



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
Shepard Building  
255 Westminster Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

---

## NEWS RELEASE

---

Contact: Elliot Krieger, Communications - (401) 222-8471; after 1 p.m., Maureen D'Andrea, 222-8706  
Embargo until: 9 a.m. - June 4, 2008

### **Education Department Releases Newly Calculated Graduation Rates for 2007**

Education Commissioner Peter McWalters today released the newly calculated graduation rate for the Class of 2007, which employs a calculation formula endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Governors Association.

Under the new formula, the reported graduation rate for the Class of 2007 is 70.1 percent. A national report to be released today (June 4<sup>th</sup>) by Education Week using the same formula puts the national graduation rate (Class of 2005) at 70.6 percent.

Under the old formula, the reported rate graduation rate for Rhode Island was 89.2.

Two factors account for this 19-point change.

First, the previous graduation rate included all graduates regardless of how many years they spent in high school. The new graduation rate includes only four-year graduates, which accounts for about 6 percent of the change.

Second, previously many students who left school for reasons that were unknown (i.e., not known to be a dropout or a transfer) were not counted as dropouts. Under the new formula, all "unknown" departures from the school system are listed as dropouts.

"Adopting this new calculation was a critical part of our efforts to bring greater transparency to our education system," said Gov. Donald L. Carcieri. "In order to improve Rhode Island's schools, the public needs an accurate understanding of the challenges we face and how we compare with other states. That requires this type of transparent reporting. I am working with the PK-16 Council to not only make our system more transparent but also to ensure that our students graduate ready for college and work. Now that we have a more accurate formula for calculating our graduation rate, we have a better chance of designing the necessary reforms to improve our outcomes."

"Though it comes as no surprise, the newly reported high-school dropout rates, particularly in the urban districts, are troubling to all of us," said Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Esq., Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. "As a result of this new data, the Board of Regents will intensify its focus on successful dropout-prevention strategies such as improving educator quality."

-more-

“We are confident that the newly calculated graduation rate, which is based on a much more complete database that RIDE has developed over the past five years, gives us a more accurate picture of the dropout rate in Rhode Island,” said Commissioner McWalters. “Interventions that the Regents have put in place in recent years such as the new graduation requirements, the emphasis on small schools and student advisories, and the requirement that all high-school students have an individual learning plan will help ensure that students stay in school through graduation.”

Under the old formula, RIDE reported for the Class of 2007:

Graduation Rate:	89.2 percent
Dropout Rate:	10.8 percent

Under the new formula, RIDE is reporting for the Class of 2007:

Graduation Rate:	70.1 percent
Students still in system:	6.0 percent
GED completers	4.6 percent
Dropout rate:	19.2 percent

Though for some schools the graduation rate changes only slightly under the new formula, some schools in the urban districts see a drop-off of approximately 30 points in the reported graduation rate. The newly reported graduation rates range from 100% (Times2 Academy, Providence) and 96.7% (Classical High School, Providence) to 46% (Central Falls High School and William E. Tolman Senior High School, Pawtucket).

Rhode Island began the transition to the new graduation rate in 2003 when the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) implemented the first State-Assigned Individual Student Identifier (SASID). Under the previous formula, to calculate the graduation rate RIDE divided the number of current year graduates by the number of graduates plus the number of dropouts from the previous four years. This method used a total student census rather than individual student records. Now that the SASID has been in place for four school years, RIDE is able to adopt the more exact “student roster tracking method” to calculate the graduation rate. This new formula or method accounts for each student from the time that he/she enters the public-school system.

Under a plan approved by the U.S. Department of Education, RIDE agreed to report the newly calculated graduation rate for the Class of 2007 for informational purposes only. Beginning with the Class of 2008, RIDE will use the new graduation-rate formula to determine whether schools have met their annual targets.

Three years ago, the governors of all 50 states agreed, through the National Governors Association, to use the same formula to calculate and report graduation rates. Rhode Island is among the first states to transition to the new formula.

Data being released today by Education Week show that all but one state will report a lower graduation rate under the new formula, with the reported differences ranging up to 30.9 percent.

As more data become available in future years, RIDE will publish four-year, five-year, and six-year graduation rates. As required by the No Child Left Behind Act, however, only the four-year rate will be used to determine whether schools and districts have met annual targets.

A complete list of the newly reported graduation rates for each high school will be posted on the RIDE Web site, [www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov)