



# **RIDE Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements:** **Frequently Asked Questions**

*Revised June 2023*



## **RIDE Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements Frequently Asked Questions**

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If you have any questions or requests for additional information, please reach out to [ReimaginingHS@RIDE.RI.GOV](mailto:ReimaginingHS@RIDE.RI.GOV).

### Introduction

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) is committed to ensuring all students have access to course offerings with high-quality curriculum and instruction as essential components of a rigorous education that prepares every student for success in college and their career. On November 15, 2022, the R.I. Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approved [Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements](#) for all Rhode Island students beginning with the graduating class of 2028. RIDE’s adoption of Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements presents an opportunity for reimagining high school education in Rhode Island. Specifically, this has presented the opportunity to enhance the meaning of the Rhode Island high school diploma, create a space to develop innovative approaches to education in middle and high schools and ensure all students graduate high school ready to create their own futures and pursue their postsecondary goals.

### Section 1: Why is Rhode Island Reimagining High School?

#### **1. Why do we need to reimagine high school?**

Too many of our young people are disengaged from their high school experience. They don't see its relevance to their lives. Too many are uninspired. Many are not being offered or are not taking (and passing) the courses they need to graduate ready to create their own future and achieve their college and career goals.



The current reality is not the fault of our educators, students, or families. It's a function of the current system, which has remained essentially unchanged while the world around it changes at an unprecedented speed. Our current way of doing things leaves too many of our young people unprepared for the future they want and deserve.

## **2. How do we know we need to reimagine high school?**

In spring 2019, RIDE launched the XQ+RI Design Challenge. The Design Challenge brought together educators, families, and students from every community across our state to think through the ways in which we need to rethink the high school experience. A critical part of that work was conducting the Educational Opportunity Audit (EOA) with our high schools—a deep dive into the R.I. high school student experience and how well each high school is preparing every one of its students. Every high school statewide was invited to participate in the EOA resulting in 39 high schools participating, and some even participating twice! In addition to individual schools participating in the EOA, RIDE presented the findings of the [statewide EOA report](#) to the R.I. Council on Elementary and Secondary Education during June 2020. The EOA data showed us that not nearly enough of our students are graduating college-ready, eligible for admittance into our state's 4-year postsecondary institutions **or** prepared for careers. The EOA data is reflective of the continued perspective shared by the employer community in R.I. that students are arriving unprepared for success in their chosen career field. The statewide EOA data made it clear that we, as a state, must reimagine high school and support our schools in creating an educational experience deserving of Rhode Island's youth.

## Section 2: How is Rhode Island Reimagining High School?

### **1. At a high-level, how did RIDE begin the effort to reimagine high school?**

In June 2021, RIDE launched the Reimagining High School Working Group to authentically engage the Rhode Island community at large to discuss how we must reimagine our high schools. This working group has been an inclusive group of stakeholders, including teachers, school and district leaders, industry leaders, higher education representatives, students, families, and community members. More than 350 unique attendees participated in the 8 working group sessions to co-design proposed changes to the statewide graduation requirements.

In December 2021, RIDE proposed to the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education that Rhode Island adopt Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements that will be grounded in the skills and experiences that our young people will need to graduate with open doors to create the futures they envision.

The initial proposal had three key priorities which have remained unchanged to date:

1. We will prepare our graduates to create their future.
2. We will increase student engagement through real-world relevant learning experiences.
3. We will change how we support our students and families.



In February 2022, RIDE returned to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education seeking a vote of approval for this proposal to enter a period of public comment. Upon receiving approval from the Council, RIDE's proposal for Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements entered a period of public comment which spanned from March 7 – May 10, 2022. During that period of public comment, RIDE achieved the goal of having this proposal become the most commented-upon set of regulations in the history of education in the state of Rhode Island.

RIDE spent several months reviewing, and incorporating the feedback received during the formal public comment period. The Chair of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education formed the K-12 Subcommittee on the Secondary Regulations which met four times with RIDE staff to dive deep into the public feedback RIDE received and to also make recommendations for how to improve and finalize the proposal.

On October 3, 2022, RIDE presented an updated proposal for Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements for discussion with the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. Several stakeholders from the field joined the RIDE team's presentation to share their perspective on how RIDE listened to and responded to the concerns raised from the field regarding the initial proposal.

Finally, on November 15, 2022, the R.I. Council on Elementary and Secondary Education unanimously approved [Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements](#) for all R.I. students beginning with the graduating class of 2028.

## **2. Why is RIDE's effort to improve high school different than previous attempts?**

This is an important question. After all, this isn't the first time that RIDE has tried to improve the high school experience through the secondary regulations.

First, we are approaching this work with a renewed outlook on what is possible, access to new data, and the ability to recognize what was and was not done well last time. We are approaching this work with an unflinching belief in our students, our parents, and our educators. Throughout the pandemic, we have proven that we can do incredibly hard things when we work together. We believe Rhode Island is ready.

Second, we know we must inspire our students in their high school experience if we want them to access the pathways that will prepare them for college and career. When we provide learning opportunities that are relevant to students' lives, aligned to their goals, and that recognize their passions, we can make their dreams come true.

Third, we understand we must develop solutions with our educators and support them in the implementation of those solutions to create a high school experience that connects them with why they became a teacher in the first place. We know that there is no success without the success of a teacher in a classroom with a student. RIDE will focus on supporting educators and administrators to be successful in adopting these regulation changes.



Finally, we have unprecedented funding to make this work real. The funding provided by the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) invests more money in our schools than any current educator has seen in the duration of their career. We know the time is now – our students have told us this.

### **3. How did RIDE develop the initial proposal for Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements?**

In June 2021, RIDE launched the Reimagining High School working group. The goal of the working group was to co-design solutions with the students, educators, and leaders most directly engaged in and impacted by R.I. high schools. The working group is an inclusive group of stakeholders, including teachers, school and district leaders, industry leaders, higher education representatives, students, families, and community members. More than 350 unique attendees participated in the eight working group sessions held from June-November 2021.

The working group engaged in a variety of topics having to do with reimagining high school. The group received presentations from local and national experts, listened directly to the student perspective, viewed real-world relevant learning in action in a local classroom, and dove into data from the XQ+RI Statewide Education Opportunity Audit that demonstrates the persisting inequities in R.I. high schools and the need for us to reimagine high school in order for R.I. students to graduate with open doors to create their futures.

At the culmination of this series, on November 30, 2021, RIDE presented to the working group the initial proposed revisions to the secondary regulations that RIDE planned to present to the R.I. Council on Elementary and Secondary Education on December 7, 2021. Below is a detailed overview of each of the eight meetings:

- [Meeting 1: June 23, 2021 – The Need to Reimagine High School](#)  
In this working group session, RIDE in partnership with the XQ Institute facilitated a deep dive into the statewide XQ+RI Education Opportunity Audit data and engage the working group in a discussion on the need to reimagine high school. The working group participants also spent reviewing and providing feedback on RIDE’s plan to engage stakeholders in this process.
- [Meeting 2: June 30, 2021 – How do we Reimagine High School?](#)  
Working group participants listened to and engaged with two XQ+RI ambassadors about the work they are doing to reimagine high school. Participants also engaged in breakout groups led by RIDE facilitators to discuss strategies for how R.I. may begin to Reimagine High School.
- [Meeting 3: July 13, 2021 – Aligning High School Graduation Requirements to College Admissions Requirements](#)  
Working group participants examined the national policy landscape on diplomas and discussed the need to align the high school graduation requirements to college admissions requirements. The CCRI admissions team provided the postsecondary perspective on reviewing student transcripts. The Office of the Postsecondary



Commissioner hosted a panel of higher education faculty, including representatives from URI, RIC, and CCRI. Panelists answered questions about student preparation for higher education, support at the postsecondary level, and how we might work with our higher education leaders to reimagine K-12.

○ [Meeting 4: July 22, 2021 – Bringing Real World Relevant Learning Experiences to High School](#)

In this working group session, we discussed the XQ+RI Statewide Educational Opportunity Audit data and the lived experiences of our working group participants. The data and perspectives reflect that many of our students are not engaged in their current learning experiences, nor do they feel like they can explore their passions through their high school coursework. The group received several presentations from the following organizations:

- Office of the RI General Treasurer (Financial Literacy),
- Fidelity Investments (Financial Literacy),
- Generation Citizen (Civics),
- XQ+RI Ambassador (The Case for Change),
- RIDE School Counseling Specialist (Individual Learning Plan),
- RIDE Computer Science Team, and
- Students from Cranston Area Career and Tech Center who were actively engaged in a real-world relevant learning experience.

○ [Meeting 5: August 4, 2021 - Creating High School Experiences that Support Real-World Relevant Learning](#)

In this working group session, we discussed strategies to bring real-world, relevant learning experiences into our high schools. We heard two presentations from two XQ+RI Ambassadors about the need to redesign high failure-rate courses at the high school level and the importance of early college programming. The working group engaged in breakout sessions focused on civics, computer science, and financial literacy.

○ [Meeting 6: August 17, 2021 – Supporting the Needs of Students and their Families](#)

In this working group session, we discussed how high school has changed, how the academic demand on students has steadily increased, and how we must change how we are supporting our students and their families. Specifically, we discussed how we must support our students who work to support themselves and their families, and students who are caregiving youth. We heard a presentation from the American Association for Caregiving Youth (AACY) about the potential supports we could bring to R.I. to support our caregiving youth student population.

○ [Meeting 7: August 26, 2021 – This is what we have heard from this working group.](#)

In this working group session, RIDE shared a summary of the feedback that was received throughout this working group series and how it would be key to informing the eventual proposed revisions to the secondary regulations. Participants continued to provide feedback on potential recommendations to revise the statewide minimum graduation



requirements and the ways in which RIDE would need to support this work to ensure implementation successfully achieves the intended goal of reimagining high school so that it graduates students with open doors to create their future.

- [Meeting 8: November 30, 2021 - This is what we are recommending to the R.I. Council on Elementary and Secondary Education.](#)

In this working group session, RIDE presented the initial proposed revisions to the secondary regulations that would, one week later on December 7, 2021, be presented to the K-12 Council for review and discussion.

#### **4. How is RIDE focusing on equity as it relates to the secondary regulations?**

There are disparities across R.I. student groups regarding completion of college and career ready coursework. For example, in the graduating Class of 2019, while 52% of all students completed the courses necessary for college eligibility, this number was only 12% for Differently-Abled Students (DAS). Research demonstrates that this “12%” should be reversed, and that if expectations, access, targeted supports and instructional accommodations are appropriately in place for DAS, 85 to 90% of DAS can meet the graduation requirements in place for all students. Completion of college and career ready coursework also varies by gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and Multilingual Learner status.

We know that these disparities will not immediately be eliminated, but we must do better as a state supporting all students. While the informed parental consent process to enroll in a RIDE-Approved Readiness Pathway in place of one or more credits required for graduation has been developed to provide additional flexibility for students, no student or student group should be categorically enrolled in or encouraged to enroll in a RIDE-Approved Readiness Pathway because of any aspect of their identify or circumstance.

### Section 3: General FAQs

#### **1. At a high-level, what shifts do Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements make to existing graduation requirements?**

***Priority One: We will prepare our graduates to create their own future.***

- Our students will, by default, be expected to take the academic coursework to graduate high school with the opportunity to enroll at any local higher education institution including URI and RIC after high school graduation. Our students, with the informed consent of their parent/guardian, may also choose to pursue a RIDE-Approved Readiness Pathway. A RIDE-Approved Readiness Pathway will be alternate coursework, approved by RIDE, that students may enroll in (in place of the default range of college and career readiness coursework) that is rigorous, and aligned to the student’s aspirations and goals as identified in their Individualized Learning Plan.
- Our students will receive support on completing the financial aid paperwork that will reduce the cost of postsecondary education. FAFSA and state aid completion data will be reported in ESSA school report cards and will be included in school accountability.



Students who do not complete FAFSA or state aid form are not eligible to take advantage of the Rhode Island Promise program, and students who complete FAFSA are [more likely to enroll in, and persist through](#) higher education compared to students who do not complete the FAFSA.

- Our students will receive information on transitioning to college, career, apprenticeship, and the military.
- Our students will graduate high school having completed a resume to help gain employment.

***Priority Two: We will increase engagement through real world relevant learning experiences.***

- Our students will graduate proficient in civics.
- Our students will graduate proficient in financial literacy.
- Our students will graduate proficient in computer science.
- Our students will graduate proficient in the arts.
- RIDE will support the development of flex credits so teachers have the opportunity to design rigorous and meaningful interdisciplinary learning experiences to support the passions of our students.
- Our high schools will develop a policy to award academic credit for work-based learning.

***Priority Three: We will change how we support our students and families.***

- Our students who are caregiving youth, and students who work will have new flexibilities that support them to pursue their academics while supporting their families.
- Our high schools will publicly establish criteria to measure the academic progress of students, and the supports being provided to our students.
- Our parents will receive annual notification from our high schools on the progress their students are making toward college and career readiness outcomes.
- Our students will receive flexibility in their schedules to participate in advanced learning experiences.

**2. What is the rollout timeline for the new secondary regulations?**

The revised requirements take effect for the graduating Class of 2028. These students are currently in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Therefore, we have 5 years to thoughtfully develop and implement the changes necessary to realize the new regulations. Two stipulations in the regulations going into effect for the Class of 2028 are that the financial literacy proficiency requirement, based upon state statute (S0349), must be implemented for the class of 2024 and the FAFSA/State Aid notification requirement, based upon state statute (H7974 and S3015), must be implemented in the 2023-2024 school year.

**3. What is RIDE's "Let's Get Ready" 5-Year Action Plan?**

We at RIDE know that a goal without a plan is just a wish. That's why RIDE created the "Let's Get Ready" 5-Year Action Plan to outline the strategies and resources RIDE is committed to providing to schools and districts with to support the successful implementation of Readiness-





Based Graduation Requirements over the next 5 years.

In addition to this set of regulations officially being the most commented-upon set of regulations in the history of education in Rhode Island, we have also met informally with hundreds of stakeholders since June 2021. We have heard and noted the implementation challenges and concerns stakeholders have raised that are posed by Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements. As we listened to our stakeholders, we have formed an initial draft of the 5-Year Action Plan that is guided directly by what we heard.

The action plan is a commitment from RIDE to identify and mitigate potential barriers to the successful implementation of the regulations. The action plan will guide RIDE's work supporting secondary schools as our state transitions to Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements and will ensure this work is grounded in the skills and experiences that our young people will need to graduate with open doors to create the futures they envision. We have and will continue to finalize the action plan with the community to ensure it fully reflects the supports and guidance RIDE must provide to teachers and administrators to ensure they are successful in the implementation of these new requirements.

**4. I'm a school or district leader. What do I need to know to support the implementation of these changes?**

The most important step in preparing to implement Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements is understanding how well your school is currently serving all of your students.

To support this process, RIDE partnered with [Always Be Learning](#) (ABL), an education software and services company that is passionate about equity, to offer the opportunity to participate in the Education Opportunity Audit (EOA) to every high school in Rhode Island. The EOA is a critical part of the high school redesign process. The EOA surfaces patterns in student access to rigorous coursework by gathering findings across multiple analytical tools and creating a comprehensive audit report. It gathers data from three sources including analysis of student transcripts; surveys of students, parents, and teachers; and student focus groups. The EOA report provides a map of the changes needed to both bridge the gaps in preparation among student groups and ensure every high school graduate is college and career ready. The EOA will serve as a roadmap to successfully implementing Rhode Island's readiness-based graduation requirements. Schools that have participated in the EOA begin by revisiting the EOA data.

Schools that have yet to participate in the EOA should begin by taking a deep dive into their students' course taking patterns to identify if all students are expected to, and provided the opportunity to graduate with the learning experiences that will prepare them for success in college and career. There will be additional opportunities in the coming year(s) for RIDE to support all schools in conducting this form of analysis.



## Section 4: XQ+RI Education Opportunity Audit

### 1. What is an Education Opportunity Audit (EOA)?

As part of RIDE’s partnership with XQ Institute—a national non-profit organization dedicated to rethinking the high school experience so that every student graduates ready to succeed in life—every high school in Rhode Island has had the opportunity to participate in the Education Opportunity Audit (EOA) process.

The EOA is a deep dive into the high school student experience and how well each school is preparing every one of its students to graduate with open doors to create their future. It focuses on learning experiences (not test scores) and gathers data from three sources including analysis of student transcripts; surveys of students, parents, and teachers; and student focus groups. The EOA surfaces patterns in student access to rigorous coursework by gathering findings across multiple analytical tools and creating a comprehensive audit report. The school-level EOA report provides a map of the changes needed to both bridge the gaps in preparation among student groups and ensure every high school graduate is college and career ready. Participating high schools receive this individualized information. School teams inclusive of students, parents, counselors, teachers, school and district leaders dive into the findings of their school level report and create action plans to improve their school communities. The EOA was also conducted at a statewide level which demonstrated the need for RIDE to take ownership over the ways our regulations are failing to prepare students from every community across R.I.

### 2. What does it mean to say that not enough of our students are college-eligible for our Rhode Island 4-year colleges?

To be college eligible, students must successfully complete (with a D-letter grade or better) the required college and career preparatory coursework for application to either the University of Rhode Island (URI) or Rhode Island College (RIC). Not nearly enough of our students are meeting eligibility requirements to be considered eligible for admissions.

- 80% of seniors said they wanted to go to college
- 60% are taking the courses needed to be considered eligible to attend our 4-year, state public schools: RIC and URI
- 52% are passing these courses.

To be prepared for RIC or URI, students need to pass the following college and career preparatory coursework. Students who do not complete the coursework outlined below will NOT be considered for admissions.

- [URI first year admissions requirements are linked here](#) and outlined below
- [RIC first year admissions requirements are linked here](#)
  - 4 units/years of English
  - 2 units/years of the same foreign language
  - 3 units/years of mathematics (Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry)
  - 2 units/years of history or social science



- 2 units/years of laboratory science
- 5 additional college preparatory units (additional coursework in any of the above subjects, or other college preparatory elective courses offered by the high school)

**3. What does it mean when the EOA states that not enough of our students are college-ready?**

Research has shown that students completing advanced coursework, achieving a 3.33 GPA or higher, and scoring a 1010 or higher on the SAT/19 or higher on the ACT are far more likely to succeed in postsecondary education and earn a degree than students who do not meet these benchmarks.

According to the statewide EOA, only 19% of R.I. graduates were college ready! That means more than 8 out of 10 students are not graduating ready to succeed in college despite 80% of them wanting to attend college.

**4. What does it mean to say that not enough of our students are career-ready?**

Rhode Island has made tremendous strides in aligning CTE to the needs of Rhode Island's high-skill, high-growth employers, yet not enough students have the opportunity to participate in these experiences in a way that prepares them for employment after graduation. 98% of students took at least one CTE course, only 50% took 3 courses in the same career pathway, which is the minimum level to be considered a meaningful CTE pathway on the road to career readiness in that field.

## Section 5: We will prepare our students to create their own futures.

**1. What does it mean that Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements align high school graduation requirements with college entrance requirements, and why should R.I. do this?**

Prior to the adoption of Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements, the coursework that RIDE required high school students to complete does not align with the coursework that the University of Rhode Island (URI) or Rhode Island College (RIC) require in order for students to be eligible for admission. This is also true for the majority of regional colleges and universities that Rhode Island students attend. According to the EOA:

- 80% of seniors said they wanted to go to college
- 60% are taking the courses needed to be considered eligible to attend our 4-year, state public schools: RIC and URI
- 52% are passing these courses.

RIDE believes in aligning the high school graduation requirements with college admissions requirements so that our students graduate with open doors to create their future. Upon the implementation of Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements, all students will, by default, be enrolled in the coursework necessary for admission into our state's public 2- and 4- year colleges.



**2. Do these new requirements change the number of credits students are required to complete in order to graduate?**

No, students statewide are required to complete the same number of minimum credits (20 credits) in order to graduate. Rather, Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements provide greater clarity about what the 20 credits must entail so that students are able to graduate college- and career-ready. These are the minimum requirements for all students statewide, and schools and districts have the ability to implement additional local requirements for graduation.

**3. School schedules are already tight. How will we be able to fit in these changes?**

We agree that schedules are tight. That’s why we are not adding additional required credits, but rather we have provided greater clarity about what credits students should take to be college- and career-ready and make those credits more easily available. These shifts also create more schedule flexibility for students in approved-Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and dual enrollment programs. For example, students in CTE and/or full time dual enrollment programs are required to complete 3 credits of math during their high school experience to provide them with additional schedule flexibility to meet the demands of their programs. This should increase opportunities and make it easier for students to put their skills into practice with invaluable work-based learning experiences. We also want to support integrated academic credits; Why can’t an engineering CTE program, for example, provide standards-aligned science or math course experiences?

We also must embrace innovative thinking around scheduling. Nationally, students are graduating from high school having taken 28 credits on average. Rhode Island eliminated instructional seat time requirements more than a decade ago and the world around us has changed dramatically, particularly around technology, but our high school schedules still look exactly the same. RIDE will be investing in and providing scheduling support as requested by any and all high schools statewide to support schools in transitioning to these requirements for the Class of 2028.

**4. How do Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements support CTE?**

Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements will support the continued growth of CTE in Rhode Island. Students that graduate high school having completed a RIDE-approved CTE program, or having completed a full-time dual enrollment program, are leaving high school with measurable postsecondary training and skills. Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements include added schedule flexibility for students participating in RIDE-approved CTE pathways so that these students may take more coursework aligned to their passions and goals. Additionally, all high schools will develop a policy to recognize work-based learning for academic credit.

**5. What about the percentage of students who do not have college (or a career that requires college) as their goal? Will these regulations make it more difficult for them to get a high school diploma?**

We want our young people to graduate high school with open doors to create their future. Therefore, we believe every student should be adequately prepared to have *the option* to choose college or career after high school graduation because they had access to college and



career-ready coursework and experiences. We do not want to close the door to opportunities for students because of the courses they took when they were 13 and 14 years old or for a graduate to find themselves ineligible to attend our state colleges and universities. Our job is to create as many options and opportunities as possible for our young people.

That said, we heard from the field the need to include additional flexibility for students for whom the full-range college and career coursework may not be the right fit. Therefore, every student with the informed consent of their parent or guardian can enroll in a RIDE-approved readiness pathway in place of one or more credits required to graduate. A student and their parent/guardian must document with the school their understanding of the potential college and career options a student may forgo if they enroll in an approved readiness pathway in place of the coursework required for graduation. The RIDE-Approved Readiness Pathway will be aligned to the student's goals and aspirations as identified in their Individual Learning Plan.

**6. How will proficiency be determined?**

All courses must be designed according to RI-approved content standards, where they exist. In areas where RI does not have approved content standards, all courses must align to national or locally developed standards. Proficiency for the purpose of meeting graduation requirements is determined at the local level. LEAs must ensure students graduate proficient in ELA, mathematics, civics, computer science, arts, and financial literacy. LEAs must also establish clear plans for evaluating proficiency in these areas for all secondary students. Schools may utilize standardized assessments in making proficiency decisions for graduation but are not required to use standardized assessments.

**7. Can students fulfil the Algebra I requirement in middle school?**

Yes, if the design and rigor of these courses are the same as those experienced by other students in high school and address the appropriate rigor of the Rhode Island Core Standards for High School Mathematics. A student should experience the complete array of standards for grades 6 through 8 while they are in middle school. A student taking Algebra I in the 8th grade will necessitate the creation of an accelerated pathway. If a student completes Algebra I in middle school this must be reflected on a student's high school transcript.

**8. Can students fulfil the World Language requirement in middle school?**

Yes, students may complete one world language credit (first sequential level) in middle school. If a student completes a world language credit in middle school, this must be reflected on a student's high school transcript.

**9. Why should multilingual learners be required to take two units of world language?**

The goal of these Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements is to ensure all students graduate with open doors to create any future they want and that includes graduating students with the open door to choose to go to college. For students to be eligible for enrollment at URI or RIC, they must complete 2 credits of world language.

High school students may demonstrate proficiency via assessment to obtain one or both



required credits of world language. This particularly applies to multilingual learners, students who participated in dual-language programs during grades K-8, and any student who participated in world language learning experiences beyond the minimum 2-credit requirement before entering high school. If a student demonstrates proficiency via assessment to earn the required world language credits for graduation, these credits must be reflected on their high school transcript.

**10. Why is RIDE requiring that FAFSA/State Aid completion data be included school accountability and RIDE Report Cards?**

We have the opportunity to graduate every student with a golden ticket to earn a tuition-free associate degree. Students who graduate from our high schools miss out on this opportunity when they do not complete the FAFSA or State Aid Form.

Students who complete FAFSA are more likely to enroll in, and persist through higher education compared to students who do not complete the FAFSA. [According to a 2020 Education Strategy Group Report](#), 90% of students who complete FAFSA enroll in college/university directly upon graduating from high school, compared to 55% of students who do not complete FAFSA. Additionally, students of color are less likely to complete the FAFSA.

In 2021 R.I. high school graduates who attended college left roughly \$8 Million in federal student aid unused. We must do better in supporting all of our students to receive the financial aid that is theirs.

**11. Why are students being required to complete a resume for graduation? Why is it separately called out as a graduation requirement if it is already required through the Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)?**

A resume is currently included in the standards for the [ILP](#) but many students are graduating still without a resume that is representative of the full depth of their accomplishments. We believe our students need to graduate high school prepared for success in college *and in* the workforce. Majority of our students must work to support themselves before they graduate from college/university. A resume is a key tool that facilitates students' ability to gain meaningful employment.

**12. Can Local Education Agencies (LEAs) implement graduation requirements that are in addition to the minimum requirements established by Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements?**

Yes, LEAs may implement graduation requirements that are in addition to the minimum requirements established by Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements.

**13. Do the proposed regulation changes prohibit schools from including the use of assessments in their local graduation requirements?**

No. RIDE is not proposing to remove the authority of school districts and school committees to include additional requirements through additional local graduation requirements.



Section 6: We will inspire new levels of engagement through real-world relevant learning experiences.

**1. What does “flex credit” mean? What will that process look like? How will flex credits be reported?**

A flex credit is an academic credit that is designed to increase real-world relevant learning for students by providing standards-aligned instruction that incorporates, at minimum, two subject areas so that credit can be connected to the student learning experience. Flex credits shall be used to promote student engagement and shall not compromise rigor and applicable academic standards. Why can't an engineering CTE program, for example, provide standards-aligned science or math course experiences? Prior to the development of this proposal, LEAs are already able to utilize the flex credit concept. The idea of including flex credits in these regulations is to encourage more LEAs to explore the use of this concept.

RIDE will work with schools and districts to identify the best way to report flex credits to RIDE and will release additional guidance to support LEAs with the implementation of flex credits.

**2. Why are students now required to graduate proficient in civics, financial literacy, computer science and art?**

We all want to be inspired and engaged. We want to feel that how we invest our time is related to our real lives. Rhode Island's students are no different. They want a high school experience that is aligned to their passions and goals, is relevant to their lives, and that sparks their curiosity. They want an education that is embedded in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They want to know how to make a budget, register to vote, and code an app. They want to be able to take control of their financial future, civic engagement, and technological and artistic/creative goals. We want that for them as well. This is why we are recommending the inclusion of civics, financial literacy, computer science, and art as graduation requirements. This also aligns with recent legislation passed by the Rhode Island General Assembly ([RIGL 16-22-13](#) and [H5028](#)).

- **Civics** will prepare our students to be responsible and thoughtful citizens of Rhode Island, the country, and the world—individuals who can actively participate and thrive in society.
- **Financial Literacy** will prepare our young people to make informed and responsible decisions about their financial futures. For example, many of our students are graduating high school while being offered six-figure loans to pursue their college education. We need to give them the skills to make an informed decision.
- **Computer Science** will prepare our students to prosper and thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy in which computer science is omnipresent.
- **Art** will encourage understanding, self-expression and creative problem-solving and will prepare our students to graduate confident in their sense of individual identity.

In order to adhere to recently passed legislation ([RIGL 16-22-13](#)), RIDE has created a community of practice around financial literacy and is currently researching best practices for implementation. RIDE will engage stakeholders to develop guidance and share resources for assessing each proficiency requirement including requirements in civics, financial literacy,



computer science, and art. LEAs are encouraged to explore the use of flex credits to meet the proficiency requirements.

**3. If students take financial literacy, computer science, and/or civics in middle school, does it fulfill the graduation requirement for any of these subjects?**

Yes, students who demonstrate proficiency in these subjects in middle school can fulfill the graduation requirement if it meets the RIDE-approved content standards for each subject. This must also be reflected on students' high school transcripts for it to be recognized by our state colleges and universities.

**4. Would a school that ran trimesters or quarters be able to count a trimester course as fulfilling the computer science, civics, and financial literacy requirements?**

Yes, this would fulfill the graduation requirements as long as students meet the respective course's academic standards.

## Section 7: We will change how we support our students and families.

**1. Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements require schools provide flexibility and support for caregiving youth and students who work to support their families. What does this mean?**

It's important to understand the lived experiences of our students. Work and caregiving are already a key feature in many of their lives. Nevertheless, we rarely place a value on that work or appreciate the level of responsibility some students bear. An example is that many students experience being marked "tardy" upon arriving late to school due to their caregiving duties of seeing their younger siblings to their bus stops. The top two non-academic reasons that students drop out of high school are to become a caregiver or to support their family finances.

RIDE hopes to place value on work as a form of learning and help students more easily balance school and work/home so they can persist to high school graduation and beyond. In pursuance of that goal, **RIDE encourages schools and districts to provide the most supportive environment possible to meet the needs of their students. This requirement specifically calls for the** identification of additional supports and flexibilities—that are publicly posted and available upon request—to support the academic goals and learning needs of caregiving youth and students who work to support their families. **RIDE will be developing and sharing out best practice strategies for identifying and supporting these student populations. We believe no student should have to choose between academics and supporting their families.**

**2. Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements create several areas of flexibility for CTE. Why does RIDE feel that this is needed?**

Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Rhode Island is designed to provide students with the academic and experiential skills they need to be successful in the workforce and in further education. With more than 200 [CTE](#) programs across the state, our young people have unprecedented access to opportunities for career awareness, exploration, and preparation focused on providing them with the academic and technical knowledge and work-related skills





necessary to be successful. Nevertheless, while Rhode Island has made tremendous strides in offering work-based learning to students, not enough students have the opportunity to participate in these experiences in a way that prepares them for employment after graduation. While 98% of students took at least one CTE course, only 50% took 3 courses in the same career pathway, which is the minimum level to be considered a meaningful CTE pathway on the road to career readiness in that field.

We need to make our CTE opportunities more accessible to all students through greater awareness of the programs available, understanding of the 3+ courses needed for career readiness, providing more flexible scheduling, and ensuring that CTE courses account for multiple subject areas. We also need to consider how to align the work young people are already doing—inside and outside the home—with a career path, instead of a job that may not have a clear growth trajectory or high wages. For example, a paid summer internship through PrepareRI can replace a low-skill job that will not prepare a student as well for their future.

Many students may find their passion and greater engagement for learning in CTE courses, yet their schedules are too tight to accommodate them. We can do more by embracing innovative thinking around scheduling. We can also support integrated academic credits where CTE courses account for multiple subject areas in different places. And lastly, with these changes, every high school statewide will develop a policy that recognizes work-based learning as a form of academic learning to ensure that students (in and outside of CTE programs) are receiving academic credit for their hours spent in work-based learning experiences (e.g. internships, apprenticeships, school-based enterprises, etc.).

**3. Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements require that schools provide an annual update to parents on the progress their student is making toward college and career benchmarks. Why does RIDE feel this is needed?**

Not enough of our parents statewide are feeling informed about their student’s educational experiences in our high schools. When we surveyed parents as a part of the EOA, 2 out of 3 parents said they do NOT receive regular updates on the progress their students are making toward college/career goals. Also, ½ of the parents surveyed said they are **not** informed when their students struggle in their classes. Parents/guardians play a key role in the educational trajectory of our students, and we must do all that we can to keep them informed of the progress their students are making. We can and must do better, which is why it is now a requirement that every school provides every parent/guardian with, at minimum, an annual notification of the progress their student is making toward graduation requirements and college and career benchmarks.

If you have any questions or requests for additional information, please reach out to [ReimaginingHS@RIDE.RI.GOV](mailto:ReimaginingHS@RIDE.RI.GOV).