

**Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE)
Assessment and Accountability in the Fifty States: 1999-2000**

RHODE ISLAND

*This profile was verified by the staff of the Rhode Island Department of Education
in July 2000. All information was current as of that date.*

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State Assessment System (1999-2000 school year)

1. *Provide a brief overview and history of the assessment system as the context.*

Rhode Island's State Assessment Program has been in operation for more than two decades, but was redesigned and adapted in response to the 1997 educational reform legislation, Article 31, and the state's Comprehensive Education Strategy (CES).

2. *What are the characteristics of the state assessment system, including:*

- *Name of Assessment Instrument(s) or Program(s)*

The Rhode Island State Assessment Program

- *Grade Levels and Subjects Tested*

The components of the State Assessment Program in the school year 1999-2000 are the following:

1. New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam at grades 4, 8, and 10
2. New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam at grades 4, 8, and 10
3. Rhode Island Writing Assessment at grades 3, 7, 10, and 11 (pilot)
4. Rhode Island Health Education Assessment at grades 5 and 9

5. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) at grades 4 and 8.
 - *Norm or Criterion Referenced:* Criterion
 - *Matrix or Census Testing:* Census
 - *Item Types (including proportions if available via Internet or interview) such as: traditional or enhanced multiple choice, performance tasks, open-ended questions, portfolios, essays, etc.*

Item types include: multiple choice, short and extended constructed response.

- *Time of Testing (specific month(s) or testing window)*
 - New Standards English Language Arts Reference Exam: March 20-28, 27-31
 - New Standards Mathematics Reference Exam: March 9-17, 20-14
 - Rhode Island Writing Assessment: March 1-8
 - Rhode Island Health Education Assessment: March 1-8, 9-15
 - National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): January 3-February 18
- *High School Exit Exam (date of implementation and/or phase-in timeline):* None

- *Other Assessments:* None

- *Transitional or Final Assessment System*

Although the state considers this to be the final system, some additions to the system may still take place (*see changes below*).

3. *Who designed and produced the assessment(s) used by the state? If a commercial test was used by the state, were modifications or additions made to the assessment to address state requirements or standards? If so, what did they include?*

The New Standards Reference Exams were developed with Harcourt Education Measurements. The Health Education and Writing Assessments are state developed with assistance from various contractors.

4. *What are the state requirements for local assessment, including the types of assessments and their use in areas such as reporting and accountability, as well as Title I adequate yearly progress? What grade levels and subjects are tested?*

Although it is assumed that districts will be building some of their own performance-based assessments in the future, the state does not have any requirements for local assessment.

5. *Is the state assessment system aligned with the state standards? Are there plans for alignment, and if so, how will the assessment and standards become aligned? Probe on:*

- *Refining standards*
- *Revamping assessments*
- *Adding components to assessments*

What is the timeline for completion of the alignment?

Rhode Island's State Assessment Program was redesigned and adapted in response to the 1997 educational reform legislation and the focal areas outlined in the state's standards.

6. *What is the state's approach for ensuring alignment and what evidence of that alignment is provided?*

Assessment experts have mapped the state frameworks to the topics covered on all of the state assessments. According to the state, there are no items on the assessments that are not reflected in the content frameworks. However, the respondent from the SDE added that it is important to remember that a single assessment cannot measure all the content standards.

7. *How is the data included in the state assessment system used?*

The central purpose of the State Assessment Program is to measure achievement for accountability. This, in turn, will drive two other purposes:

1. to assess student performance in order to provide information to students, families, and their teachers, and
2. to inform and improve instructional programs.

8. *Are there changes planned for the state assessment system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?*

The only changes planned in assessment are the addition of the alternate assessment for students with severe disabilities (as required by IDEA) and possibly new skills testing to meet the federal Perkins Act law and regulations.

9. *What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of state assessment? Explain.*

The major issues in the state have been getting teachers to change their instruction to be more standards-based and including all students in state assessment through the use of accommodations. The state has also been assisting schools to become more "assessment literate" and to use the data appropriately. In addition, the state is currently building alternate assessment models and developing consequential validity indices for performance assessments.

Inclusion Policies for Assessment

1. *What exclusions are made in the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP? Who makes the decision about exclusion of a particular child? Does the state collect data or in other ways monitor the number and types of students excluded? Does that vary by test?*

The full participation of students with disabilities in state and district assessment programs is important, according to the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), to assure that

each student learns as much of the state's general education curriculum standards as possible. By holding schools accountable for every student's performance, the goal is to increase the achievement of students with disabilities. The information collected will also help each Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team appropriately assess and instruct each student.

2. *What accommodations and/or modifications are made on the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP?*

The student's IEP team will decide how the student will participate in the state assessment program. For students with a Section 504 Plan, the student's 504 team will decide how the student will participate. The state has developed participation guidelines to direct IEP/504 teams as they make participation decisions. These guidelines stress factors such as the cognitive level of students, their ability to generalize information, and their need for multiple setting instruction. The student's IEP team or 504 team should meet prior to the state assessment to determine the nature of student's participation. Students may take:

- the assessment without accommodations, under conditions routinely used;
- the assessment with accommodations; or
- the alternate portfolio assessment of the same standards contained in the curriculum frameworks used for the state assessment.

Accommodations for the state assessments include the following:

Accommodations	Writing	Health	English/LA	Mathematics
Setting				
• Alternate location	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
• Environmental change	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
• Preferential seating	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Presentation				
• Audio tape	Yes	Yes	Directions only	Yes
• Braille edition	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
• Large print	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
• Oral administration	Yes	Yes	Directions only	Yes
• Oral administration in another language	Yes	Yes	Directions only	Yes
• Directions (signed, repeated, simplified)	Yes	Yes	Directions only	Yes
• Audio (i.e. hearing aid)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
• Visual aides	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Scheduling				
• Specific time of day	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
• Subtests in different order	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes
Timing				

• Extended time	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
• Flexible schedule (extended test over several days)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
• Frequent breaks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Response				
• Use of Braille, word processor, computer, typewriter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
• Oral response into tape recorder transcribed into written English	Yes*	Yes	Yes*	Yes~
• Use of scribe	Yes*	Yes	Yes*	Yes~
• Signed response	Yes*	Yes	Yes*	Yes~
• Communication devise	Yes`	Yes	Yes`	Yes
• Pencil grips/large pencil	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Accommodations	Writing	Health	English/LA	Mathematics
• Paper secured in test area with tape or magnets	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
• Resources (i.e. spell check)	No	No	No	Yes
• Oral written response in language other than English	No (English only)	Yes	No (English only)	Yes~

* - Must include specific reference to grammar, spelling and punctuation

~ - Must include specific reference to details of how to construct pictures, charts, graphs, etc.

` - Except for those that self-correct

3. *Does the state provide assessments in languages other than English? If so, describe. In what grades and subjects?*

The New Standards Reference Exam in math at grades 4, 8, 10 is available in Spanish. More broadly, the accommodations allowed by the state specify that the administration of all but the English/language arts assessment may be provided orally in a language other than English; only the *directions* for the English/language arts assessment may be provided orally in a language other than English. Oral written responses to assessments in a language other than English may also be used in health education and math assessments.

4. *Does the state provide alternative assessments for students with disabilities? If so, describe. For which students and in which subjects and at what ages?*

Members of the IEP team must agree that the student is eligible for the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment. Students who might qualify have several characteristics. A student who will participate in the alternate assessment must have:

- a current IEP;
- cognitive ability and adaptive skills that prevent full involvement in the state-approved content standards even with program modifications and adaptations; and
- cognitive ability and adaptive skills that require extensive direct instruction in multiple settings to generalize skills necessary for functional application in school, work, home, and community environments.

The Rhode Island Alternate Assessment Statewide Pilot has been implemented during the 1999-2000 school year. A total of 60 teachers, with representation across grades 3-5 and 7-11 will collect exemplars of student work that measure the state standards. The pilot teachers will have two of their students who meet the participation guidelines develop portfolios to be scored in the spring. All districts will fully participate during the 2000-2001 school year. Training in the Alternate Assessment system will be provided in the spring of 2000 and again in the early fall.

5. *Does the state have a goal for the inclusion of students with disabilities and/or LEP students on the statewide tests? Does the state use any strategies to encourage the inclusion of students with disabilities? LEP students?*

The state expects that in 2001, only beginner English students (by TESOL standards) should be exempted from testing.

6. *Are changes planned in the for the inclusion of SWD and LEP students in the state assessment system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?*

The alternative assessment system will be formally administered in following years; this year it was piloted by the SDE.

Performance Standards

1. *How many and what performance levels has the state established for its assessments?*

Performance levels on the state assessments are:

1. Achieved the Standard with Honors
2. Achieved the Standard
3. Nearly Achieved the Standard
4. Below the Standard
5. Little Evidence of Achievement

2. *Has the state set acceptable levels or targets for schools, districts or the state on tests, drop-out rates or other measures (e.g. 70% of students in Maryland pass the MSPAP)?*

The state goal is 100% of students achieving at the proficient level.

3. *How are these performance standards calculated? What data are included in the calculations, and at what proportions (e.g. assessment results 60%, dropout and attendance rates 40%). How are the calculations made? What is the final unit of analysis for reporting school and district achievement levels (e.g. performance index, grade, category)?*

1. **Gap to Standards:** the first target has addressed the gap in students achieving the state standards. This target has been applied to all students and those students in the lowest performing category in a school in a given subtest. Both groups were required to meet the target, not just all students as a group.

2. **Equity Gap:** Rhode Island researchers have created a model which considers:

- Poverty
- Non-English speaking background
- Educational background of the parents
- Having special learning needs, and
- Having minority/racial group identity

to determine what results schools are likely to achieve when taking into consideration the characteristics of the student body and to establish achievement benchmarks that acknowledge the challenges of different children. Groups of students within a school were compared with similar groups of students statewide; schools themselves were not sorted for comparisons. The 1999 model used two years of assessment data to create the performance bands.

Schools finding a discrepancy of more than 15% in the performance of any of these subgroups, then the school must create a plan to address this issue.

4. *Are all students, schools and districts included in these performance calculations? If not, who is excluded?*

The scores of all students are included except for

- 1) those who will be taking the alternate assessment in 2001,
- 2) beginner ESL students,
- 3) intermediate (TESOL) ESL students who are tested but whose scores are sheltered from aggregation, and
- 4) long term absence students who will not be attending school for the entire testing window.

5. *Are changes planned for the state performance standards (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?*

No changes are anticipated at this time.

6. *What proportion of schools and/or districts fail to meet acceptable levels on performance targets?*

The state has not been in the general practice of identifying schools or districts as low performing. However, using the newly approved **Progressive Support and Intervention: Next Steps for Improving Rhode Island's Low Performing Schools** (see accountability section below), two districts would be designated as "Intervention Districts;" such districts are those with 40% or more of their schools in the category of "Intervention School." There would also be an additional six or seven *schools* for intervention.

Reporting Performance Data

1. *Describe the characteristics of the state performance data reporting system (by whom, what data, who is the audience) for each of the following levels:*

- *Student reports*

Score reports for individual student results from the New Standards Reference Exams, Writing Assessment and Health Education Assessment are provided. These are generated for the individual students as well as aggregations at the school, district and state levels. Schools, classroom teachers, and parents also receive reports listing the results of individual students. Skill profiles are sent to parents for their children, along with assessment result interpretation guides.

- *School reports*

The school **Information Works!** Report includes the following:

- Percentage of students at each performance level in each assessed grade in Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Health and Writing, grouped by elementary, middle and high school levels
- SAT average scores in math and verbal, the percentage of seniors taking the test and the percentage of those test takers in college-bound programs
- Percentage of students who met or exceeded the standard compared to the percentage of similar students statewide
- Characteristics of students in the school by percentage
 1. student eligibility for free or reduced lunch
 2. ethnic/racial background
 3. ESL or bilingual students
 4. special education students
 5. mother's education of students who took the assessment
- Percentage of students who met or exceeded the standard (**disaggregated**)
- Highlights from the school
- Percentage of students who met or exceeded the standard
- Selected SALT Survey findings
- Selected school indicators (SALT survey teacher response rate, SALT survey student response rate, student attendance, average class size, span of responsibility in middle and high schools, stability, mobility, teacher attendance, rate of teacher grievances filed, suspension rate, drop-out rate, graduation rate)

- School targets for **Adequate Yearly Progress (2001 targets vs. 1998 actual)**
- Percentage of students meeting and not meeting the standard (**disaggregated**)
- School goals
- Suspensions (infractions listed by type)
- Reasons for Teacher grievances

- *District and State reports*

Annual report by the commissioner of education: (Article 31) On or before March 1 of each year, the commissioner of education must annually publish a report detailing school district and individual school performance. This report must also set annual performance benchmarks. Also, the commissioner of education reports to the House of Representatives and the senate no later than March 1 of each year, on the status of district and school performance, status of the level of the state's investment in education, and the status of district and school expenditures.

The Rhode Island state and district **Information Works!** Reports includes the following:

- Percentage of students at each performance level in each assessed grade in Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Health and Writing, grouped by school levels
- SAT average scores in math and verbal, the percentage of seniors taking the test and the percentage of those test takers in college-bound programs
- Characteristics of students in the state or district by percentage
 1. public vs. non-public school attendance
 2. student eligibility for free or reduced lunch
 3. ethnic/racial background
 4. ESL or bilingual students
 5. special education students
- Number of schools in the state or district that met or exceeded the standard compared with similar schools statewide
- Selected SALT Survey findings
- Selected school indicators (student attendance, average class size, span of responsibility in middle and high schools (**state only**), stability, mobility, teacher attendance, rate of teacher grievances filed, suspension rate, drop-out rate, graduation rate)
- Percentage of students who met or exceeded the standard (**disaggregated**)
- Community financial indicators (median family income, per capita income, property value per student, relative local tax capacity, relative local tax effort, local tax rate)
- State or district expenditures per pupil
- Sources of revenue
- General and targeted instructional expenditures per pupil
- District mobility by student, teacher and principal (**state only**).

2. *How are the data distributed? When during the year (month or time period after assessment)? To whom (students, teachers, parents, the media, the community)?*

The SDE released results from the 1999 state assessments in January of 2000. Results are sent to districts and then results are distributed to schools.

3. *At what level(s) are data disaggregated (state, district and school levels)? For what groups are disaggregated data reported (see Internet sites for state, district and school level report cards)? Check on the following categories required by federal regulation:*

- Gender yes
- Race (Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, Native Am., White, Other)
- LEP status yes
- Migrant Status no
- SWD yes (special education)
- SES yes (poverty, non-poverty)

Rhode Island also reports the percentage of **general education** students as a disaggregated category.

5. *Does trend data exist from the state assessments (example: Texas State Assessment data is available from “1996-97 on”)?*

Three years of trend data are available for the New Standards Reference Exams and five years on the Rhode Island writing and health education assessments.

6. *How are the results of students with disabilities and limited English proficiency reported? Are they included in the aggregate scores reported to the public, or disaggregated by group?*

The results of both LEP students and those with disabilities are disaggregated and reported separately.

7. *What are the state’s requirements for the use of data in school and district improvement planning?*

Article 31 states that: Every school district receiving state education aid under Title 16 of the general laws shall develop a **district strategic plan**. The district strategic plan shall:

- be based on high academic standards for student performance consistent with the statewide standards and benchmarks;
- be the product of a shared community wide process which defines a vision of what students should know and be able to do;
- address the needs of each school in the district;
- encourage the development of school-based improvement planning and implementation;
- include a process for mentoring of new teachers;
- be designed to improve student achievement with emphasis on closing the performance gaps among groups of students such as the performance gaps correlated with poverty, gender, and language background and disability;
- include establishment of student intervention teams to address the instructional needs of diverse learners, and an asset protection plan; and
- be consistent with Rhode Island’s Comprehensive Education Strategy.

The strategic plan shall include strategies to improve the performance of students in mathematics, reading and writing. These strategies shall be based on the **adequate yearly progress** expected for students and schools. **Annual performance targets** for determining

whether schools and districts have made **adequate yearly progress** will be set by the commissioner of education. The general assembly expects these district strategies to increase the number of fourth grade students performing at or above the proficient standard in mathematics, reading and writing in each district and school.

Each strategic plan must indicate the manner in which self-studies will be completed at the school level in accordance with guidelines established by the commissioner. Funds shall be appropriated to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to assist districts with on-site reviews. Schools to be visited shall be determined by the Commissioner. Each strategic plan shall include the development of inter-agency agreements for the coordination of services among state and local agencies responsible for service to children and families. These agreements shall address the identification and provision of services to preschool children with disabilities and children and youth with behavioral health care needs. All district strategic plans and annual updates shall be submitted to the commissioner of education no later than November 1st of each year.

School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT): This process includes several activities:

Self-study: Self-study activities are focused inquiry activities that the school improvement team conducts. Self-study activities lead to the school improvement team's conclusions about how well that school is doing and recommendations about what it needs to do to improve.

School improvement plan: The plan reflects the judgments made by the school improvement team based on a set of conclusions and recommendations from self-study activities.

School Visit: A team--comprised of a majority of practicing Rhode Island teachers, a parent, a school administrator, school committee member and someone from higher education and usually a member of the RIDE staff--will conduct a four-day visit to each school in the state. Each school can expect a visit approximately once every five years. The visiting team writes a report about how well it thinks the school is performing in each of the three focal areas of SALT and offers advice for the school to pursue.

Compact for Learning: Once the school has revised its school improvement plan on the basis of the report from its school visit, it develops a Compact for Learning (*previously known as the School Support and Intervention Agreement*) with its district and the SDE. The purpose of this agreement is to ensure that the school has as much capacity as possible to implement its revised plan. The agreement specifies what the district and the department (and possibly other partners) will do to support the school. The revisions the school makes to its improvement plan may include changes in the: roles and responsibilities of the school staff, instructional program and the support services the school provides for its students, and the school's site-based expenditures. An initial priority is redirecting resources already available at the school. The agreement may also specify changes in the way the district supports the school both programmatically and fiscally. These changes should be reflected in the district's strategic plan as well as the support agreement. The agreement may also specify new levels and kinds of assistance from the department.

The school prepares to formalize its School Support and Intervention Agreement by discussing the conclusions and recommendations of its school visit report with its district and its Field Service representative. It must decide on whether it should change its school improvement plan to incorporate what it has learned from the report of the visiting team, and if so, how the plan should be changed. The school should keep its district and the department informed of its emerging decisions at appropriate intervals. The agreement should specify the support it needs to implement the revised plan in a way that is persuasive to the district and the department. Once the school has completed this process, the school, district and the department are ready to formalize the School Support and Intervention Agreement. This should be done in a time and place where the school, district and department can conduct a finalizing discussion.

School report night: Schools report to their parents and community at least once a year on how well they are doing, their plans for improving results and how the school community can help the school to address those challenges.

8. *Are changes planned for performance reporting (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the accountability system (Title I or in general)?*

The annual targets set by schools and the school's success in meeting the target will be included in the reports from the state for the 2000-2001 school year; 1999-2000 was the last year of the three year cycle (see accountability section below for cycle explanation).

9. *What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of performance standards and reporting? Explain.*

It is important to recognize that Rhode Island has not been categorizing schools and districts as low or high performing and reporting that to the public, although such calculations have been taking place within the SDE and the state has been tracking annual school progress.

State Accountability System (1999-2000 school year)

1. *Provide a brief overview and history of the accountability system as the context.*

In 1997, Article 31 was passed by the Rhode Island General Assembly, officially establishing the Governor's Comprehensive Education Strategy (CES). For the past two years, all communities have been working on District Strategic Plans as required by Article 31, and every school has set performance targets based on state assessment results for the first time. Those performance targets are guided by school-based improvement plans developed by school teams. Using these targets as the focus, the accountability system in the state is based on three dimensions:

1. Public reporting through Information Works
2. Fiscal responsibility, and
3. School Accountability for Teaching and Learning (SALT).

2. *What are the characteristics of the state accountability system? Organize the response into the following subsections:*

- *Student Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

The state does not have a system of student accountability for promotion or graduation.

- *School and District Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

The range of potential annual performance targets for determining whether schools and districts have made adequate yearly progress was set by the commissioner of education as between 3 and 5%; schools and districts then worked together to determine the specific target. Schools deciding to set a target below 3% or above 5% needed to receive approval from the state.

Schools have been charged with showing satisfactory progress in student achievement each year. The state gathered three years of baseline data (1997-98, 1998-99, 1999-2000) and closely monitored whether schools met score improvement targets. Schools that fail to meet improvement targets will potentially be subject to various levels of increased state support and direction. The department is discouraging interpretations on progress or lack of progress at either the state or district level until at least four years of test data are available for review.

According to Article 31, if after a three-year period of support strategies (see types of assistance below) there has not been improvement in the education of students as determined by the criteria to be developed by the Board of Regents, then there shall be progressive levels of control by the Rhode Island Department of Education over the school and/or district budget, program, and/or personnel. Such control by the Rhode Island Department of Education may be exercised in collaboration with the school district and the municipality. If further needed, the school shall be **reconstituted**. Such reconstitution responsibility has been delegated to the Board of Regents and may range from restructuring the school's governance, budget, program, personnel, and/or may include decisions regarding the continued operation of the school. The Board of Regents will assess the district's capacity and may recommend the provision of additional district, municipal and/or state resources. If a school or school district is under the Board of Regents' control as a result of actions taken by the Board pursuant to this section, the local school committee shall be responsible for funding that school or school district at the same level as in the prior academic year increased by the same percentage as the state total of school aid is increased.

During this three year period, however, schools and districts have been held harmless and no consequences have been in place for schools not meeting annual targets. The new plan outlined below will include consequences for schools not making the required improvement.

3. *What methods of measuring progress are used in the state accountability system?*

The state system has required that schools meet both an absolute target (i.e. 4% improvement in achievement) and narrow the gap by raising the performance of the lowest performing students.

4. *Are all students included in calculating the measures of progress? If not, who is excluded (probe on inclusion of SWD and LEP students)?*

The scores of all students are included except for:

- those who will be Taking the alternate assessment in 2001,
- beginner ESL students,
- intermediate (TESOL) ESL students who are tested but whose scores are
- sheltered from aggregation, and
- long term absence students who will not be attending school for the entire testing window.

5. *How do the general state accountability system and the system of accountability for Title I schools compare? Are they the same, or different? How?*

The state has had an aligned system and will continue to with the new plan approved by the Board of Regents.

6. *Are subgroup performance results used as an indicator in the calculation of state accountability measures? If so, how? To identify schools or districts in need of improvement? For recognition and rewards?*

Rhode Island targets subgroup performance in two ways:

1. **Gap to Standards:** the first target has addressed the gap in students achieving the state standards. This target (i.e. 3-5%) has been applied to all students and also to those students in the lowest performing category in a school in a given subtest. Both groups were required to meet the target, not just all students.
2. **Equity Gap:** Rhode Island researchers have created a model that considers:
 - Poverty
 - Non-English speaking background
 - Educational background of the parents
 - Having special learning needs, and
 - Having minority/racial group identity

to determine what results schools are likely to achieve when taking into consideration the characteristics of the student body and to establish achievement benchmarks that acknowledge the challenges of different children. Groups of students within a school were compared with similar groups of students statewide; schools themselves were not sorted for comparisons. The 1999 model used two years of assessment data to create the performance bands.

Schools finding a discrepancy of more than 15% in the performance of any of these subgroups, then the school must create a plan to address this issue.

7. *Are charter and/or non-public schools included in the accountability system? If so, how?*

Charter schools are included in the state accountability system while non-public schools are not.

8. *Are changes planned for the state accountability system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?*

The **Progressive Support and Intervention: Next Steps for Improving Rhode Island's Low Performing Schools** (approved May 11, 2000) outlines the following criteria for identifying low performing schools:

1. whether or not a school is improving student learning, specifically whether it is achieving its targets for improving student performance
2. the magnitude of the percentage of students below standard in mathematics, English, language arts and writing
3. the magnitude of discrepancies of achievement levels between groups of students, and
4. whether the students in a school perform at, above or below the level of similar students in the state.

Still pending is the decision as to the amount of money that will be provided for this program by the state legislature, and than will impact the specifics of when the program starts and how much the SDE can do in the state.

9. *What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of accountability? Explain.*

The school day schedules (time available for reflection and data analysis) and cultures (the focus on looking at performance in a school as a whole) as schools have operated traditionally have not supported standards-based reform and accountability. District capacity for reform and the state's ability to "manage the press" around issues of achievement reporting have also been issues in the state.

Identifying and Assisting Low Performing Schools and Districts

1. *How are schools and districts identified as low performing? Using what criteria? Do the identification processes and/or criteria differ for Title I and non-Title I schools?*

The state decided initially that their definition of a low performing schools, under both Title I and the general system, would be that fewer than 100% of the students in a school or district were scoring below the proficient level in math, reading and writing. With this criteria, all schools in the state were considered low performing, but none were identified as such.

2. *Does the district or the state decide whether a school is low performing? If the district is involved in the process, how much discretion do they have?*

This will be determined by the state under the new system of support and intervention.

3. *What types of assistance are provided to these schools and districts by the state?*

Article 31: The Board of Regents will adopt a series of progressive support and intervention strategies consistent with the Comprehensive Education Strategy and the principles of the "**School Accountability for Learning and Teaching**" (SALT) of the Board of Regents for those schools and school districts that continue to fall short of performance goals outlined in the district strategic plans. Such strategies will initially focus on:

- (2) technical assistance in improvement planning, curriculum alignment, student assessment, instruction, and family and community involvement;
- (3) policy support; and
- (4) creating supportive partnerships with education institutions, business, governmental or other appropriate nonprofit agencies.

The **Office of School Improvement and Accountability** has responsibility for developing and implementing systems that support the continuous improvement of schools. These systems include: 1) school networks, 2) training programs, and 3) School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT).

School Networks: The office is responsible for supporting:

- The Rhode Island Middle Level Education Network (RIMLE),
 - The Title I Schoolwide Network, and
 - The newly developed Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Network (CSRDN).
- It houses the Charter School initiative that is currently promoting development of Charter Schools and forming a network of those schools. The office, in partnership with the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals (RIFTHP), supports the Rhode Island Skills Commission (RISC).

Training Programs: The office conducts a wide range of ad-hoc and ongoing training, which includes leadership training for superintendents, principals and school improvement teams, often in partnership with the Center for School Leadership (CSL) and other educational organizations, to use SALT Survey data.

School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT): The office houses the School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) system. While SALT is an agency-wide effort, the Office of School Improvement and Accountability is responsible for:

- the continuing development of the SALT system
- the coordination of the SALT Visits
- the development and dissemination of guidance to schools on conducting the various SALT activities
- training schools, districts and RI Department of Education staff to conduct SALT activities.

1. *Who provides the state assistance?*

The **Office of School Improvement and Accountability** has responsibility for developing and implementing systems that support the continuous improvement of schools. Five **RIDE**

Field Service Teams provide assistance in self-study activities, including the analysis of SALT survey data which inform school improvement plans. Schools are also regularly visited by **SALT visitation teams** that provide feedback on school improvement efforts. This visit results in an agreement called a Compact for Learning which reflects a more detailed plan for school support.

5. *Does support to Title I and all low performing schools and districts differ? Is support generally provided for all schools and districts, or are services specifically designed to help those that are low performing?*

The support systems in the state are available for all schools. Title I schools also have a Schoolwide Network for Title I Schoolwide Projects (see Title I section below).

6. *Has the state established a set of criteria and/or a process for getting schools and districts out of low performing status? If so, what do they include?*

Under the Progressive Support and Intervention plan, when the indicators of successful implementation have been reached, the district and its schools will continue in RIDE's ongoing SALT process and Field Service Team support, but would no longer be considered to be in "intervention." (see changes question #8 below for full description).

7. *Once a school or district is identified as low performing, what types of plans must it prepare? Who are they submitted to once completed? How do they differ from other planning documents?*

Under the Progressive Support and Intervention plan, a district identified as requiring intervention will be visited by a Support and Intervention Team from the state that will work with the district to analyze the areas that need reform and develop a detailed diagnosis of the problems facing the district and its schools. This analysis will result in a **Negotiated District Agreement**, detailing a strategy for reform (see below for agreement components).

8. *Are changes planned for the state system of identifying and assisting low performing schools or districts (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?*

As outlined in the **Progressive Support and Intervention: Next Steps for Improving Rhode Island's Low Performing Schools** (approved May 11, 2000), the state has determined that the data generated through the Information Works system will be utilized to determine the "threshold" conditions or indicators under which school support and intervention will occur. The first step in the process will be to identify "Schools Under Review." In addition to these indicators, RIDE is planning to use a three-year rolling average to measure change in student performance. Schools under review would look at local data to determine whether or not it supports the state contention that the school is low performing.

If local data support the conclusions drawn by the state, the school would be designated as an “Intervention School.” Districts with 40% or more of their schools in this category would be designated as “Intervention Districts.” Intervention action steps for school schools and districts might include:

- A prescribed course of study for teachers
- A focused effort in the development of leadership for administrators
- Support for the development of curriculum or materials
- Support for the development of school schedules that ensure time for examining student work and teacher practice
- Development of staff capacity to access, analyze and use data to inform instruction
- Development of an information infrastructure that provides access to student achievement data
- Development of a system of resource allocation that aligns with student achievement
- Development of a public engagement plan that supports student achievement.

A district identified as requiring intervention will be visited by a Support and Intervention Team from the state that will work with the district to analyze the areas that need reform and develop a detailed diagnosis of the problems facing the district and its schools. This analysis will result in a **Negotiated District Agreement**, detailing the following:

- changes that will be implemented,
- a timeline for implementation,
- assistance to be provided by the state,
- a resource plan,
- the required outcomes, and
- indicators of successful implementation.

RIDE will monitor district progress over time and negotiate adjustments with the Agreement as needed. When the indicators of successful implementation have been reached, the district and its schools will continue in RIDE’s ongoing SALT process and Field Service Team support.

Title I and Adequate Yearly Progress

1. *What criteria are included in the definition of adequate yearly progress for schools and districts under Title I?*

The state assessment tests in math, writing and English/language arts are used as the criteria for adequate yearly progress, which in Rhode Island is a measure of progress that a school or district is making towards moving all children to meet the Regents standard of proficiency. Achievement targets for proficiency over 3 years are set by each school. The state issued guidelines to the schools on how to do this in each tested subject. These targets are then to be negotiated with the state via the RIDE field service system (initially by November 1998).

2. *What are the definitions of adequate yearly progress for the following:*

Adequate Yearly Progress in Rhode Island has been in the form of target setting. Schools and districts have been required to set three year targets for improvement in both proficiency and equity standards.

A three-year “rolling average” will be used:

Year 1: 1997-98 (Baseline Year)

Year 2: 1998-99

Year 3: 1999-2000.

The guidelines for adequate yearly progress have been 3-5% per year for an accumulated target gain of 9-15% over three years. Schools used the same 3 to 5% guidelines to set targets to reduce the proportion of their lowest achieving schools. Some schools have a large number of students performing at the lowest level (>10%); those schools merely applied the guide numbers to that group. If there were less than 10% the level “little evidence of achievement” the school added the percentage of students at the next lowest level, or “below the standard.” Those schools applied the guide numbers to the combined lowest two achievement levels. In rare cases, schools had less than 10% of their students in these lowest two levels, in which case the school used all three groups of students performing below the standard to set the target.

This has been a transitional approach and all schools in the state will now be aligned with the process established in the Progressive Support and Intervention plan.

3. *What is the process for identifying those schools and districts that are not making adequate yearly progress under Title I? Does the district or the state make this determination for schools? If the districts plays a role, does the state provide guidance on local criteria?*

The state has been monitoring schools and districts to see if they have been making their annual target of between 3 and 5%, but have not acted on this information in any formal way.

4. *What are the criteria and processes for identifying schools and districts in need of improvement under Title I? What plans must be prepared? How can a school or district get out of Program Improvement? Does the district or the state make this determination for schools?*

The state decided initially that their definition of a low performing schools would be that fewer than 100% of the students were scoring below the proficient level in math, reading and writing. With this criteria, all schools in the state were considered low performing, but none were identified as such.

5. *What types of assistance are provided to those in need of improvement under Title I?*

The Rhode Island Schoolwide Network is a new initiative for Title I Schoolwide Projects in the state. Schools with 50 percent poverty or higher may elect to become Schoolwide Project

Schools, which allows greater flexibility with Title I funds. The network, which was started last spring, will hold four meetings each year. The purpose is to provide schools that are attempting to improve student achievement with support and resources for their efforts.

6. *Who provides the assistance?*

See previous question, as well as general assistance provided to all schools and districts.

7. *Have waivers played a role in this process?*

No, waivers have not played a role in the state.

8. *Are there future plans for the state system for schools or districts receiving Title I funding (proposed or enacted and to be implemented) or for the definition of adequate yearly progress? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?*

For the 2000-01 school year, the state has developed a process that would identify approximately 30 schools that would be considered low performing; the plan has been submitted to the United States Department of Education for approval, but would only be a transitional plan for one year.

A Title I participating LEA that has 40% or more of its Title I schools identified as low performing is to be identified as in need of improvement. Title I participating schools that have 10% or fewer students achieving proficiency and 50% or more students in the two lowest performance levels on two of the three State Assessment Program (SAP) tests will be identified as in need of improvement. The AYP or growth measure for schools is the 3-5% annual rate for a period of three years, under Article 31 authority for the Commissioner to annually establish targets.

The new Progressive Support and Intervention Plan approved by the state (May 11, 2000) has been developed and is intended to apply to both Title I and non-Title I schools and districts; the plan will also be submitted for approval by the U.S. Department of Education.

9. *Is there alignment between Title I and non-Title I systems for adequate yearly progress?*

Yes, the two systems have been aligned and will continue to be aligned using the new system approved on May 11, 2000.

10. *What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of Title I? Explain.*

The transition to the new Progressive Support and Intervention Plan is the major issue for the state Title I Office at this time.

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