



**A 21st Century
Education
for a
21st Century
Workforce**

**A SENATE EDUCATION
LEGISLATIVE ACTION PLAN**

September 2018

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document evaluates the current condition of schooling in Rhode Island and makes recommendations to create a public education system better suited to today's student and workforce needs. To address these needs, this report proposes five strategies and related actions.

1. IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE TO INCREASE AND SUPPORT WORKFORCE NEEDS

- Increase incentives for teachers to major in math and science, including increasing teacher access to loan forgiveness programs such as the RI Wavemaker Fellowships;
- Encourage all elementary schools to allot four or more hours per week to science;
- Require the Board of Education to draft a plan to increase STEAM opportunities in K-12 for female and underrepresented minority students and to increase enrollment and attainment for those populations in STEAM programs at our public postsecondary institutions;
- Require the Board of Education to develop a strategic plan for all elementary, secondary, and postsecondary students and adult learners to gain broader access to STEAM opportunities that lead to degree and certificate completion and workforce training;
- Encourage school districts and the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts to partner and collaborate to continue to expand students' exposure to a variety of art forms;
- Monitor the performance of the Governor's Third Grade Reading Action Plan and request that the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education share any additional guidance regarding best practices and information about successful programs within Rhode Island and around the country; and
- Request that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the School Superintendents' Association, and elementary and secondary teachers collaborate and develop a campaign to ensure that all 180 days of the school year provide enriching educational opportunities.

2. IMPROVE ACCESS TO WORLD LANGUAGE ACQUISITION OPPORTUNITIES

- Increase incentives for students in teacher preparation programs to become multilingual or for those who already are multilingual, by seeking public and private partnerships that may provide scholarships, grants, or possible loan forgiveness programs;
- Increase advanced study of world languages at Rhode Island's public postsecondary institutions;
- Increase opportunities for students in elementary and secondary education to be exposed to and to learn a world language;
- Request that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provide a model policy and guidance for implementation of dual language immersion programs; and
- Require the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to issue a state seal of biliteracy to qualified students beginning with the Class of 2020.

3. MODIFY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

- Require 1 credit of computer science as a high school graduation requirement;
- Create a state policy that requires all school districts to allow AP Computer Science (not including AP Computer Science Principles) to satisfy a math requirement for graduation; and
- Remove the health and physical education requirement for students enrolled full-time at the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, or the University of Rhode Island through the PrepareRI program.

4. RE-EXAMINE POSTSECONDARY OPPORTUNITIES FOR FOSTER YOUTH

- Modify the Higher Education Opportunity Incentive Grant to allow former foster youth to enroll in 9 credits or more at a postsecondary institution. Analyze whether the scholarship should be amended so it may be used for room and board, transportation costs, and other ordinary living expenses.

5. IMPROVE ACCESS TO QUALITY ADULT EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE TRAINING THAT LEADS SEAMLESSLY TO EMPLOYMENT

- Request that the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner collaborate with industry, trade associations, and chambers of commerce and continue to seek opportunities to expand the Westerly Education Center model to other areas of Rhode Island and to address employment needs and training gaps;
- Request that the Community College of Rhode Island work closely with adult education and GED providers to better coordinate opportunities for their clients with respect to workforce training, industry credentials or certificates, and postsecondary education, including financial resources that may be available to the adult students; and
- Review the recommendations of the Senate commission examining the appropriate state agency to house adult education, and draft legislation if appropriate.

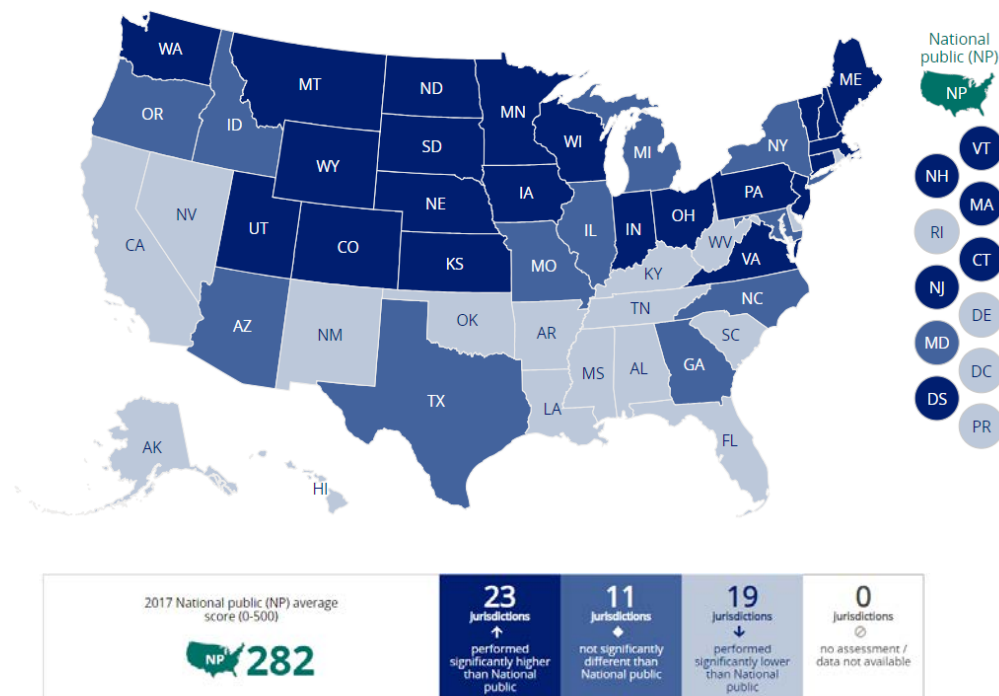
SECTION 1: IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE TO INCREASE AND SUPPORT WORKFORCE NEEDS

(a) Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM)

Rhode Island businesses cannot find employees who have adequate training in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to stay competitive.¹ Jobs in these fields are expected to grow 9 percent between 2017 and 2027, compared to 5 percent in non-STEM fields.²

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which is commonly known as the Nation’s Report Card, is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America’s students know and can do in various subject areas. Assessments are conducted periodically in mathematics, reading, science, and other subjects. Based on the 2017 NAEP, only 39 percent of Rhode Island fourth graders and 30 percent of eighth graders tested at or above proficient in math. In contrast, 53 percent of Massachusetts fourth graders and 50 percent of Massachusetts eighth graders tested at or above proficient.³ In addition, all New England states, except for Rhode Island, scored significantly higher than the national average in eighth grade math.⁴

Mathematics, grade 8
Difference in average scale scores between all jurisdictions and National public, for All students [TOTAL], 2017



SOURCE: The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

¹ <http://vitalsigns.ecs.org/state/Rhode-Island/overview>

² <http://vitalsigns.ecs.org/state/Rhode-Island/demand>

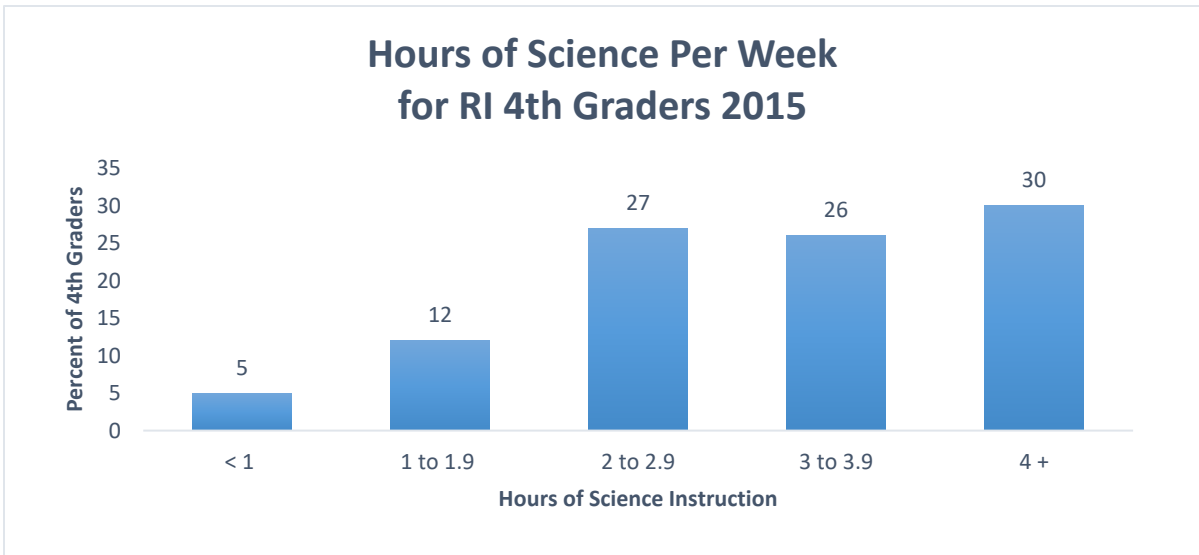
³ www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile?chort=1&sub=MAT&sj=AL&sfj=NP&st=MN&year=2017R3

⁴ www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile?chort=2&sub=MAT&sj=&sfj=NP&st=MN&year=2017R3

NAEP science results for Rhode Island tell the same story. Based upon the 2015 NAEP, the most recent assessment for fourth and eighth grade science achievement, only 36 percent of Rhode Island fourth graders and 32 percent of eighth graders tested at or above proficient.⁵ In contrast, 47 percent of Massachusetts fourth graders and 44 percent of eighth graders did so.⁶ In addition, all New England states, except Rhode Island, scored significantly higher than the national average in eighth grade science, while Rhode Island eighth graders tested significantly below the national average.⁷

According to the Education Commission of the States, the nation’s most effective STEM education programs can result in more students who pursue a career in a STEM field.⁸ In 2017, only 3 percent of Rhode Island’s fourth grade students had a teacher who majored in mathematics.⁹ Fifty percent of eighth grade students had a teacher who majored in mathematics in 2017, and 50 percent in 2015 had a teacher who majored in science, according to the most recent data.¹⁰ All students need access to teachers who are most qualified to teach mathematics and science. A student-loan forgiveness program such as the Rhode Island Wavemaker Fellowship could be used to incentivize students in Rhode Island’s teacher preparation programs to major in math or science or for students with a math or science major to become teachers.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Increase incentives for teachers to major in math and science, including increasing teacher access to loan forgiveness programs such as the RI Wavemaker Fellowships.



SOURCE: Education Commission of the States

⁵ www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile?chort=2&sub=SCI&sj=&sfj=NP&st=MN&year=2015R3

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ <http://vitalsigns.ecs.org/state/Rhode-Island/overview>

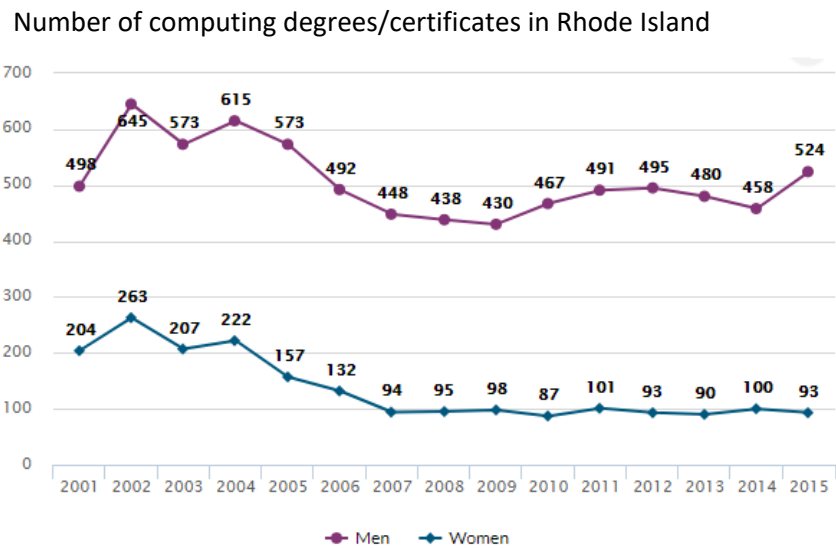
⁹ <http://vitalsigns.ecs.org/state/rhode-island/teachers#deep-content>

¹⁰ Ibid.

In 2015, only 30 percent of Rhode Island fourth graders received four hours or more per week of science instruction, while 44 percent spent less than three hours per week on science instruction.¹¹ Effective STEM education programs start with access to meaningful and consistent STEM learning opportunities at all grade levels, including elementary schools.¹²

RECOMMENDATION 2: Encourage all elementary schools to allot four or more hours per week to science.

Women and minorities in Rhode Island lag behind in earning STEM degrees.¹³ Rhode Island could dramatically increase the available talent in computer science and engineering by simply closing the gender and demographic gaps in these subjects.¹⁴ The number of women who earned degrees and certificates in science has remained relatively constant each year from 2007 through 2015, while the number of men earning such degrees and certificates has been trending upward.¹⁵



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, 2001–2015.



¹¹ <http://vitalsigns.ecs.org/state/Rhode-Island/curriculum>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ <http://vitalsigns.ecs.org/state/rhode-island/diversity#not-gaining-ground>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

In a state where women comprise more than half the population¹⁶, and the black and Hispanic populations are growing¹⁷, Rhode Island must provide STEM opportunities for these populations. It is imperative for the Ocean State to increase interest and performance in STEM fields in order to support workforce needs and demands.

As Rhode Island continues to foster the expansion of STEAM opportunities for students, the Board of Education must set access and attainment goals and determine ways to offer more options for students to access these subjects and to develop competencies that will help them transition successfully into postsecondary education and the workforce.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Require the Board of Education to draft a plan to increase STEAM opportunities in K-12 for female and underrepresented minority students and to increase enrollment and attainment for those populations in STEAM programs at our public postsecondary institutions.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Require the Board of Education to develop a strategic plan for all elementary, secondary, and postsecondary students and adult learners to gain broader access to STEAM opportunities that lead to degree and certificate completion and workforce training.

The Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA) is a collaboration of the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA).¹⁸ The ACPSA is the first federal effort to provide in-depth analysis of the arts and cultural sector’s contributions to the U.S. economy, and it released economic data for the states in March of 2018.¹⁹

According to the ACPSA data, close to 18,000 Rhode Islanders were employed in the arts and cultural sector in 2015.²⁰ Total arts and cultural production industries, which include core industries, supporting industries, and industries with secondary production that are designated artistic and cultural, contribute 3.3 percent to Rhode Island’s gross domestic product.²¹ Nationwide, this study reveals that the arts and cultural sector contributed \$763.6 billion, or 4.2 percent, to the U.S.

¹⁶ www.census.gov/quickfacts/RI

¹⁷ Campbell, Paul, “Current Population Reports, Census Bureau,” 1997, www.census.gov/prod/2/pop/p25/p25-1131.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.arts.gov/news/2017/latest-economic-data-tracks-arts-and-cultural-jobs-state>

¹⁹ <https://www.bea.gov/news/2018/arts-and-cultural-production-satellite-account-us-and-states-2015>

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

economy that year.²² Providing students with meaningful enrichment opportunities in the arts can help support the arts and culture economy within the state.

A state statute established the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (RISCA) in 1967 and delegated the responsibility to stimulate public interest and participation in the arts.²³ While science and math are an essential part of a student’s education, exposure to a variety of art forms also plays a critical role in the development of students.²⁴ RISCA provides many grants, programs, and partnerships to increase access to high quality arts learning opportunities, both in school and out of school for Rhode Island children.²⁵ Moreover, RISCA assists in the professional development of educators and ensures that all students are able to demonstrate proficiency in one or more art forms before graduation.²⁶ Providing meaningful enrichment opportunities for students can also be a foundation to help support the development and interests of the whole child, while maintaining a vibrant arts and culture economy in Rhode Island.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Encourage school districts and the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts to partner and collaborate to continue to expand students’ exposure to a variety of art forms.

(b) English Language Arts

While improving performance in STEAM is important, Rhode Island must not overlook English Language Arts. Based upon recent data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 39 percent²⁷ of Rhode Island fourth graders performed at or above proficient in reading in 2017, compared to 51 percent²⁸ in Massachusetts.

Governor Gina Raimondo has set a goal to increase statewide third grade reading proficiency to 75 percent by 2025, through a Third Grade Reading Action Plan.²⁹ Research shows that children who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than their peers.³⁰ These language and literacy gaps

²² Ibid.

²³ <http://www.arts.ri.gov/>

²⁴ <http://www.arts.ri.gov/education/overview/index.php>

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ www.nationsreportcard.gov

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ “Rhode Island’s Third Grade Reading Action Plan,” 2017, www.kids.ri.gov/documents/Third%20Grade%20Action%20Plan_17.10.30_CC.pdf

³⁰ “Rhode Island Campaign for 3rd Grade Reading, “Rhode Island Reads, 2017, www.rikidscount.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/1.18%20New%20Slides%20-%20RI%20Reads%20Rhode%20Island%20Reads%20Partner%20Meeting%20November%20202017%20rev.pdf

can begin to develop at birth and may widen over time without intervention.³¹ Rhode Island must deploy in-school and out-of-school strategies to meet this goal.³²

The Third Grade Reading Action Plan addresses the issues of school readiness, school success, increasing access to effective social services for high-risk young children, and improving community engagement.³³ The implementation and progress of this plan needs to be monitored to ensure it is working to improve reading proficiency for all students.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Monitor the performance of the Governor’s Third Grade Reading Action Plan and request that the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education share any additional guidance regarding best practices and information about successful programs within Rhode Island and around the country.

(c) Effective use of school days

Rhode Island General Laws require students in kindergarten through 12th grade to attend school for a period equivalent to 180 days per school year. Students’ performance in all subjects can be improved when they are given educational opportunities each of the 180 days. Education is about the whole child, and Rhode Island’s efforts should be developed beyond the core subjects and curriculum.

When examining the school year and grading periods, schools generally flow seamlessly from one grading period to the next. However, the end of the school year can provide very different educational experiences from school to school. Some schools effectively use the time period between the close of grades and the end of the school year to provide many enrichment opportunities for students, including organized field days, art exhibits, and musical performances. Other schools, unfortunately, do not.

The end of the school year may be a perfect time to enrich students’ educational experiences beyond standards and curriculum by teaching life skills, experimenting with new teaching techniques, encouraging student-led discussions, and honoring the arts. This time period need not be used in a traditional teacher-led, standards-focused manner, nor is grading necessary. Nevertheless, the waning days of the school year should not be filled by students watching the latest movie releases. While movies may be an effective reward for students and can be appropriately associated with a lesson

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

that students are currently learning, an over-reliance on them at year’s end is not advisable. The last week or more of school, and the days just before each school break throughout the year, should continue to be an enriching educational time for students. Every day matters.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Request that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the School Superintendents’ Association, and elementary and secondary teachers collaborate and develop a campaign to ensure that all 180 days of the school year provide enriching educational opportunities.

SECTION 2: IMPROVE ACCESS TO WORLD LANGUAGE ACQUISITION OPPORTUNITIES

The English language has been widely used and understood throughout the world, through trade and U.S. diplomacy efforts,³⁴ and its importance in Rhode Island schools is unquestioned. However, the ability to understand, speak, read, and write in English and in other world languages is critical to success in business, research, and international relations in the world economy and also in our diverse neighborhoods.³⁵

The United States lags behind most nations, including European countries and China, with its percentage of citizens who speak or understand a second language.³⁶ According to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences’ Commission on Language Learning, one of the biggest obstacles to language acquisition in America is a shortage of qualified world language teachers.³⁷ In a 2017 report, the Commission on Language Learning provided many recommendations to increase the number of world language teachers and to increase student exposure to world languages and cultures.³⁸

Those recommendations include the idea that loan forgiveness programs can be used to attract and incentivize students in teacher preparation programs to become fluent in a world language.³⁹ Bilingual students may also be tempted to enroll in teacher preparation programs to become eligible for student loan forgiveness programs.

The commission also suggests providing new opportunities for advanced study in languages in postsecondary institutions for future language teachers and for those focusing on other

³⁴ “America’s Languages, Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century,” 2017, www.amacad.org/multimedia/pdfs/publications/researchpapersmonographs/language/Commission-on-Language-Learning_Americas-Languages.pdf

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

areas of study.⁴⁰ A commitment to world language courses and majors, along with the expansion of blended learning programs, collaboration, and resource sharing between Rhode Island’s public higher education institutions may increase the number of world language teachers and advanced learning opportunities for all students.⁴¹ The Board of Education should develop a plan to encourage and increase the number of multilingual teachers in K-12 and to offer greater access to world languages at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), Rhode Island College (RIC), and the University of Rhode Island (URI).

RECOMMENDATION 8: Increase incentives for students in teacher preparation programs to become multilingual or for those who already are multilingual, by seeking public and private partnerships that may provide scholarships, grants, or possible loan forgiveness programs.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Increase advanced study of world languages at Rhode Island’s public postsecondary institutions.

Speaking, reading, writing, and understanding multiple languages are important 21st century skills for an increasingly global society and economy.⁴² In addition, the study of a second language has been linked to improved learning outcomes in other subjects and to enhanced cognitive ability.⁴³ Children are especially receptive to language education; however, across the nation the number of middle schools and elementary schools that offer world language courses has significantly declined.⁴⁴ This is especially true in public elementary schools, where only 15 percent offered a program for world languages, compared to 50 percent of private schools.⁴⁵

Rhode Island’s current five-year strategic plan for PK-12 public education from 2015 to 2020 identifies three key outcomes in dual language and world language instruction.⁴⁶ The

⁴⁰ “America’s Languages, Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century,” 2017, www.amacad.org/multimedia/pdfs/publications/researchpapersmonographs/language/Commission-on-Language-Learning_Americas-Languages.pdf

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² “Rhode Island Dual Language Program Standards Elementary Level,” Board of Education, 2014, http://ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/OSCAS/Dual_Language_Program_Standards.pdf

⁴³ “America’s Languages, Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century,” 2017, www.amacad.org/multimedia/pdfs/publications/researchpapersmonographs/language/Commission-on-Language-Learning_Americas-Languages.pdf

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ “2020 Vision for Education: Rhode Island’s Strategic Plan for PK-12 & Adult Education, 2015-2020,” Rhode Island Council On Elementary & Secondary Education, 2015, <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Board-of-Education/Strategic-Plan/2020VisionForEducation.pdf>

plan calls for a 10 percent increase in the number of students accessing high-quality world language programs, double the amount of students participating in dual language programs, and 14 percent of high school graduates earning the state seal of biliteracy by 2020.⁴⁷

While these are ambitious goals, many school districts have responded to the challenge. Dual language immersion programs provide literacy and content instruction in two languages. These programs differ from traditional world language programs that focus on language instruction as its own subject area.⁴⁸ Dual language immersion programs present content areas through the world language.⁴⁹ For instance, half of the school day is taught in English, and the other half is taught in the world language.

With the International Charter School paving the way, the Pawtucket, Providence, Central Falls, and South Kingstown public school districts now offer some dual language immersion programs. Progress has been made to provide some Rhode Island students with world language exposure, but many students throughout the state have no access to world languages. A recent study of dual language immersion programs⁵⁰ indicated that students in immersion programs performed better academically in English language arts than those not in such programs.⁵¹ By eighth grade, students in immersion programs were a full academic year ahead of their peers, whether their first language was English or another world language.⁵²

Moreover, in the long-term, immersion programs may be more cost-effective than world language courses.⁵³ Rather than adding additional units to an overloaded curriculum and requiring new teachers who are dedicated only to language instruction, immersion courses incorporate language instruction into pre-existing coursework.⁵⁴ In the short-term, however, districts may find it challenging to hire teachers who are multilingual and capable of teaching a broad curriculum in two languages.⁵⁵ Rhode Island must work to remove these barriers to increase its bilingual workforce.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Increase opportunities for students in elementary and secondary education to be exposed to and to learn a world language.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ http://www.skschools.net/teaching_and_learning/dual_language_immersion/d_l_i_program_description/

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ "Dual Language Immersion," Utah State Office of Education, 2016, <http://le.utah.gov/interim/2016/pdf/00000674.pdf>

⁵¹ "America's Languages, Investing in Language education for the 21st Century," 2017, www.amacad.org/multimedia/pdfs/publications/researchpapersmonographs/language/Commission-on-Language-Learning_Americas-Languages.pdf

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Request that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provide a model policy and guidance for implementation of dual language immersion programs.

A seal of biliteracy is an award that recognizes a graduating student who has demonstrated proficiency in both English and another language.⁵⁶ The student must be able to read, speak, listen, and write in both languages.⁵⁷ If the student meets the criteria for the seal, the seal becomes part of the student's transcript-and diploma, signaling to employers and colleges that the student is bilingual.⁵⁸ This multilingual competency is a critical skill in today's global economy.⁵⁹

In 2011, California became the first state to create a formal seal of biliteracy. By the spring of 2012, roughly 10,000 students earned the seal in its first active year.⁶⁰ By September of 2018, 33 states and the District of Columbia had enacted legislation to create state seals of biliteracy.⁶¹

Rhode Island General Laws § 16-22.2-2 established a state seal of biliteracy in 2016. Under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, Rhode Island will use the Postsecondary Success Indicator, which will include the state seal of biliteracy, within its accountability system to measure students' achievements beyond those needed to earn a high school diploma.⁶² As the agency that awards the seal, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has indicated that the state seal of biliteracy will be recognized within the accountability system beginning in the 2022 school year.⁶³ The department has established the criteria by which a seal of biliteracy can be earned and has established gold and silver levels of proficiency.⁶⁴ The Class of 2022 will graduate six years after the passage of § 16-22.2-2. Six years is too long to wait for students seeking the state seal of biliteracy. Because the department has already established the criteria and some districts are already providing local seals of biliteracy, it is time to move forward. School districts should have the ability to award a state seal of biliteracy beginning with the class of 2020, to provide time for students, families, teachers, and the districts to address implementation issues and demand before the federal accountability system goes into effect.

⁵⁶ www.ncsl.org/research/education/state-seals-of-biliteracy.aspx

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ www.ncsl.org/research/education/state-seals-of-biliteracy.aspx

⁵⁹ <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Diploma-System/Council%20Designations/Seal-of-Biliteracy-Overview2018.pdf>

⁶⁰ <http://sealofbiliteracy.org/research/value-bilingualism-and-seal-biliteracy-california-labor-market>

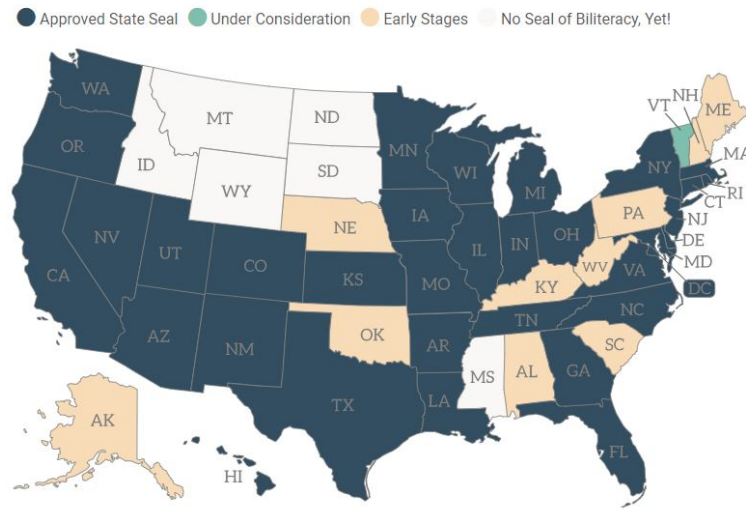
⁶¹ <http://sealofbiliteracy.org/>

⁶² www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Diploma-System/Council%20Designations/Seal-of-Biliteracy-Overview2018.pdf

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

State Laws Regarding The Seal Of Biliteracy



SOURCE: sealofbiliteracy.org

RECOMMENDATION 12: Require the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to issue a state seal of biliteracy to qualified students beginning with the Class of 2020.

SECTION 3: MODIFY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

In Rhode Island, high school students must successfully complete 20 courses in six core content areas: English Language Arts (ELA), math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology. The regulations regarding high school graduation requirements further require the following 14 courses: four ELA, four mathematics, three science, and three social studies.⁶⁵ Currently, there is no state requirement for a student to complete a computer science course.

The remaining six courses are presumed to include, but are not limited to, world languages, the arts, technology, physical education, and health, pursuant to local policies and applicable state law, which *could* include computer science.⁶⁶ In today's economy and with the role that technology plays in our lives, all students should successfully complete at least one course in computer science.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has projected that employment of computer and information research scientists will grow by 19 percent from 2016 to 2026, according to the Occupational Outlook Handbook updated on October 24, 2017.⁶⁷ According to the Education Commission of the

⁶⁵ RIDE Secondary School Regulations, L-6-3.1 Course requirements

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/computer-and-information-technology/computer-and-information-research-scientists.htm>

States (ECS),⁶⁸ 20 states require that students be allowed to apply specific computer science courses toward mathematics or science requirements to receive a diploma.⁶⁹ Local school districts are authorized to designate the content area that a course fulfills based upon the alignment to the state-adopted standards.⁷⁰ Rhode Island school districts, however, seem reluctant to use their local authority to allow computer science courses to fulfill a mathematics or a science requirement.

RECOMMENDATION 13: Require 1 credit of computer science as a high school graduation requirement.

RECOMMENDATION 14: Create a state policy that requires all school districts to allow AP Computer Science (not including AP Computer Science Principles) to satisfy a math requirement for graduation.

High school students can enroll in dual or concurrent courses that count for both college and high school credit.⁷¹ The PrepareRI program pays the tuition and fees for high school students to enroll in college-level courses that are taught either at their high school or on a college campus, specifically the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, or the Community College of Rhode Island.⁷² These students are required to meet the high school graduation requirements discussed above.⁷³

Rhode Island General Laws §16-22-4(a) also require that all students in grades one through 12 shall receive “instruction in health and physical education . . . that shall average at least 20 minutes in each school day.”⁷⁴ If a high school senior enrolls full-time in a postsecondary institution, he or she must still satisfy the health and physical education statutory requirement in order to meet high school graduation requirements.⁷⁵

Currently, the PrepareRI program covers the tuition for a college course that satisfies the statutory requirement of § 16-22-4(a).⁷⁶ With the limited funds available each year for this highly successful program, the PrepareRI program should not be funding physical education and health courses taken at institutions of higher education. Moreover, a student should not be prevented from receiving a

⁶⁸ ECS is a non-partisan organization that is committed to providing all 50 states with unbiased, factual information and resources to aid policymakers in making informed decisions to improve public education from early childhood to postsecondary.

⁶⁹ “Education Trends,” Education Commission of the States, 2016, https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/09.13.2016_Computer-Science-in-High-School-Graduation-Requirements.pdf

⁷⁰ RIDE Secondary School Regulations, L-6-3.1 Course requirements

⁷¹ <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE16/16-100/INDEX.HTM>

⁷² www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/EducationPrograms/DualEnrollment.aspx

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE16/16-22/16-22-4.HTM>

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ <http://www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/EducationPrograms/DualEnrollment.aspx#321430-concurrent-course-list>

high school diploma merely because he or she was unable to enroll in a physical education and health course while attending a postsecondary institution full-time. Accordingly, seniors enrolled full-time at a public higher education institution should be exempted from the physical education and health course requirement for their 12th grade year.

RECOMMENDATION 15: Remove the health and physical education graduation requirement for students enrolled full-time at the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, or the University of Rhode Island through the PrepareRI program.

SECTION 4: RE-EXAMINE POSTSECONDARY OPPORTUNITIES FOR FOSTER YOUTH

National data demonstrates that most foster youth want to attend college; however, roughly 50 percent finish high school by the age of 18.⁷⁷ Between 2 percent and 9 percent of former foster youth attain a bachelor's degree.⁷⁸ In Rhode Island, roughly 95 youth have "aged out" of the care and custody of the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) annually at the age of 18.

Navigating the financial aid system, college applications, transportation, and living arrangements while also earning enough money to pay for food and clothing creates a seemingly impenetrable barrier to postsecondary enrollment and success for former foster youth.

A new law created in 2018 now allows foster youth who would have aged out of the system to request and receive certain continued support from the Department of Children, Youth and Families. Enrollment in postsecondary education is one of several ways that foster youth can meet the eligibility requirements for continued support. As such, postsecondary enrollment and completion should be a viable option for youth who are or were in the care and custody of the state. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that individuals with a high school diploma earn approximately \$24,000 less per year than those with a bachelor's degree and are twice as likely to experience unemployment.⁷⁹ While the RI Promise Scholarship program and federal Pell Grants offer an opportunity for foster youth to enroll in college, particularly at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), foster youth have struggled in recent years to find ways to pay for housing, transportation, books, fees, and food costs not covered by these programs. In addition, students must be enrolled full-time in order to be eligible for the RI Promise scholarship.⁸⁰ With ordinary living expenses, full-time enrollment may not be feasible for many former foster youth.

⁷⁷http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/DesktopModules/Bring2mind/DMX/Download.aspx?EntryId=1279&Command=Core_Download&method=inline&PortalId=0&TabId=124 Pg.1

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ https://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm/

⁸⁰ <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE16/16-107/16-107-6.HTM>

Rhode Island General Laws §§ 42-72.8 created the Department of Children, Youth and Families' Higher Education Opportunity Incentive Grant. The purpose of the program is to provide financial assistance in the form of grants and scholarships to former foster youth. This program currently requires grant recipients to be enrolled full-time, but such a course load can be difficult for former foster youth to maintain while they work to become independent and earn money for living expenses. For this incentive grant to be more effective, the number of credits a foster youth must take to be eligible should be lowered to 9 credits. Further, these grants should provide more flexible assistance to cover tuition expenses and other logistical barriers.

How are transition-age youth in RI faring at age 19 and 21?

Of youth who spent time in foster care...	RI		US	
	at age 19	at age 21	at age 19	at age 21
Total number of youth who were eligible to complete the NYTD survey	170	170	11,350	11,471
Total number of youth who responded to the NYTD survey	138	124	7,584	7,083
Finished high school/GED	46%	70%	56%	76%
Employed full- or part-time	32%	47%	34%	49%
Medicaid or other health insurance coverage	78%	87%	79%	75%
Experienced homelessness in past two years	17%	25%	20%	27%
Attending school	51%	31%	55%	32%
Connected to an adult	91%	96%	90%	87%
Had children in the past two years	12%	18%	12%	27%
Was incarcerated in the past two years	24%	24%	22%	22%
Referred for substance abuse treatment in the past two years	16%	14%	15%	11%
Receiving public assistance	56%	38%	25%	32%

Of youth in the general population...	RI		US	
	at age 19	at age 21	at age 19	at age 21
Total number of youth	18,535	18,490	4,246,635	4,670,085
Finished high school/GED	93%	93%	87%	90%
Employed full- or part-time	46%	59%	45%	60%
Attending school	78%	66%	68%	52%
Medicaid or other health insurance coverage	93%	95%	86%	84%

SOURCE: Child Trends

Data on outcomes of youth who spent time in foster care comes from the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). Data for 19-year-olds is from federal fiscal year (FFY) 2013 and for 21-year-olds is from FFY 2015. Data on youth in the general population comes from the American Community Survey 2011-2015 estimates.

RECOMMENDATION 16: Modify the Higher Education Opportunity Incentive Grant to allow former foster youth to enroll in 9 credits or more at a postsecondary institution. Analyze whether the scholarship should be amended so it may be used for room and board, transportation costs, and other ordinary living expenses.

SECTION 5: IMPROVE ACCESS TO QUALITY ADULT EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE TRAINING THAT LEADS SEAMLESSLY TO EMPLOYMENT

A 21st century education should include education and training opportunities for adults that lead to better employment opportunities. The Westerly Education Center was founded in 2016 and is managed by the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner.⁸¹ In collaboration with business, postsecondary education institutions, industry, and other community partners, the Westerly Education Center successfully provides education and workforce training to adults that is resulting in their finding better paying jobs and opportunities for advancement.⁸² The University of Rhode Island (URI), Rhode Island College (RIC), and the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) offer high-quality education designed to meet projected workforce needs. Collaboration with the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training and the state's public higher education institutions serves a regional need for workforce training and high-quality undergraduate and graduate courses.⁸³

The Westerly Education Center has trained more than 700 adults for employment in maritime pipefitting, sheet metal, and electrical careers at General Dynamics Electric Boat for the Quonset Point and Groton facilities, with training provided by CCRI.⁸⁴ In addition, URI has provided leadership training to roughly 300 Electric Boat employees and continues to do so.

RIC provides training for the Westerly Community Credit Union and also participated in the Real Jobs RI program and eight-week training session for community health workers.⁸⁵ In the spirit of collaboration, CCRI and RIC are also providing training for bank tellers and call center employees.

The Westerly Education Center facility is also used to provide postsecondary courses. URI provides some master's degree courses, while CCRI offers 15 to 18 undergraduate courses per semester. The Rhode Island School of Design also hosts continuing education courses.⁸⁶ Classrooms have also been rented to area businesses for training purposes, including Yale New Haven Health at Westerly Hospital, Washington Trust, Ocean Community YMCA, and Ivory Ella.

The Westerly Education Center became financially self-sustaining in its first year of operation. It is currently open and operating during multiple shifts to accommodate the high demand for training by employers.⁸⁷ This type of public-private collaboration is clearly in demand and should be replicated in other parts of Rhode Island to help support adult

⁸¹ <http://www.westerlyedcenter.org/page/about-us/>

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Information provided by the Executive Director of the Westerly Education Center.

⁸⁵ "Annual Report Westerly Education Center," 2017, www.westerlyedcenter.org/static/photos/2018/03/22/Annual_Report_CY_2017_FINAL_website_link_COMPRESSD.pdf

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

students and local businesses. The state has allocated additional funding in the state budget for Fiscal Year 2019 to expand such collaborations and to develop another education center in northern Rhode Island that will be modeled after the Westerly center. Additional locations and partnerships should be considered as well.

RECOMMENDATION 17: Request that the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner collaborate with industry, trade associations, and chambers of commerce and continue to seek opportunities to expand the Westerly Education Center model to other areas of Rhode Island and to address employment needs and training gaps.

Adult education in Rhode Island is currently under the control of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in the Office of College and Career Readiness, where the program provides basic education, GED preparation, and English language acquisition services through nonprofit agencies.⁸⁸ According to research provided by the Education Commission of the States, the majority of states house their adult education programs in their state education agencies dedicated to K-12 education.⁸⁹ A number of states, however, have begun to take a different approach.

Given that adult learners' needs and challenges differ from those of youth, some states operate adult education out of their departments of higher education or their departments of community/technical colleges.⁹⁰ Roughly eight states house adult education in labor and workforce-oriented departments.⁹¹ Coordinating the necessary educational courses and workforce training programs so they meet the needs of actual employers is important. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has expertise in overseeing the educational component for adult learners, but not necessarily the connection to employment training and job opportunities.

In June of 2018, the Senate passed a resolution, Senate Bill No. 2960, to create a special legislative commission to conduct a comprehensive review and to make recommendations regarding the appropriate state agency to house adult education. The purpose is to determine whether the state's adult education program would provide a more seamless transition to employment and/or postsecondary options if it is housed in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Department of Labor and Training, or the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner.

⁸⁸ www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/RIDEOffices/CollegeandCareerReadiness.aspx

⁸⁹ Education Commission of the States – StateNotes - Adult Education Governance Structures and Descriptions, July 2004, and updated information provided to Senate Policy staff from ECS staff.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

RECOMMENDATION 18: Request that the Community College of Rhode Island work closely with adult education and GED providers to better coordinate opportunities for their clients with respect to workforce training, industry credentials or certificates, and postsecondary education, including financial resources that may be available to the adult students.

RECOMMENDATION 19: Review the recommendations of the Senate commission examining the appropriate state agency to house adult education, and draft legislation if appropriate.

CONCLUSION

This report is the first step toward shaping a legislative agenda for education in the 2019 Legislative Session. The recommendations here outline some of the state's most pressing needs in terms of education.

A vibrant economy can only thrive in a state that serves all of its students with a robust, diverse, and comprehensive public education system.

The 19 recommendations presented here represent a solid beginning to implement necessary improvements. Other strategies will clearly surface as educators, policymakers, parents, and students weigh in with their perspectives on how to make Rhode Island's education system one that works for everyone. The Rhode Island Senate encourages and invites this dialogue as we forge ahead to implement policies and practices on behalf of our students.

**“A 21st Century Education for a 21st Century Workforce”
A Senate Education Legislative Action Plan
September 2018**

**Prepared by:
Rhode Island Senate Policy Office**

