



Angélica Infante-Green
Commissioner

State of Rhode Island
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

July 2, 2026

RE: Building on #AttendanceMattersRI: 2026–27 Attendance Reporting Updates

Dear LEA and School Leaders:

As Rhode Island continues to build on the success of our statewide #AttendanceMattersRI strategy, RIDE is implementing several updates for the 2026–27 school year to strengthen the consistency, accuracy, and quality of attendance data and reporting statewide. **This letter outlines upcoming changes to attendance-related reporting requirements, as well as future expectations related to School Improvement Plans and LEA Strategic Plans.**

These updates build upon the significant progress Rhode Island schools have made in improving student attendance. Through the collective efforts of educators, students, families, and community partners, Rhode Island has reduced chronic absenteeism by more than 12 percentage points from its pandemic-era peak and recovered more than 3.7 million hours of instructional time for students.

This progress has positioned Rhode Island as a national leader in attendance improvement, a distinction recently highlighted in a report by the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (RIPEC).¹

Attendance Definition Updates

Beginning in the 2026–27 school year, Rhode Island will adopt a standardized statewide definition of attendance and absence whereby a student will be considered absent if they miss 50 percent or more of the instructional school day.

This change aligns Rhode Island with nationally recognized best practices and recommendations from both RIPEC and attendance experts nationwide. Nearly half of all states, including neighboring Massachusetts and Connecticut, utilize a similar 50 percent attendance definition.

Attendance reporting practices currently vary across LEAs, limiting the comparability of attendance data statewide. Establishing a common definition will provide a more accurate measure of lost instructional time and strengthen our ability to identify and support students who may be disengaging from school. Accordingly, RIDE is establishing this statewide definition pursuant to its authority under Rhode Island law and the Basic Education Program to ensure consistent and comparable statewide reporting.²

To support implementation, RIDE is releasing updated Attendance Data Collection³ specifications concurrent with this letter and will provide additional guidance, technical assistance, and training opportunities in August prior to the start of the 2026–27 school year.

¹ https://ripec.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/2026_Chronic_Absenteeism_in_RI.pdf

² RIDE is responsible for establishing statewide student data definitions, reporting requirements, and data collection standards to ensure consistency, comparability, and accuracy across all public schools. This includes the Commissioner's authority to establish standard reporting requirements for local education agencies pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 16-1-5; 16-60-4 and RIDE's responsibility for statewide educational data collection and quality assurance under the Basic Education Program Regulations (Section 1.1.3(C)).

³ Attendance Data Collection Specifications for 2026-27: <https://www.eride.ri.gov/doc/DataCollections/202627/AttendanceCollection.pdf>

In addition to this standardized definition, RIDE is implementing further attendance-related reporting updates designed to improve statewide consistency and align reporting practices with existing Rhode Island regulations and federal guidance. These updates include:

- New attendance reporting codes for limited circumstances in which students are not required to attend school under Rhode Island's School Calendar and School Days Regulations (200-RICR-20-05-1)⁴, including staggered school openings, kindergarten screening days, graduation dates, and approved exemptions from mid-term or final examinations.
- Update Discipline Collection⁵ reporting requirements to align with Rhode Island's statewide attendance definition and federal Civil Rights Data Collection guidance by defining a day of suspension as missing more than 50 percent of the instructional day.

School Improvement and LEA Strategic Planning Expectations (School Year 2027–28)

Beginning with School Improvement Plans and LEA Strategic Plans submitted in Summer 2027 for implementation during the 2027–28 school year, schools and LEAs with student chronic absenteeism rates exceeding 5 percent will be required to include attendance goals and initiatives designed to improve student attendance outcomes.⁶

Attendance remains one of the strongest leading indicators of student success. Ensuring schools and districts with elevated chronic absenteeism rates have intentional plans in place to address attendance challenges is a critical component of improving student outcomes and sustaining Rhode Island's progress.

While this requirement will not formally take effect until Summer 2027, RIDE encourages schools and LEAs exceeding this threshold to begin incorporating attendance goals and improvement strategies into their planning efforts now. As part of the upcoming review cycle, RIDE will provide advisory feedback to schools and LEAs above this threshold whose plans do not include attendance-focused goals or strategies.

Thank you for your continued partnership and leadership in supporting Rhode Island students. Together, these updates will strengthen the consistency and quality of statewide data while ensuring schools, LEAs, and RIDE have the information needed to improve student outcomes. We look forward to partnering with you throughout implementation and building on the progress achieved through our statewide #AttendanceMattersRI strategy.

Sincerely,



Angélica Infante-Green
Commissioner of Education

⁴ Rhode Island's School Calendar and School Days Regulations (200-RICR-20-05-1): <https://rules.sos.ri.gov/Regulations/part/200-20-05-1>

⁵ Discipline Data Collection Specifications for 2026-27: <https://www.eride.ri.gov/doc/DataCollections/202627/DisciplineCollection.pdf>

⁶ RIDE is authorized to establish the form and requirements for School Improvement Plans and LEA Strategic Plans pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws §16-53.1-3(b) and R.I. Gen. Laws §16-97.1-1(h) and (j).