updates. Work is also under way to fully integrate the collection of Title I students (including homeless students) and students enrolled in Career and Technical education.

Improve the Efficiency of Federal Program Management

Beginning in the 2010-2011 year, RIDE began a two-phase burden reduction program focused on federal program fund management. During Phase I, the Consolidated Resource Plan application was audited and revised to ensure that it adequately covered all federally required fields while, at the same time, minimized the amount of time required by LEAs. Through this audit, RIDE was able to consolidate nearly 25% of the content by elimination of duplication and consolidation of fields.

During Phase II of the burden reduction efforts, RIDE is working with technical experts to audit all federal program performance review processes and migrate toward a unified approach to on-site monitoring. This unified visit approach is designed to consolidate components of federal program monitoring in order to:

- (1) Create improved coordination across federal programs at the LEA level
- (2) Examine data in light of federal program investments and results
- (3) Reduce the time required for LEAs to report compliance matters including desk audit/reporting time and on-site monitoring time
- (4) Focus intensive RIDE monitoring activity on “high risk” districts or compliance elements.

RIDE will conduct analysis throughout the implementation of the flexibility to identify areas for consolidation, improving efficiency and reducing burden. RIDE will revisit policies and procedures regularly to identify potential burdens. RIDE conducted an analysis of the federal program funding application in 2011, which resulted in a reduced paperwork burden to LEAs by 15% for Title I, 15% for Title III and 20% for IDEA funding applications. RIDE plans to continue similar analysis throughout the flexibility period.

Principle 3: Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership

3.A *Develop and Adopt Guidelines for Evaluation and Support Systems*

Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide the corresponding description and evidence, as appropriate, for the option selected.

<p>Option A</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> If the SEA has not already developed and adopted all of the guidelines consistent with Principle 3, provide:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. the SEA’s plan to develop and adopt guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems by the end of the 2011–2012 school year; ii. a description of the process the SEA will use to involve teachers and principals in the development of these guidelines; and iii. an assurance that the SEA will submit to the Department a copy of the guidelines that it will adopt by the end of the 2011–2012 school year (see Assurance 14). 	<p>Option B</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the SEA has developed and adopted all of the guidelines consistent with Principle 3, provide:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. a copy of the guidelines the SEA has adopted (Attachment 10) and an explanation of how these guidelines are likely to lead to the development of evaluation and support systems that improve student achievement and the quality of instruction for students; ii. evidence of the adoption of the guidelines (Attachment 11); and iii. a description of the process the SEA used to involve teachers and principals in the development of these guidelines.
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Educator Effectiveness and the Rhode Island Theory of Action

Research has proven that there is nothing more fundamental to student success than having the benefit of an excellent teacher who works in a school led by an excellent principal. We believe our most essential function as an SEA is improving and assuring the quality of education for students through our commitment to recruiting, developing, supporting, and retaining highly effective principals and teachers in our schools.

Therefore, the first priority in our strategic plan, *Transforming Education in Rhode Island*, is to ensure that we have excellent educators in every school in our state. To do their work effectively, teachers need the support of world-class standards, such as the Common Core State Standards, and they need to work within systems of accountability and support that: set appropriate annual objectives; diagnostically recognize problems at the school and district level; and provide a model and timeframe for school transformation that will accelerate all schools toward greatness. Teachers and school leaders who work within such a system are well prepared for a fair and transparent evaluation system that will provide guidance toward improving instruction and that will guide school districts in making appropriate personnel decisions that advance teaching and learning.

Adopting Standards for Educator Evaluation

[The Rhode Island Basic Education Program](#), which the R.I. Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education (Board of Regents) approved on June 4, 2009, states that:

Appraising personnel performance and quality is an extremely important factor affecting student learning. The LEA shall establish a set of clearly detailed and widely disseminated policies and procedures for the supervision and evaluation of all staff. These policies and procedures shall include personnel policy statements, job descriptions that outline job functions and responsibilities, and assignment and discipline of all LEA staff.

In order to ensure that all staff show consistent positive impact on student learning, the LEA shall have a formal evaluation process that is completed on a regular basis and is compliant with applicable legal requirements. The evaluation system promotes the growth and effectiveness of staff, provides feedback for continuous improvement, and includes processes for disciplinary action and exiting of ineffective staff. The evaluation system shall be developed, implemented and managed by persons with the necessary qualifications, skills, and training. The evaluation system shall be described in sufficient detail so that it is clear who is responsible and what is expected. (G-15-2.2-4)

While the BEP regulations were still in draft form, RIDE spent 18 months developing *Rhode Island Education Evaluation System Standards (RI Educator Evaluation Standards)*. These *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* were created through a transparent, inclusive process. The R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) met with teacher and principal teams including union representatives, held community forums with the Rhode Island Urban Education Task Force, and integrated feedback from the LEAs' annual teacher and principal surveys. Following the initial draft of the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, we solicited public comment over three months and held two public hearings.

The Board of Regents approved the Rhode Island Standards for Educator Evaluation (*RI Educator Evaluation Standards*) on [December 3, 2009](#), as described in the official minutes of the meeting:

Approval of Educator Evaluation Standards

Next, the Commissioner presented the Educator Evaluation Standards for approval. She reminded the Board that the evaluation standards are exactly that – standards - and that their use should be considered similar to the manner in which the Program Approval Standards are used to gauge the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. The Board discussed at length all of the suggested changes at the November 19th work session. The Department will develop timelines and guidance documents, including rubrics and model processes, at the agency level, as needed to ensure the timely adherence of district practice to these standards. The group discussed in detail Standard 1.3 – “This standard established four broad areas of performance that should provide the focus for all educator evaluation. Testimony and research all support the need to place student improvement as the primary measure of effectiveness.” A sentence added to standard 1.3: “An educator’s overall evaluation of effectiveness is primarily determined by evidence of impact on student growth.” Regents expressed their concern about the wording of the added sentence. The discussion involved the use of “student growth” versus student achievement.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Amendment to Standard 1.3 of the Board of Regents document, “Annotated Changes to RI Educator Evaluation System Standards” to read as follows: “An educator’s overall evaluation of effectiveness is primarily determined by evidence of impact on student growth and academic achievement.”

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education adopts the Rhode Island Educator Evaluation System Standards, as amended.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Educator Evaluation System Standards (Attachment 10)

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/Docs/EdEvalStandards.pdf>

Improving Teaching and Learning through Evaluation Systems

Coupled with the BEP, the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* provide the framework that serves as the basis for all state and local human-resource management decisions — including certification, selection, tenure, professional development, support for both individual and groups of educators, placement, compensation, promotion, and retention. Every decision made in regard to the professional educators in Rhode Island, whether by an LEA or the SEA, will be based on evidence of the respective teacher’s or principal’s impact on student growth and academic achievement in addition to other measures of professional practice and professional responsibility. Through our Race to the Top application, we have also committed to the principle that no child in Rhode Island will be taught by a teacher who has been rated ineffective for two consecutive years.

The *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* require every LEA to establish an evaluation system that meets state standards by the current (2011-12) school year. The evaluation of teachers, principals, and support professionals remains an LEA responsibility, and now it is done at a breadth and level of rigorous quality prescribed by state regulation.

Approved educator-evaluation systems in Rhode Island must align with the [Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards](#), [the Rhode Island Educator Code of Professional Responsibility](#), and the [Standards for Educational Leadership in Rhode Island \(Leadership Standards\)](#).

Additionally, the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* require LEAs to establish and support local District Evaluation Committees that include teachers, support professionals, administrators, and union representatives. This Committee in each LEA is charged with soliciting feedback from other educators, students, parents, and assessment experts, and it shares its findings with the LEA leadership.

To meet the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, each LEA’s evaluation system must:

- base evaluation of educator effectiveness “*primarily on evidence of impact on **student growth** and academic achievement;*”
- differentiate educators into **four levels** of effectiveness (highly effective, effective, developing, and ineffective);
- **annually** evaluate effectiveness of all educators, including teachers, principals, and professional support staff;
- ensure a **transparent, fair** evaluation process;
- involve **teachers and principals** in the development process; and
- provide opportunities for **professional growth** and improvement.

As part of our Race to the Top commitment, RIDE used these six standards as a foundation and worked with educators from across the state to design the Rhode Island Model educator-evaluation system.

Developing Standards for Educator Evaluation

Engagement of teachers, principals

As we developed the model statewide evaluation system – **The Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation System** - with the common definitions and methodologies and to assist with the resolution of evaluation-related concerns, RIDE established the Rhode Island Advisory Committee for Educator Evaluation Systems (ACEES). This committee is made up of 25 members: The Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education; Commissioner of Higher Education (or designee); one representative from each of the state’s teacher unions (Rhode Island Federation of Teachers & Health Professionals and the National Education Association – Rhode Island); one superintendent; one school committee representative; principals and teachers representing elementary, middle, and high schools; teachers of students with disabilities and of English Learners; professional support educators; one secondary student; one parent; and one representative from the business community. Members of this committee are nominated for a two-year period. The Commissioner sought nominations from professional organizations, as appropriate, to make all appointments.

ACEES works to ensure that all members of the education community are deeply engaged in the development and implementation of the Rhode Island Model for educator evaluation. ACEES acts in an advisory capacity to provide RIDE with:

- feedback on key evaluation system deliverables; and
- direction for overall system development through the design principles.

The ACEES committee first met on June 21, 2010, and is continuing to meet throughout the design and implementation of the Rhode Island Model Evaluation System. ACEES [committee materials](#) and [ACEES committee members](#) can be viewed online.

Through ACEES, educators from 23 LEAs and organizations throughout Rhode Island participated in the development of the Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation System. Six working groups developed and refined the content, and the ACEES committee reviewed their work. Three teachers of English and three teachers of students with disabilities were members of these groups. Teachers of English Learners and teachers of students with disabilities participated in working-group sessions and attended open meetings designed to gather input from educators across the state. During the design process, RIDE staff members met on multiple occasions with the Association of Rhode Island Administrators of Special Education (ARIASE) and the English Language Learners Advisory Council to discuss evaluations.

RIDE is continuing to improve the evaluation system based on feedback from educators during the first year of gradual implementation.

Flexibility for LEAs

The *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* allow for LEAs that do not elect to participate in the Rhode Island Model Evaluation System (the Rhode Island Model) to design or adapt their own system to meet the requirements set forth in the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*. Any LEA evaluation system that is distinct from the Rhode Island Model must be submitted to RIDE to secure approval of the system. If an LEA is unable to independently meet the standards, then the LEA must adopt the Rhode Island Model.

RIDE prepared [guidelines and resources](#) that inform LEAs on what to submit for approval, including format, links to standards, supporting documentation, deadlines, and other specifics. RIDE reviews documentation for compliance with the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*. All 7 districts that elected to develop their own systems had their designs reviewed, and they all received initial approval. To gain full approval, all 7 districts will need to resubmit their models to address open issues. The guidelines and resources for districts that elected to develop their own evaluation system in compliance with the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* are posted on the RIDE Web site.

The process of developing an evaluation system to meet the Rhode Island Educator Evaluation System Standards is a significant undertaking. Districts that elected to follow this pathway did so with the belief that they would be adapting a system that is in existence and that can be modified to meet the standards. RIDE recommended that districts begin by developing an understanding of the standards and rubrics for approved systems and then review the district's current system to identify gaps and to develop strategies to address these areas in the redesign or modification of the current system.

RIDE encouraged districts to take the gap-analysis approach as the first step in review, including a set of yes/no questions to evaluate how well the current evaluation-system structure matches the expectations of the Educator Evaluation System Standards. Districts were asked to answer a set of yes/no questions, and whenever the answer was “no” or “partially,” preliminary ideas for modifying the current system were to be noted so as to create the infrastructure necessary to create and sustain a system that meets RIDE standards. Districts were also asked keep a running log of the evidence that supports “yes” or “partially” ratings so that this data could be used in the preparation of the proposed plan that the district would write in response to the guidelines document.

In the fall of 2009, the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers & Health Professionals (RIFTHP) received a grant from the American Federation of Teachers to develop a model urban evaluation system. The RIFTHP brought together labor-management teams from the six most densely populated urban districts (including active participation from Providence, West Warwick, and Woonsocket) to work collaboratively with RIFTHP and RIDE to develop a model educator evaluation and support system that meet the *RI*

Educator Evaluation Standards. Since 2009, the six districts have been meeting monthly to assess their evaluation systems against the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, review models of educator evaluation, and work with nationally recognized experts to design a model urban evaluation system that was piloted in the 2010-11 school year. RIDE has continued to work collaboratively with the RIFTHP group and has granted initial approval of its evaluation system, the [Innovation Initiative on Educator Evaluation \(Innovation Model\)](#). Six urban districts are implementing the Innovation Model during the current school year (2011-12). These six comprise six of the seven LEAs granted initial approval.

In addition to the Rhode Island Model and the Innovation Model, one LEA (**Coventry**) has developed its own evaluation system. RIDE has granted initial approval.

All other LEAs are using implementing the Rhode Island Model for Educator Evaluations. Though there are seven LEAs that have received initial approval, it is important to note that RIDE has defined required student learning measures for all systems and provides the training in this area to all LEAs. All RI evaluation systems must result in an annual rating for educators. Systems must include formal and informal observations, information from students parents and others, state defined measures of student learning and assessments of professional responsibilities in addition to the areas of practice and student learning. Written feedback is required throughout the process in order to provide actionable feedback so educators can develop professional growth plans or improvement plans that are aligned to the feedback and to school and district needs. By integrating these multiple measures and by focusing on improvement, we will improve the instruction in schools and student growth and achievement.

3.B *Ensure LEAs Implement Evaluation and Support Systems*

- 3.B Provide the SEA's process for ensuring that each LEA develops, adopts, pilots, and implements, with the involvement of teachers and principals, including mechanisms to review, revise, and improve, high-quality teacher and principal evaluation and support systems consistent with the SEA's adopted guidelines.

Overview of the Rhode Island Evaluation System

As discussed in 3.A., the Board of Regents has promulgated regulatory Educator Evaluation System Standards (*RI Educator Evaluation Standards*) that apply to all public schools in Rhode Island. These standards go beyond the level of mere guidance; they are regulatory, and all educator-evaluation systems in Rhode Island must meet these legal standards. To put these standards into action, RIDE (as discussed in 3.A.),

in partnership with educators across the state, developed the Rhode Island Model for Education Evaluation.

Most LEAs adopted the Rhode Island Model; however, as discussed in 3.A. six LEAs developed the Innovation Model and one LEA developed its own district-level model. RIDE has initially approved both alternate models as meeting all of the requirements of the Evaluation System Standards. The rubric and other documents required for approval were noted in 3.A.

Elements of the Rhode Island Evaluation System

An effective teacher can change the course of a student’s life. Research has shown that teacher quality is the single most important school-based factor influencing student achievement, so, naturally, a top priority should be giving teachers the guidance and support they need to be successful. A fair and accurate evaluation system is a critical tool for developing and improving the effectiveness of our teachers while also recognizing the outstanding performance of our most successful teachers.

Unfortunately, the evaluation models that had been in use in the majority of our schools did not provide the kind of feedback and support teachers deserve as professionals. Often, evaluations were infrequent or inconsistent, with little consideration for the teacher’s professional development or how much students were actually learning in the classroom.

Our Rhode Island Educator Evaluation System Standards (*RI Educator Evaluation Standards*), which have the force of law, require a local evaluation system that uses multiple measures to determine educator effectiveness, based primarily on impact on student growth and academic achievement. The *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* call for annual evaluations. Educator-evaluation systems in Rhode Island focus on collaboration and feedback to fuel professional growth and on specific goals and objectives to measure progress.

To meet the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, each LEA’s evaluation system must:

- base evaluation of educator effectiveness “*primarily on evidence of impact on **student growth and academic achievement;***” and
- differentiate educators into **four levels** of effectiveness (highly effective, effective, developing, and ineffective).

In accordance with the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, all educators will receive clear, actionable feedback in order to improve, and any educator who receives a rating of Developing or Ineffective will receive more targeted support to accelerate improvement. These educators will work with their evaluator to develop a detailed Improvement Plan with clear objectives, benchmarks, and timelines and to identify an improvement team to assist with their development.

In order to meet the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, each LEA's evaluation system must use multiple observations and other measures to **annually** evaluate effectiveness of **all** educators, including teachers, principals, and professional support staff.

Evaluations may be conducted more frequently if appropriate, depending on the educators' experience, assignment, or prior evaluation outcomes. RIDE believes that fair, valid, and reliable evaluation systems are important because they provide opportunities to acknowledge best practices and to offer support when needed.

To determine overall educator effectiveness, educator evaluations in Rhode Island considers three central components:

- Professional Practice;
- Professional Responsibilities; and
- Student Learning.

RIDE developed matrices that show how the three components of the evaluation system – student growth, professional practice, and professional responsibilities – interact to determine the educator's final composite effectiveness rating.

Professional Practice

Professional Practice encompasses a spectrum of knowledge and skills that result in effective instruction, based on the Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards. For the RI Model working group of teachers, administrators, and other educators from around the state developed the rubric that was field tested and is being implemented for gradual implementation this year. Teachers are evaluated on a range of professional practices, including: the implementation of lesson plans, use of critical thinking tools, strategies to engage students and the ability to create a safe learning environment. School-based administrators are being evaluated on elements relating to their leadership skills, such as the ability to establish and maintain a school mission or the ability to develop a strong collaborative culture.

According to the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, measures of “quality of instruction” (or Professional Practice) must include, at a minimum, observations of educator practice using valid and accurate observation rubrics and tools. Both formal and informal observations must be integrated into all systems. The feedback RIDE received on RI Model rubrics indicates that they can be applied to the varied settings encountered by teachers of English Learners and teachers of students with disabilities. Other systems being implemented gradually this year report similar feedback.

These evaluation rubrics and tools will allow teachers to receive ongoing, timely, and constructive feedback about their professional practice that will lead toward the development of an individualized professional-development plan. Further, the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* require LEAs to collect and analyze data about individuals' and groups of educators' professional-development needs so as to develop

coherent plans to address these needs. The evaluation system must “provide feedback on performance to all educators to support continuous professional development.”

Professional Responsibility

Professional responsibility relates to the educator’s role and responsibility within the learning community, including participation in decision-making, willingness to help and be helped by others in support of student learning, and efforts to advocate for students. We developed and posted on our website [rubrics](#) that outline the specific expectations for all educators regarding Professional Responsibility.

Student Learning

The most heavily weighted component of teachers’ and principals’ evaluations must be based on evidence of student growth and academic achievement. We base evaluation decisions on educators’ effect on student growth and achievement because we believe that this is the most important measure of the teacher and principal – and that adult’ performance measures should be tied to the performance of their students. This is our mechanism to ensure that students will have access to high-quality instruction that prepares them for college, careers, and life.

Student Learning: Student Learning Objectives

Many teachers in Rhode Island have for many years been setting standards-aligned goals for their students. Teachers are planning backward to align their daily and weekly instruction with their long-term goals, giving valid and rigorous assessments on an ongoing basis to measure student progress toward their goals, and instructing their students powerfully, informed by the goals, plans, and assessments.

The Rhode Island Model and all other approved educator-evaluation systems in Rhode Island make this best practice a part of every teacher’s planning and every principal’s leadership, as teachers and principals set Student Learning Objectives through which evaluators will measure growth for all teachers and schools, including those who teach in grades or subjects that are not part of the state assessment system.

Student learning is best measured by looking at multiple sources. Evaluators are working with both teachers and school-based administrators to set Student Learning Objectives that measure and assess the growth of student learning in every classroom. Student Learning Objectives are specific, measurable goals based on Rhode Island content standards or other nationally recognized standards that may be aligned with the School Improvement Plan and the LEA’s strategic plan. These goals are not student-specific; they are classroom-wide or relating to specific groupings of students within a classroom.

A Student Learning Objective is a long-term (typically one semester or one school year) academic goal that teachers set for groups of students. It must be specific,

measurable, based on available prior student-learning data, and aligned with state standards as well as with relevant school and district priorities.

Student Learning Objectives should represent the most important learning during an interval of instruction and may be based on *progress* or *mastery*. Objectives based on *progress* require students to make a certain amount of progress from a baseline measure toward a clear benchmark of performance (e.g., all students will move up 3 reading levels within one year). Objectives based on *mastery* require students to demonstrate a particular level of skill and knowledge in that specific course content, regardless of any baseline measures (e.g., all students will be reading level W texts by the end of the year).

Teachers work together with other teachers and administrators to develop a set of Student Learning Objectives for each grade level, course, or school. All teachers of the same course in the same school use the same set of objectives, although specific *targets* may vary if student starting points differ among classes. Teachers may add additional objectives beyond the required 2 to 4 range if their teaching context requires it (e.g., those teaching more than 4 different subjects).

Student Learning Objectives present an opportunity for teachers and administrators to be closely involved in shaping the manner in which their practice and the performance of their students is evaluated and measured. With the use of Student Learning Objectives, educators work together to determine how content should be prioritized and to establish clear expectations for how student learning should be assessed. Student Learning Objectives allow for the use of multiple measures of assessment, including existing off-the-shelf assessments and those objectives that are developed by teams of educators. Teachers and administrators set targets based upon available data for their specific population of students.

Setting and attaining Student Learning Objectives requires the purposeful use of data through both formal and informal assessments. This process recognizes and documents academic gains in non-tested grades and subjects and supplements NECAP (or, after 2014, PARCC) scores in tested grades and subjects. Finally, Student Learning Objectives focus instruction on district and school improvement plans and on student needs.

To ensure that all educators have the support they need to develop appropriate Student Learning Objectives, RIDE created a cross-office team to work with educators in the field and to draft guidance and sample Student Learning Objectives specifically for teachers of English Learners and teachers of students with disabilities. RIDE continues to meet with directors of special education and with the English Language Learners Advisory Council to receive feedback and guidance on the evaluation process and on Student Learning Objectives.

RIDE received significant feedback early in the current school year (2011-12) indicating that teachers of students with disabilities needed more samples that addressed the

various types of assignments found in their field. To meet this need, RIDE convened a small group of teachers of students with disabilities to assist in designing sample Student Learning Objectives. These educators have now written [several sample Student Learning Objectives](#) for teachers of students with disabilities.

In addition to these sample Student Learning Objectives for teachers of students with disabilities, we learned that a separate [FAQ](#) on evaluations was needed for teachers of students with disabilities. We worked with these teachers to identify the questions for the FAQ, which we have also posted on our website.

Currently, we are in the process of developing sample Student Learning Objectives and guidance documents for teachers of English Learners. To develop these samples and guidance, we are working in partnership with educators who work directly with English Learners.

For some educators, setting or evaluating Student Learning Objectives represented a major shift in practice. It required collaboration and the use of data that was new and, at first, challenging; however, the result will be more purposeful instruction, closer monitoring of student progress, and, ultimately, greater student achievement. Over time this process will help establish statewide perspectives on student progress and learning.

Setting Student Learning Objectives requires being able to answer three key questions. Teachers should answer these questions with their colleagues, not in isolation:

1. What are the most important things my students must learn?
2. How will I measure how much my students learn?
3. Based on what I know about my students, what is a rigorous, but attainable target for how much and at what level should my students learn?

Teachers begin the process of setting Objectives by working with their colleagues to determine the most important standards and content in their grade(s) and subject(s). Ideally, these discussions occur just before school starts or early in the year. In some cases, priority standards or content may already be identified by the school or district.

Once teachers identify the priority standards and content of their Student Learning Objectives, they must determine how they will measure their students' learning over the course of the year. What assessments are available? Are they of high quality? Are they common to other teachers who teach the same grade(s) and subject(s)?

Finally, teachers must gather all available data and historical information they have on current students in order to set numerical targets for how much their students will learn over the course of the instructional period. Pre-test data or assessment data from the prior year can be used to set quantifiable targets for students. Targets should always be set using the highest-quality source of evidence available. Targets should be rigorous and attainable for all students or ambitious, based on the past performance of similar cohorts of students, when taught with best practices from the school, district, or outside the district.

Horizontal and vertical consistencies are two additional critical elements to consider when setting Student Learning Objectives. When a Student Learning Objective is horizontally consistent, all teachers in the same grade-level or subject collaborate on shared Student Learning Objectives. Vertically consistent Student Learning Objectives should be consistent with the school administration's school-level goals (for teachers in applicable subject areas and grade levels). School-level objectives, in turn, should be consistent with key district goals and priority metrics or with the school or district improvement plan.

The Student Learning Objective process is used statewide. RIDE determines the protocol for how objectives are set, monitored, and scored. LEAs have flexibility in which assessments they use in various grades and subjects and the local common-scoring rubrics they use to score student performance on those assessments. Because RIDE wants to make sure the approved educator-evaluation systems are adaptable to different contexts and in keeping with the goal of reducing duplication and unnecessary burdens on LEAs and schools, LEAs also have flexibility in determining who will evaluate teachers, especially if individuals other than administrators have conducted evaluations before.

RIDE is providing training to evaluators on how to approve, monitor, and score Student Learning Objectives. RIDE is also providing direct guidance to teachers on how to set and monitor Student Learning Objectives, including a series of exemplar Student Learning Objectives for various grades and subjects that RIDE released at the beginning of the current (2011-12) school year. These exemplars will serve as additional guidance for full implementation in the 2012-13 school year.

In addition, RIDE is in the process of building an Instructional Management System (IMS) — an online platform that will house data, curriculum, and assessment materials. The IMS, when complete, will facilitate the Student Learning Objective process by making it easier for teachers and administrators to access common assessments and student-achievement data they need to make informed decisions and will reduce duplication and unnecessary burdens on LEAs and schools.

During full administration of the evaluation system, teachers set 2 to 4 Student Learning Objectives and building administrators share a set of 4 to 6 Student Learning Objectives.

All Rhode Island LEAs, including the districts using the Innovation Model and the Coventry district, are following the same approach to Student Learning Objectives throughout their evaluation systems.

RIDE has a long term strategy to address the quality, consistency, and rigor of the Student Learning Objective process. The SLO process will supplement the Student Growth Scores or will be the primary source of evidence when a growth score is not available. We understand the critical role that the SLO process has in the evaluation

system. There is a two-pronged approach to addressing SLO quality. The first is embedded in the overall training conducted by the Office of Educator Quality and Certification and the second is by making explicit connections to the work in the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. In combination we will:

- Identify grade/course specific SLOs for all new curricula being developed under RTTT initiatives. By the end of the RTTT we will have ensured that high quality SLOs are built into the development of curricula.
- Train a core leadership team in every school in the state on how to use data to inform instruction and assessment decisions. Using student data to inform setting SLO targets will be a core part of this training.
- Build assessment literacy by providing access to on-line modules that are accessible to every teacher and administrator in RI. The focus on building valid and reliable curriculum embedded assessments will improve the evidence used for SLOs over time.
- Provide additional SLO exemplars on our web site to illustrate and explain the features of high quality SLOs.
- Introduce a suite of assessment tools through our Instructional Management System that include interim assessments, a test building engine, and item banks;
- Increase the amount of training on SLO writing, approval, and development as part of the four day Summer Institutes for all evaluators.

RIDE will continue to monitor the quality of SLO over the next several years. We will study the relationship between SLO scoring and Student Growth Scores for educators that have both scores. We will audit schools that have significant differences between the two measures to understand why they have occurred. Collectively we believe that these efforts will help us strengthen the SLOs while providing resources to support that goal.

Student Learning: The Growth Model

In addition to the Student Learning Objectives, The Rhode Island Growth Model will be used to measure student learning for teachers in NECAP-tested grades (3 through 7) who teach mathematics or English language arts. For these teachers, the Rhode Island Growth Model rating is based on how a teacher's students progressed in comparison with other students throughout the state who had similar scores in previous years. To increase the accuracy and precision of this growth rating, the score will reflect two years' worth of assessment data. The Rhode Island Growth Model will also be used as an evaluation tool for school administrators, where applicable, in combination with

Student Learning Objectives. Together, these two measures comprise approximately half of the evidence that informs summative ratings.

Starting in the 2013-14 school year, teachers who are responsible for student learning in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics in grades 3 through 7 and building administrators in schools with students in grades 3 through 7 will receive a rating based on their students' growth on the NECAP ELA and mathematics assessments, as compared with students with a similar academic score history. The first year of growth-model scores will be available in the 2012-13 school year. We will not use the growth-model scores in evaluations, however, until we have two years of data – that is, until 2013-14.

RIDE will calculate the growth-model scores and supply the scores to evaluators. The scores will help determine the educator's summative rating on Student Learning.

RIDE has developed guidance for districts to help in determining who, in addition to the teacher of record, would be a contributing educator accountable for student growth. This guidance, "[A Tool to Assist in the Development of Policies and Practices for Identifying Contributing Educators](#)," contains detailed information about including contributing teachers, notably teachers of English Learners and teachers of students with disabilities, within the growth determinations for the evaluation system.

RIDE is in the early stages of reviewing teacher-course-student linked growth data. As we conduct our initial analysis, we are paying particular attention to how the results of growth-model data for teachers of English Learners and teachers of students with disabilities. In February 2012, the Rhode Island Technical Advisory Committee met to review growth data and to make recommendations to RIDE for further analysis. The RIDE Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members are national experts in their fields of educator quality and measurement. The TAC meets three or four times each year to provide guidance to RIDE on all aspects of the RI Model, including long term validity plans and monitoring implementation fidelity.

During the current school year, RIDE will have derived benchmark measures for student growth for all teachers who teach subjects or grades that are part of the state assessment system. During the ensuing school year (2012-13), we will have one year of data on student growth for these teachers. We will not use student growth as a factor in evaluations until we have two years of growth data, that is, until 2013-14.

Two consecutive data points (e.g., a student's test scores from his or her grade 4 and grade 5 NECAP mathematics tests) are needed to calculate Rhode Island Growth Model results. Each student's growth is compared with that of his or her *academic peers*. Academic peers are defined as all students *statewide* with a similar NECAP score history, regardless of student demographics or program information (e.g., race/ethnicity, SES, IEP, LEP). The student's growth is measured as a percentile from 1-99, with higher values indicating more growth relative to academic peers. For example, a student with a *Student Growth Percentile* of 90 showed more growth than 90

percent of his or her academic peers. With the Rhode Island Growth Model, a student can have a high Student Growth Percentile even when performance is not yet at a proficient level.

For a group of students (e.g., in a classroom or school), Student Growth Percentile data can will be aggregated to determine the median Student Growth Percentile of the group of students. To do so, all tested students' Student Growth Percentiles are arranged in order (e.g., 1-99) to determine the median Student Growth Percentile, which is most representative of the school or of the teacher's students. The median Student Growth Percentile is the point at which half of the students' Student Growth Percentiles are above and half are below.

Just as we will use the Growth Model as part of the process of evaluation of teachers, aggregating data for all tested students in their classrooms, we will also use the Growth Model as part of the process of evaluation of principals, aggregating data for all tested students in their school.

Implementing the Evaluation System

Field Testing the evaluation system

RIDE field-tested the evaluation systems during the previous school year, beginning in March, when four LEAs implemented some aspects of the Rhode Island Model, but the LEAs did not use the evaluations as the basis for any personnel decisions.

The Rhode Island Model districts and districts developing their own systems will be held to the same timelines for implementation. Through the field testing (last school year) and gradual implementation of educator evaluations (this school year) in all LEAs, RIDE is implementing a thoughtfully designed system that incorporates the insights and suggestions of teachers and administrators. School-based administrators and teachers in all districts are participating in each element of the evaluation process, at varying levels, during this year of gradual implementation in an effort to help everyone feel comfortable with the process.

Gradual Implementation of the evaluation system

All Rhode Island school LEAs are implementing an evaluation system during the current school year. All LEAs are implementing approved evaluation systems on a gradual basis, with the exception of two districts that are going through full implementation of the Rhode Island Model. Here is our description of gradual implementation:

An effective evaluation system is key to developing, supporting and improving the effectiveness of our educators as well as recognizing the outstanding performance of our most effective teachers and leaders. While it is substantial work to implement a new evaluation system, it is the right work. We owe it to our educators and our students to work together to overcome the challenges to implementing this new system.

Before the Rhode Island Model is fully implemented in school year 2012-13, we want to ensure that educators get a chance to practice implementing the system and provide feedback to RIDE. Gradual implementation allows districts to identify challenges and begin developing solutions before full implementation begins in 2012-13.

The LEAs that are in the process of gradual implementation are engaging in all aspects of the educator-evaluation system during the current school year (2011-12) but with fewer required observations, Student Learning Objectives, and Professional Growth Goals. Every component of the system will be introduced gradually throughout the year. This approach will enable educators to acclimate to the Rhode Island Model in a year of hands-on learning, before final evaluation ratings carry more weight. Teachers have set only two Student Learning Objectives and one Professional Growth Goal, and they will have only two classroom observations (one long, one short). Under full implementation, teachers will set up to four Student Learning Objectives, as well as Professional Growth Goals and several observations. Principals are also following a gradual implementation of their own evaluation during the current school year. They will also establish one professional goal, two student learning objectives and participate in two school site visits.

All LEAs will fully implement evaluation systems during the 2012-13 school year, incorporating lessons learned from the year of gradual implementation. Even beyond these initial years, we will continuously improve the evaluation systems, based on educators' feedback and experience.

During development and during the gradual implementation of evaluations taking place this year in all districts, RIDE has also met with groups of teachers of English Learners and teachers of students with disabilities to discuss the use of rubrics and the development of Student Learning Objectives.

One of the main purposes of this gradual implementation year is to give districts and schools the opportunity to develop context-specific solutions to implementation challenges. There is no one right answer to the question about how to do this well. Instituting the new system is exceptionally difficult work for districts and schools, but has been shown to dramatically impact the professionalism, culture and collegiality within schools.

During gradual implementation, each evaluator is required to complete a series of training sessions focused on the specifics of the evaluation system, including sessions on Student Learning, Professional Growth Plans, observations and feedback, and conferencing. These training sessions are being led by Intermediary Service Providers—experienced teachers and administrators whom RIDE has trained. A second series of training sessions are occurring for the evaluators of building administrators.

Support for implementation of the evaluation system

To ensure that teachers receive information about the model, RIDE has also designed communication tools for building administrators to share directly with teachers in their schools. These materials include shorter communication documents as well as “meeting in a box” materials. In preparation for full implementation, evaluators will receive more targeted follow-up training, beyond the initial orientation to the model. Finally, the RIDE Educator Evaluation web page is being enhanced throughout the year with additional resources, including Student Learning Objective exemplars.

In most cases, teachers will be evaluated by their school principal. On occasion, they may be evaluated by a trained evaluator with relevant content knowledge or instructional expertise. School-based administrators will be evaluated by superintendents or their designees.

The effective implementation of the model evaluation system depends upon having well-trained evaluators. To ensure that LEAs have the capacity needed to implement the model evaluation system, these trained Intermediary Service Providers (ISPs) are available to LEAs, through Race to the Top funding. Each LEA has access to ISPs for a specified number of days based on their RTTT funding. Additional days may be negotiated at the LEA’s request. The ISPs are highly trained and are available to support both evaluators and teachers as needed. Some LEAs have supplemented their RTTT funding in order to release a full time educator to serve as a district Evaluation ISP. These educators are trained by RIDE with the other statewide ISPs to ensure consistency in approach.

In hiring the ISPs, RIDE established the following qualifications as criteria for applicants:

- evidence of strong leadership and facilitation skills;
- previous experience developing and leading teacher professional development;
- excellent project-management and organization skills;
- excellent oral-communication and writing skills;
- outstanding critical-thinking skills;
- the ability to work effectively with others at all levels of an organization;
- capacity to work independently and to manage multiple responsibilities simultaneously;
- the ability to identify challenges and to be flexible to actively work to find solutions;
- outstanding interpersonal and teamwork skills;
- openness and responsiveness to feedback;
- comfort working with computers and strong working knowledge of the Microsoft Office suite;

- familiarity with a range of school settings within Rhode Island, including high-need schools; and
- holding or recently holding valid certification as a teacher or administrator or having recent experience in higher education.

Evaluation ISPs are responsible for:

- leading training for district personnel or teams on the evaluation system; and
- supporting districts, schools, and educators with on-the-ground evaluation system implementation and technical support (e.g., collaborating with principals, teachers and district administrators; calibrating and norming ratings)

Some of the supports that ISPs provide to LEAs include:

- conducting observations;
- helping teachers set student-learning objectives;
- supporting conferences;
- giving feedback;
- holding district- or school-level information or training sessions; and
- supporting and collaborating with principals and teachers in the implementation of the model evaluation system.

Guidance materials for Intermediary Service Providers

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/Accelegrants/DocumentLibrary/Documents/548FB3DC-6004-41E3-9785-A24527BD825C.pdf>

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/educatorquality/educatorevaluation/Docs/ISPEvaluation.pdf>

To ensure that all educators receive annual evaluations, including educators who do not have primary responsibility for the instruction of English learners and of students with disabilities, evaluation systems in Rhode Island may use “complementary evaluators.” These complementary evaluators may have specialized expertise in a content area or grade level and may assist the building principal or primary evaluator in completing the evaluation process. All developed guidance and rubrics for evaluations specifically address team teaching and co-teaching scenarios. All expectations of competency and of effect on student growth apply to every teacher, regardless of whether he or she is assigned as a sole classroom teacher or as a co-teacher, such as a teacher of English Learners or a teacher of students with disabilities.

Providing guidance on evaluations

To ensure successful implementation of systems of educator evaluation in Rhode Island, RIDE is engaged in an ambitious training schedule for all evaluators in LEAs that have selected the Rhode Island Model. Every LEA submitted a list of evaluators for every school and within the central office. Once identified, it is required that they attend

all required training. We will repeat the summer training of multiple weeks and locations in order to ensure that everyone can coordinate training with their summer schedules.

During the current school year (2011-12), training involves four “modules,” each of three or four sessions. All evaluators are receiving training through these modules. Training will continue in the summer of 2012, with four-day training seminars and with two half-day seminars as follow-up during the next school year (2012-13). Here is a description of the summer academies:

Academy for Personnel Evaluating Teachers: Four-day rigorous training (9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. each day) seeking to prepare personnel evaluating teachers to accurately observe and rate practice, lead professional feedback conversations, set and approve Student Learning Objectives, and engage with the Educator Performance and Support System.

Academy for Personnel Evaluating Building Administrators: Three-day rigorous training (9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. each day) seeking to prepare personnel evaluating building administrators to conduct effective school visits and accurately rate performance, lead professional feedback conversations, approve school wide Student Learning Objectives, and engage with the Educator Performance and Support System.

Please note that both academies will be offered multiple times between the second week of July and the end of August.

The Rhode Island Educator Evaluation Guide to Implementation is located in Appendix H. Additional training materials for Evaluators

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/Training.aspx>

RIDE has also provided training for educators in the seven districts that have *not* selected the Rhode Island Model, particularly regarding the use of Student Learning Objectives as one of the valid and reliable measures of Student Learning.

In addition to these resources for evaluators, RIDE requests that all LEAs have their own District Evaluation Committee to ensure successful implementation of the evaluation system at the local level.

District evaluation systems are an integral part of the district human-capital management system and are supported by district educators who regularly review and revise the system in response to systematic feedback and changing district needs.

All districts must establish and support a District Evaluation Committee that includes teachers, support professionals, administrators, and union representatives. The committee solicits feedback from others (e.g., students, parents, assessment experts), who bring added perspective or expertise when appropriate. The committee reviews the

effectiveness of the evaluation system; the validity and utility of the data produced by the system; the fairness, accuracy, and consistency of decisions made; and the currency of the system. The committee then uses the information from the analysis to make recommendations for revisions to the system. Finally, the District Evaluation Committee communicates data from the evaluation system to district personnel responsible for strategic planning and professional development to work in partnership toward a coherent approach to educator quality, professional development, and continuous organizational improvement.

The District Evaluation Committee works with district leadership to assure the resources of time, financial support, and evaluation expertise necessary to maintain the quality of the evaluation system.

Reviewing and Approving Evaluation Systems

To comply with state regulations, including the Rhode Island Standards for Educator Evaluation (*RI Educator Evaluation Standards*) and the Rhode Island Basic Education Program (BEP), LEAs must either:

- *adapt* their own educator evaluation system to “primarily” include student growth and achievement and meet state standards; or
- *adopt* a state-provided educator evaluation system, the *Rhode Island Educator Evaluation Model System* (The Rhode Island Model).

Each LEA is responsible for meeting the RIDE reporting requirements for assuring the quality of educator evaluation.

RIDE has developed a detailed and rigorous rubric based on the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards to approve all systems*. The rubric addresses:

- the quality of the design, rubrics, and instruments used to measure educators’ professional practice, responsibilities, and content knowledge;
- how well evaluation systems ensure fairness, accuracy, and consistency of educator ratings;
- the engagement of principals, support professionals, and teachers in ongoing evaluation system development;
- how the district uses evaluation results to inform key human resource decisions; and
- how systems use evaluation data to create professional development plans.

RIDE holds LEAs accountable for the use of evaluation data for the purposes designated in their approved evaluation-system designs. The integration of information generated from LEA-reported educator evaluations and the Rhode Island teacher-certification database along with the student information in the RIDE Data Warehouse will allow RIDE to collect, analyze, and report extensive data. RIDE will have the capacity to use this information to monitor the extent to which LEAs are actually using

evaluations to inform decisions about educator assignment, professional development, compensation, promotion, tenure, renewal, and termination, and RIDE will support LEAs to help ensure that they are using educator evaluations to develop cadres of highly effective teachers and school leaders.

Valid measures for evaluations

An evaluation based on multiple measures, including observations of practice and evidence of student learning, provides the best and most complete assessment of educator effectiveness. Neither observations nor test scores alone should be the sole basis of an evaluation. Many validation safeguards have been built into the system, including training for evaluators, ongoing refinement of the system, and the opportunity to review an evaluation if a teacher or administrator feels it is inaccurate.

Rhode Island's winning application to Race to the Top, which netted \$75 million in federal funds, included a commitment to the creation of an educator-evaluation system focused on professional growth and student learning. In addition to RIDE's in-house experts, a team of evaluation specialists is being trained to support schools with the ongoing evaluation process.

Rhode Island educator-evaluation systems must meet certain criteria regarding the evaluators and their training in order to ensure that the valid measures are used consistently and accurately across all schools in each district. All Rhode Island educator-evaluation systems must:

- use evaluators who are trained and able to make valid and accurate judgments;
- ensure that the evaluation team as a whole has sufficient diversity of experience and content knowledge to accurately assess educators across subjects, grades, and programs (including ELL and special education settings); and
- include norming mechanisms to regularly confirm the accuracy and reliability of evaluator ratings.

Evaluation systems in Rhode Island will continue to improve based on educators' experiences and continued feedback from the Technical Advisory Committee, from educators in the field, and from formal reviews of the data.

At the state level, RIDE will periodically audit the evaluation process within districts to ensure that evaluations are fair and accurate and that they adhere to the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*. Additionally, all evaluators will be trained and must demonstrate the ability to make accurate judgments.

As we develop our Educator Performance and Support System, the data platform that will support the implementation and management of educator-evaluation systems across Rhode Island, we anticipate that this data platform will generate reports that will serve as warning flags, indicating when the LEA or RIDE should conduct an audit of the evaluation system.

Each LEA is responsible for ensuring that its evaluation system is implemented with fidelity by reviewing the accuracy and utility of the data produced and by viewing the decisions made for fairness and consistency. Each LEA must provide procedural safeguards to ensure the integrity of the system, including evaluation appeals. Appeals will be handled at the LEA level, in accordance with LEA policy and practice, collective-bargaining agreements, and processes set forth by the District Evaluation Committee. In the event that an evaluation process yields a contradictory outcome (e.g., a teacher has an extremely high Student Learning rating and an extremely low rating in Professional Practice and Professional Responsibilities), a review of the evaluation will be conducted at the LEA level.

All approved educator-evaluation systems in Rhode Island must align with the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, the Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards, the Rhode Island Educator Code of Professional Responsibility, and the Standards for Educational Leadership in Rhode Island (Leadership Standards). The Rhode Island Model aligns with all of these standards and uses valid and reliable measures to evaluate Professional Practice, Professional Responsibilities, and, as described in 3.A.ii., evidence of student growth and achievement base on statewide assessments, student-learning objectives, and other measures of student learning.

Those LEAs that chose *not* to adopt the Rhode Island Model had to meet the criteria in the District Guidelines for approval of evaluation systems, which include evidence of quality of instruction, of student learning, and of professional responsibilities. For approval of their systems, these LEAs had to submit to RIDE a description of the evaluation instruments and how they are to be used.

To ensure that measures are valid and reliable, the application for LEAs seeking approval of an evaluation system includes these requirements and questions:

Provide an overview of the evaluation of teachers by listing each instrument and providing a brief description.

How is teacher observation included in the evaluation of quality of instruction? Describe the instrument(s) used and attach copies of the instrument (e.g., directions, rubric, forms, feedback) to this proposal.

In your description, address all of the following points:

- What is the process of observation?
- What Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards are measured in the observation?
- How frequently is observation conducted?
- What are the possible ratings from the observation?
- What other parameters govern the observation?
- What feedback is provided?
- Who conducts the observation?

- What qualifications are necessary to be an observer?
- How are they trained and how are their evaluations monitored for continued accuracy?
- What other information would help RIDE understand the instrument(s)?

How evidence of student learning is included in the teacher's evaluation? Describe the instrument(s) used and attach copies of the instrument (e.g., directions, rubric, forms, feedback) to this proposal.

In your description, address all of the following points:

- What is the process of evidence selection and review?
- What Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards are measured in the review?
- How frequently is the review conducted?
- What are the possible ratings from the review?
- What other parameters govern the review?
- What feedback is provided?
- Who conducts the review?
- What qualifications are necessary to be a reviewer?
- How are they trained and how are their evaluations monitored for continued accuracy?
- What other information would help RIDE understand the instrument(s)?

How are teacher professional responsibilities evaluated in the system? Describe the instrument(s) used and attach copies of the instrument (e.g., directions, rubric, forms, feedback) to this proposal.

In your description, address all of the following points:

- What is the process of evidence selection and review?
- What Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards are measured in the review?
- How frequently is the review conducted?
- What are the possible ratings from the review?
- What other parameters govern the review?
- What feedback is provided?
- Who conducts the review?
- What qualifications are necessary to be a reviewer?
- How are they trained and how are their evaluations monitored for continued accuracy?

- What other information would help RIDE understand the instrument(s)?

Use of Evaluations

Using evaluations to improve instruction

The *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* provide procedural safeguards to ensure fairness and professional-development plans to enable educators to grow professionally and to improve their effectiveness. This system serves as our new framework for making human-capital decisions.

The evaluation system must provide each educator with specific and actionable feedback on his or her individual performance, including impact on student growth and achievement, and recommendations for professional growth. Once the growth model is in use (2013-14), RIDE will provide principals and teachers in tested grades and subjects with reports on their own effect on student growth and achievement in their classrooms or schools. There is a focus on support and development for every Rhode Island teacher and building administrator at the heart of the educator evaluation now in place in Rhode Island. This commitment is critical to ensuring that educators continuously improve their practice.

Using Race to the Top funds, RIDE is embedding the use of educator-evaluation data into every aspect of human-capital management in Rhode Island public schools. The *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* require that evaluation systems inform the types of ongoing professional development needed by individual educators and groups of educators. The information generated from evaluations will enable LEAs, principals, and teachers to make better-informed decisions about the specific, most appropriate types of professional development that individual educators need.

The integration of educator-evaluation data and the Rhode Island certification database into the Rhode Island longitudinal data system will allow RIDE and the LEAs to track professional-development initiatives. This tracking will allow RIDE to develop information about the efficacy of professional-development providers over time in order to inform future investments, so this tracking will reduce duplication and unnecessary burdens on LEAs and on schools.

RIDE will allow state and federal dollars to fund only those providers who have a proven track record of improving educator effectiveness. RIDE will also produce reports on the results of different professional-development providers in order to allow LEAs and individual educators to select the most effective professional development for identified local needs.

The Rhode Island Basic Education Program (BEP) requires that LEAs develop systems to assign and promote educators based on evidence of their effectiveness. Going forward, LEAs will use professional-development dollars more efficiently and effectively

because our evaluation and support systems will provide specific feedback tied to educator competencies and linked with the Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards.

A rigorous, transparent, and fair educator-evaluation system is essential to our commitment to have an effective teacher in every classroom and an effective principal in every school in Rhode Island. The manner in which RIDE and the LEAs use data from educator evaluations is critical to this effort. Pursuant to the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, LEAs must have in place processes to use evaluation results for the following purposes:

- providing individualized feedback on performance to all teachers, principals, and support professionals, including detailed analysis of their performance (based on student growth) and recommendations for professional growth and development;
- supporting continuous professional development and improvement;

Teacher and principal evaluation and support systems in Rhode Island result in differentiated professional development that meets the needs of teachers.

Pursuant to the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, LEAs must have in place processes to use evaluation results for improving performance of ineffective educators by providing intensive support and evaluation specifically designed to improve their performance and dismissing those who are unable or unwilling improve in a timely manner.

Any administrator or teacher who receives a rating of developing or ineffective must have the opportunity to improve. With the support of the evaluator, he or she will create an improvement plan and identify sources of support and training, as well as benchmarks and timelines for improvement. The Rhode Island Model links an educator's evaluation, which identifies strengths and areas for development, with that educator's personal reflection on his or her practice and an individualized Professional Growth Plan.

To develop a Professional Growth Plan, each educator completes a self-assessment at the beginning of the school year, when they reflect on their past performance, consider relevant student learning data, and set professional goals for the upcoming year. Educators use the Professional Practice and Professional Responsibilities Rubrics to identify both strengths and areas for development and to ensure that their goals are aligned with the competencies on which they will be evaluated.

Completion of the self-assessment leads to the development of the Professional Growth Plan, containing three concrete Professional Growth Goals, which are the focus of the educator's targeted professional development over the course of the year. Each goal must be specific and measurable, with clear benchmarks for success. Support and development vary depending on goals identified by individual educators. All educators participate in ongoing, job-embedded professional development, such as peer observation or participation in a professional learning community, all designed to help them achieve their goals. Collaborative, professional conversation about performance

between educators and their evaluators helps educators to improve their practice over the course of the year.

Using evaluations to inform personnel decisions

Pursuant to the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, LEAs must have in place processes to use evaluation results for the following purposes:

- creating incentives for highly effective educators, including establishing a process to identify individuals or groups of educators who demonstrate exemplary effectiveness and recognize and capitalize on their talents through differentiated roles and responsibilities, formal recognition, or other incentives; and,
- providing objective information to support meaningful renewal and tenure decisions.

To obtain RIDE approval of their educator-evaluation systems, all Rhode Island LEAs must demonstrate that they have processes and policies in place to use data for at least the purposes listed above. LEAs that adopt the Rhode Island Model system must also document how they will use evaluation data for the purposes listed above or adopt model processes and policies recommended by RIDE in these areas. Thus, all Rhode Island LEAs will be using educator-evaluation data captured from LEA evaluation systems to develop, promote, recognize and reward, renew or retain, assign, and terminate teachers and principals by the 2012-13 school year.

In order to gain state approval for its evaluation system, each LEA also had to demonstrate that it will use educator-evaluation data to make decisions about promotion into leadership positions (i.e., mentor teacher, grade-level or discipline chair, or, with proper certification, assistant principal, principal, or other equivalent roles). Similarly, principals who demonstrate highly effective performance should be considered for principal-mentor roles and central-office leadership positions. Only those educators who have consistently been rated effective or highly effective on the LEA's educator-evaluation system will be considered by LEAs as eligible for promotion to positions of increased leadership, including transfer of a principal from one school to another. As LEAs develop policies on how they will use information from evaluations to make decisions about promotion, RIDE will monitor the process to ensure that these policies are leading to the establishment of a cadre of highly effective school leaders.

RIDE requires LEAs to set ambitious goals for improving teacher and principal effectiveness. It is vital that LEAs also develop targeted goals for developing systems that empower teachers and principals to improve performance, evaluate out ineffective teachers and principals, and assign effective teachers and principals to fill vacancies. These are important steps to strengthen the use of educator-effectiveness data to inform key human-capital management decisions.

Rhode Island believes that differentiated compensation, linked to evidence of effectiveness, can be an important lever in recruiting and retaining the best teachers

and principals to improve student achievement. Our Strategic Plan, *Transforming Education in Rhode Island*, indicates that RIDE will lead a collaborative effort to review and analyze research regarding the successful implementation of performance-based compensation systems that districts can adopt by 2015.

Using Race to the Top funds, RIDE will fund two programs through competitive grants to LEAs, multi-LEA collaboratives, or LEA-union partnerships. One award will be granted to study the replacement of steps-and lanes-compensation schedules with systems that base compensation on evidence of teacher effectiveness. One additional grant will be awarded to develop a system that includes whole-school rewards. In the end, Rhode Island will have two viable models for LEAs to adopt or use as guidance for their own compensation systems. RIDE will provide consulting support on compensation reform to help these LEAs design robust new performance-based compensation models.

Our evaluation system is designed to enable LEAs to dismiss ineffective teachers and principals after two years of ineffective evaluations. Individuals must receive fair and valid evaluations and opportunities to improve their practice; however, an educator who continues to underperform, as evidenced through the documentation and data from the evaluation system, will be dismissed by the LEA. This does not preclude LEAs from dismissing ineffective teachers and principals before two years, if evidence merits dismissal.

RIDE will also use evaluation data to place into state-sponsored leadership roles only those educators who have had a positive effect on student academic growth and who have demonstrated an ability to lead others to increased measures of success. All state-sponsored educator training and support programs will use effective and highly effective evaluation as an essential, nonnegotiable selection factor. No teacher will be permitted to advance to these state-sponsored leadership roles without achieving effective or highly effective levels on his or her evaluation. Further, to inform state-level policy decisions, we will use this evaluation data over time to understand and document how teachers are being cultivated, supported, assigned, and removed.

Although a single teacher can have a profound impact on student learning over one year, that effect generally diminishes if a student does not have equally effective teachers in subsequent years, with half the gains being lost the following year and nearly all of the gains lost within two years. To ensure that students have continual years of effective teachers, the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* allow Rhode Island to link teacher-effectiveness ratings to the students whom those teachers teach and to identify students who are taught in any year by an ineffective teacher. Under the BEP and the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, LEAs must ensure that any student who is taught by an ineffective teacher in one year is assigned to an effective or highly effective teacher in the next.

Using information from the evaluation system and in keeping with assurances in our Race to the Top grant application, RIDE expects LEAs to release teachers and

principals after two years of ineffective performance. Because research shows there tends to be a higher concentration of ineffective teachers at high-need schools, LEA action to remove ineffective teachers and principals will relieve schools from ineffective performers and create openings for effective teachers to serve these students.

Using information from the evaluation system, RIDE will prohibit transfer of ineffective teachers into high-poverty, high-minority schools. The BEP requires LEAs to “address staffing of low-performing schools with highly effective” staff to make up for previous disproportionate staffing of less effective teachers to high-need students. By 2012-13, in order to comply with the *RI Educator Evaluation Standards*, LEAs cannot assign or transfer any teachers who are not effective or highly effective to high-poverty, high-minority, or low-performing schools. The educator-evaluation data system will enable RIDE to annually monitor whether districts are placing ineffective teachers in such schools.

Using information from the evaluation system, RIDE will build principal capacity to hire effective teachers based on mutual consent. RIDE focuses on building the capacity of principals—particularly those in low-performing, high-poverty LEAs—to screen and hire effective applicants. As part of our implementation of the educator-evaluation system, RIDE will provide training for all the principals and superintendents in the state on effective teacher observation and evaluation.

The *RI Educator Evaluation Standards* call for LEAs to provide appropriate levels of support based on evaluation findings. RIDE requires LEAs to report annually on the number of teachers and principals who received evaluations of ineffective, developing, effective, and highly effective; the number of educators terminated annually as a result of “ineffective” evaluations; and the evaluation history of those teachers and principals during their terms of employment with the LEA. This reporting requirement will allow RIDE to ensure that LEAs are in fact dismissing those teachers and principals who repeatedly demonstrate ineffective teaching and to ensure that termination decisions are accurate and fair.

Prior to the adoption of the BEP, Rhode Island had an ambitious and U.S. Department of Education-commended teacher equity plan, focused primarily on the equitable distribution of “highly qualified teachers” based on certification (as defined under NCLB) and other credential measures. Based on research from the field, we understand that these measures are not adequate to ensure that children in high-poverty and high-minority schools have equitable access to highly effective teachers. Thus, we will use our educator-evaluation system standards to monitor and drive action to improve the equitable distribution of teachers and principals. Through our data-management system, we will monitor the distribution of highly effective, effective, developing, and ineffective teachers and principals across classrooms, schools, and LEAs, and will use these data to hold LEAs accountable for achieving an equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals with highly effective teachers and principals going to struggling schools and classrooms. RIDE will collect and analyze data on the numbers of highly effective,

effective, developing, and ineffective teachers and principals at each school in the state; differences between high- and low-poverty and high- and low-minority schools statewide and within each LEA; and differences across different types of teaching assignments (for example, general and AP courses) both statewide and in each LEA and school. Additionally, RIDE will monitor the assignments of all educators, as required through our Equitable Distribution Plan.

Continuous Improvement of Evaluation Systems

Teacher and principal involvement

RIDE continues to seek input and to respond to concerns from educators regarding the evaluation system, through drop-in sessions, [outreach sessions](#), and webinars, such as these that RIDE publicized through the weekly Field Memo and through list-serves, with messages such as this one:

Do you have questions about the Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation and don't know where to find answers? Join us for a conversation about implementation of the Rhode Island Model.

We are offering some sessions as drop-in sessions and some in an online webinar. The drop-in sessions do not require registration.

On February 1, 2012, RIDE partnered with the National Education Association – Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals to co-host a webinar for all educators on evaluations and to provide the latest updates on the evaluation system. RIDE continues to hold webinars on evaluations for administrators as well. During the current month (February 2012), RIDE is conducting an online statewide survey for teachers on educator evaluations. The survey asks teachers questions about their experiences with the evaluations as well as about their perspective on evaluation systems in general. Later this month, RIDE will begin an online survey of principals on educator evaluations.

In addition, Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist held teacher meetings in every LEA in Rhode Island during the previous (2010-11) school year in order to discuss the evaluation system directly with teachers so as to respond to concerns and to receive feedback. The Commissioner invited all teachers in each LEA to join her at these meetings, and she provided her e-mail address to all teachers in order to respond to follow-up questions as necessary. These meetings were closed to the public in order to allow teachers to express their views frankly to the Commissioner.

Finally, RIDE will receive feedback throughout the current school year from the two districts that have agreed to be “early adopters” and to go through full implementation of the Rhode Island Model. RIDE is conducting focus groups and surveys of teachers and

school leaders to obtain information about the process of full implementation of an educator-evaluation system so as to guide our work going forward toward full implementation in all LEAs during the next school year (2012-13).

Feedback received and goals for improvement

Some of the feedback we have received to date include:

- the paperwork and the time required to complete the beginning-of-the-year components (e.g., self assessment, professional growth plan, Student Learning Objectives) is a significant concern;
- writing Student Learning Objectives is complicated, especially for special educators;
- the Teacher Professional Practice rubric should be streamlined to eliminate redundancy and to clarify expectations for observable and non-observable areas; and
- the evaluation conferences are meaningful and focused on how to improve practice, but preparing for them requires a lot of work.

Some of our goals for incorporating this feedback and improving our evaluations are to:

- increase clarity related to expectations, requirements, and timelines;
- streamline the process and forms to address capacity issues while maintaining a robust model that yields accurate ratings and fosters professional growth;
- review rubric competencies to identify redundancy; and
- examine the number of required professional goals.