



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
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Peter McWalters  
Commissioner

September 18, 2008

TO: Superintendents

FROM: Peter McWalters, Commissioner 

SUBJECT: Algebra II Assessments

The first cycle of the American Diploma Project Algebra II end-of-course assessments concluded on Monday (August 25<sup>th</sup>) with the public release of state-level performance results on this new assessment. I want to thank the 25 Rhode Island high schools (see list below) that participated in either the pilot testing phase (October 2007) or the first operational phase (May 2008) of this exam.

Achieve and a consortium of 14 states developed this Algebra II assessment; Rhode Island was one of the 9 founding members of the consortium. Twelve of the states had at least some students involved in the May 2008 assessment. This multi-state partnership is the largest of its kind ever attempted. It serves as a model of the voluntary adoption of content and performance standards. This initiative has considerable political support among governors, and we expect it to include even more states and reach a higher profile of recognition as the project moves forward.

The Achieve and Rhode Island news releases and report (attached) explain the context and the purpose of this assessment very well. The Achieve report presents state-by-state performance data, but the Achieve materials indicate clearly that cross-state comparisons are not valid for this first test administration.

Results from this first test administration will be interpreted over the coming year as the project completes a variety of “validity studies” so that appropriate performance standards can be set and reported after the second test administration, in May 2009. Test-score reports that you received last week for students who took the test in last May will simply list the number of questions the student answered correctly. No performance standards (e.g., proficiency level) have been set at this time. This reporting format is temporary and is for the development year only.

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This Algebra II assessment is intended to correlate with success in credit-bearing college mathematics courses. Results across of all participating states were uniformly low and demonstrate that significant alignment or instructional issues need to be addressed. We should not be discouraged, however, by these initial levels of performance. We know by using complementary data from NECAP and the SAT that much more must be done to improve the mathematical reasoning and content knowledge of our students.

It is becoming increasingly important for high schools to offer a rigorous mathematics sequence that meets the new expectations of this century. The American Diploma Project Algebra II assessment is voluntary, but it is one of the best vehicles available for defining and measuring a strong Algebra program. We hope that we can fully support the cost of this assessment for the coming year. For planning, you may wish to schedule two ninety-minute test sessions during the testing window of May 5-23, 2009. These test dates are the same dates used by the College Board AP program, so you may wish to plan for a joint testing schedule. As the funding situation becomes clearer, we will provide additional details regarding test administration.

Attachment

C: High School Principals

# ACHIEVE AMERICAN DIPLOMA PROJECT

## RHODE ISLAND HIGH SCHOOLS CONTRIBUTING TO THE TRIAL YEAR OF THE ALGEBRA II END-OF-COURSE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

### PILOT TESTING PHASE OCTOBER 2007

Barrington HS  
Central Falls HS  
Coventry HS  
East Providence HS  
Johnston Sr. HS  
North Kingstown Sr. HS  
North Smithfield Jr.-Sr. HS  
Ponagansett HS (Foster-Glocester)  
Portsmouth HS  
Wm. Davies Jr. Career-Tech. HS

### FIRST OPERATIONAL PHASE MAY 2008

Blackstone Academy  
Mt. Hope HS (Bristol Warren)  
Chariho Regional HS  
Cranston High School East  
Cumberland HS  
Lincoln HS  
Providence District  
    Adelaide HS  
    E-Cubed Academy  
    Hope Arts HS  
    Hope Info. Tech. HS  
    Hope Leadership HS  
Scituate HS  
Warwick District  
    Pilgrim HS  
    Toll Gate HS  
    Veterans Memorial HS