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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Board of Regents Amends 2003 High-School Regulations**

PROVIDENCE – The Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education voted tonight (September 3, 2008) to amend the High School Regulations of 2003 so as to clarify the process districts must go through to implement the regulations and to bolster supports for students.

The amended regulations specify some course requirements, provide details about the required personal literacy plans and mathematics interventions for students performing below grade level, and place greater weight on state assessments as a graduation requirement.

The amended regulations state that “the Rhode Island Diploma System is designed to support students in becoming proficient life-long learners in order to successfully pursue post-secondary academic and career goals.” (Section 3.0)

The regulations also note that “every student enrolled in Rhode Island public schools has the right to an individualized and optimized opportunity to achieve proficiency for graduation.” (3.6) They also state that students entering high school who are not “on course” toward graduation “shall be provided...with the requisite supports designed to offer meaningful opportunities, including alternate pathways, to complete” the diploma requirements. (3.6a)

The regulations further state that, in order to have an approved graduation system, school districts “must demonstrate...that all students have been provided appropriate supports and opportunities to learn.” (3.4)

“The amended regulations that the Board has approved tonight are fair to students and their families, and they take a major step toward ensuring that all our graduates will demonstrate levels of proficiency in English, mathematics, and the other core subject areas,” said Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Esq., Chairman of the Board of Regents. “I commend my fellow Regents for their hard work during the past two years in developing these amended regulations.”

“As we have worked together with all school districts to implement the Rhode Island Diploma System, with its emphasis on supports to students and proficiency-based graduation requirements, we have come across issues that have needed clarification and specificity,” said Peter McWalters, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “These amended regulations will help us continue to develop a Diploma System that will engage high-school students and keep them on the pathway toward success in college and the world of work.”

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The amended regulations add no new graduation requirements and leave in place the key elements of the Diploma System established in the 2003 regulations:

- In order to graduate from a Rhode Island high school, students must demonstrate that they have achieved proficiency in six “core academic areas”: English, mathematics, science, social studies, technology, and the arts.
- Students must demonstrate this proficiency “through multiple sources of evidence gathered over time,” including coursework, state assessments, and “performance-based assessments,” such as portfolios, exhibitions (senior projects), or end-of-course exams. (3.1) Under the previous regulations, state assessments could count for no more than 10 percent of the graduation requirements.
- The Commissioner “shall review all [district] high-school diploma systems” and grant approval only to those that comply with the regulations.

Among the changes put in place by the amended regulations:

- Districts may continue to issue diplomas based on “local criteria” through 2012, as the Commissioner continues his review of the diploma systems in all districts. In 2010, districts whose systems have been approved may begin offering Regents’ approved diplomas. By 2012, districts without full approval “will no longer be authorized to grant diplomas.” (3.4)
- Students must complete 20 academic credits (courses), including four years each of English and mathematics (the fourth course may be a mathematics-related course), three years of science, and three years of history or social studies. (3.1)
- NECAP, the state assessments, will count as one-third of the proficiency measure in English and mathematics, though “state assessments shall not be the sole grounds to prohibit graduation from high school.” The Regents shall determine the “minimum achievement level” on the assessments to measure proficiency for graduation, and the Commissioner shall prescribe “additional evidence of proficiency” that can be presented for students who fall below the minimum achievement level, or passing score, on the NECAP tests. (3.3)

(In a separate action tonight, the Regents set the minimum achievement level, or cut score, on the NECAP tests as “partially proficient.”)

The amended regulations provide additional specificity about the required supports to students, notably:

- All districts must provide “specialized assistance” to all students reading below grade level, including “Personal Literacy Plans” for all elementary-school students reading below grade level. (2.2)
- All districts must develop “strategies and programs” to assist students who are not making progress in mathematics. (2.3)
- Upon entry into middle school, each student “shall have an individual learning plan” that will be developed over time to document the student’s “interests, needs, supports, course selections,...and opportunities” (3.6a)
- Students and families “have the right to appeal graduation decisions,” and districts must allow for “alternate methods of measuring the student’s overall proficiency.” (3.4.c)

In coming weeks, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) will issue guidance for school districts on implementing the revised regulations. The revised regulations will soon be posted on the RIDE Web site, [www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov).