

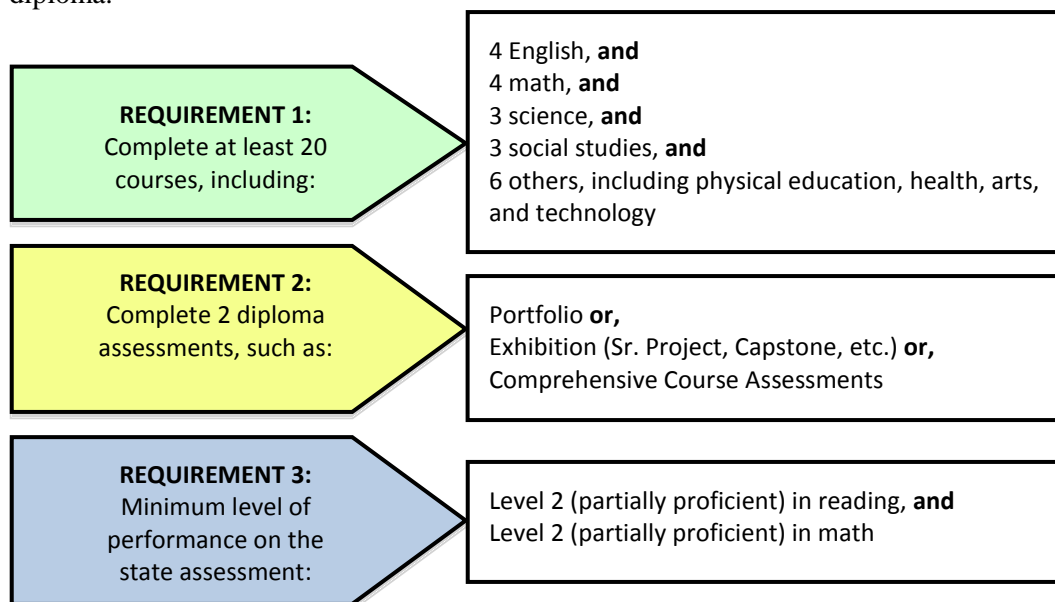
August 2, 2011

Dear Families of High-School Sophomores,

I am writing to tell you about changes to Rhode Island's graduation requirements. These requirements, though challenging, will ensure that all Rhode Island students graduate ready for success in postsecondary education and careers. These changes will affect current sophomores, the graduating class of 2014, and future classes. In this letter, I will address four important topics: (1) the graduation requirements for the Class of 2014, (2) the responsibilities of your child's school, (3) the opportunity for your child to earn a new academic honor, and (4) the steps you can take to help ensure your child's success.

The Graduation Requirements for the Class of 2014

There are three graduation requirements for the current sophomores, the Class of 2014. Requirements 1 and 2 remain the same as the requirements in effect now (see below). Requirement 3, starting in 2014, requires all students to reach a Level 2 (partially proficient) on the state tests in reading and math in order to receive a diploma.



These graduation requirements will help ensure that your child is ready for college, careers, and life. These are the minimum state requirements; your local school district may have additional requirements. Contact your child's principal to learn more.

The Responsibilities of Your Child's School

Your child's school is responsible for providing you with clear information about the graduation requirements. In addition, the school is required to contact you if your child is falling behind or is not on track to graduate.

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If your child is not on track to graduate, she or he must receive additional academic help and may need a “progress plan.” Progress plans are documents schools and families create, and they include two important parts: the academic help the school will provide the student and the steps the student must take in order to meet the requirements and graduate.

If your child does not reach Level 2 (partially proficient) in reading and math on the 11th-grade state test, he or she will have the opportunity to retake the state test during senior year. Your child must show improvement in his or her achievement on the test in order to graduate.

Regents’ Commendations: An Academic Honor

The graduating class of 2014 will have the opportunity to earn an academic honor called a “Regents’ Commendation.” A student who earns a Regents’ Commendation will have a special seal on his or her diploma. A student will be able to earn a Regents’ Commendation by meeting all of the graduation requirements of his or her school and by scoring at Level 3 (proficient) in reading and math on the state tests.

Three Things Families Can Do Today to Support Student Success

Families share responsibility for their child’s success. There are several important steps you can take immediately:

First, contact your child’s school and ask for three things: (1) results from your child’s 8th-grade state tests, (2) attendance for this school year, and (3) your child’s grades for this school year. This will provide you with enough information to know if your child is on track to graduate or is falling behind.

Second, if your child scored at Level 1 (substantially below proficient) or Level 2 (partially proficient) in reading or math on a state test in 8th grade, schedule a meeting with your child’s school counselor and learn more about the additional help your child is receiving or may need.

Third, talk with your child about the graduation requirements and the importance of keeping up with his or her work. Make sure that both of you understand the requirements and that you both know whether your child is on track to graduate.

If you have questions about your school’s graduation requirements, please contact your child’s principal. The graduation requirements may also be available on the district or school Web site. You can visit the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) Web site (www.ride.ri.gov/HighSchoolReform/) to read more about the state graduation requirements.

Rhode Island’s graduation requirements set high expectations for all our students. These requirements are a challenge that all our students can reach. RIDE and our schools are committed to working together to make sure that your child graduates from high school truly ready for success in college, careers, and life.

Sincerely,



Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner