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TITLE 200 – BOARD OF EDUCATION

CHAPTER 20 – COUNCIL ON SECONDARY AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

SUBCHAPTER 10 - ACADEMIC STANDARDS, PROGRAMS AND OPERATIONS

PART 2 – Secondary Design: Middle and High School Learning Environments and the Rhode Island Diploma System

2.1 Definitions

- A. As used in this Part, the following words and terms have the following meaning, unless the context indicates another or different meaning or intent:
1. “Applied learning skills” means the cross-curricular, skill-based standards students are expected to learn and acquire over the course of their K-12 education, including communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, research, reflection and evaluation, and collaboration.
 2. “Advisory structure” means a structure or structures for stable groups of students to meet regularly throughout the academic year with at least one assigned adult in an environment with sufficient time and opportunity to support student achievement in the academic, career, and personal/social domains.
 3. “Certificates” means documentation that can be earned by a student and certify his or her mastery of specific skills or sets of skills; completion of training requirements set forth by a certifying body; and/or demonstrated readiness to enter an industry, educational setting, independent living, or the workplace.
 4. “Commissioner” means the commissioner of elementary and secondary education.
 5. “Common planning time” means regular, scheduled opportunities provided to teachers to work in disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary teams for the purpose of improving student achievement.
 6. “Concurrent enrollment” means enrollment of a student in a dual enrollment course that is offered at the secondary school and taught by a secondary school teacher who is approved by the postsecondary institutions.

7. “Conjunctive diploma requirements” means the non-compensatory relationship between Rhode Island’s diploma requirements, commencing in 2021. The required elements of a diploma include:
 - a. Successful completion of state and local course requirements; and,
 - b. Successful completion of a performance-based diploma assessment.
8. “Content standards” means the knowledge and skills associated with a particular subject area that defines what students need to know and be able to do.
9. “Core content areas” means English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, and technology.
10. “Course” means a connected series of lessons and learning experiences that:
 - a. Establish expectations defined by recognized content standards;
 - b. Provide students with opportunities to learn and practice skills; and,
 - c. Include assessments of student knowledge and skills adequate to determine proficiency at the level of academic rigor required by relevant content standards.
11. “Course catalog” means a list of courses offered to students during a given timeframe, typically including course name, description, pre-requisites, and instructor.
12. “Council designation” means a notation on a diploma designating achievement consistent with a standard set for this purpose by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. Designations approved by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education shall include but not be limited to documentation of student achievement of statewide literacy and numeracy standards and documentation of student completion of a defined course of study consistent with a personal learning goal.
13. “Diploma system” means the comprehensive set of structures, processes, and policies required in all secondary schools to ensure access to rigorous programming and appropriate supports that prepare all students for success in college, careers, and life.
14. “Dual enrollment” means enrollment of a student in a secondary school while simultaneously enrolled part-time or full-time as a non-matriculating student at a postsecondary institution, such as a community college, college, or university.

15. “Guaranteed and viable curriculum” means curriculum that provides both the opportunity and time for students to learn. It ensures that the curriculum is implemented consistently by all teachers to all students. It is based on a commitment from the districts and its schools that the written, taught, and learned curriculum is aligned so that all students learn agreed-upon standards. See “Basic Educational Program Regulations”.
16. “Individual learning plan” or “ILP” means a planning and monitoring tool that customizes and directs students’ goals and development in three domains: academic, career, and personal/social.
17. “Literacy” means the ability to read, write, speak, and listen in order to communicate with others effectively, as well as the ability to think and respond critically and to process complex information across content areas.
18. “Local education agency” or “LEA” means a public board of education/school committee or other public authority legally constituted within the State for either administrative control or direction of one or more Rhode Island public elementary schools or secondary schools.
19. “Numeracy” means the ability to use and communicate about numbers and measures with a range of mathematical techniques in order to solve quantitative or spatial problems in a range of real-world contexts.
20. “Performance-based diploma assessment” means multifaceted assignments that serve as a culminating demonstration of a student’s applied learning skills and knowledge of one or more content areas.
21. “Personalization” means a diverse variety of educational programs, learning experiences, instructional approaches and academic support strategies that are intended to address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations or cultural backgrounds of individual students.
22. “Proficiency” means a defined level of knowledge and skills that are expected to be learned signaling that a student is well prepared to progress to the next lesson, course, grade level, or to receive a diploma.

2.2 Ensuring grade level literacy and numeracy for all secondary Rhode Island students

Each local education agency (LEA) shall ensure that all of its secondary students are proficient in literacy and numeracy. LEAs shall ensure student proficiency by providing access to a guaranteed and viable curriculum, monitoring each student’s progress toward proficiency in literacy and numeracy, and providing sufficient academic, career, and personal/social supports to ensure that all secondary students become proficient.

2.2.1 Assessing literacy and numeracy proficiency levels of secondary students

- A. Each LEA in Rhode Island shall evaluate the literacy and numeracy levels of all secondary students. All LEAs shall develop a screening/review process that utilizes state and local assessments to identify students in need of additional diagnostic assessment and instructional support.
- B. LEAs shall diagnostically assess all secondary who have been identified through this screening process described herein as performing below grade level to determine and assign appropriate instructional strategies and intervention. The LEAs shall be responsible for costs associated with test procurement, administration, and interpretation. The Commissioner may authorize the use of suitable state or federal funds for such purpose.

2.2.2 Improving literacy and numeracy for secondary students performing below grade level

- A. Each LEA shall initiate interventions for every student functioning below levels of expected performance for their grade based on the assessments required under § 2.2(B) of this Part. Any student who continues to fall below grade level and/or fails to attain proficiency in literacy or numeracy in subsequent years shall continue to receive specialized intervention and supports.
- B. Ensuring grade level literacy and numeracy is the responsibility of each LEA and shall include instruction and the provision of school-wide, targeted and intensive supports. Intervention and support for students performing one or more years below grade level shall be documented within the student's Individualized Learning Plan (ILP).
- C. Each LEA shall ensure that all students who are not demonstrating proficiency as measured by state-adopted math and literacy standards will attain and maintain performance that allows them to engage in grade appropriate curriculum. LEAs shall have mechanisms in place that:
 - 1. Identify and support students who are not making progress in literacy and mathematics as measured by local and state assessment data; and
 - 2. Provide universal student access to a guaranteed and viable curriculum aligned to state adopted standards; and,
 - 3. Ensure that all grade levels work collaboratively to transition students between schools within and across LEAs.
- D. All LEAs shall maintain documentation of the effectiveness of specific literacy and mathematics strategies and programs that have been implemented.

2.3 Rhode Island Diploma System

- A. Diploma eligibility shall be derived from a conjunctive review of two sources of evidence:
 - 1. Successful course completion in conformance with § 2.3.1 of this Part.
 - 2. Successful completion of at least one performance-based diploma assessment as described in § 2.3.2 of this Part.
- B. In order to be eligible for a diploma, students must meet state and local requirements in § 2.3(A) of this Part.
- C. No earlier than the class of 2017, LEAs may choose to include the state assessment or other standardized assessment as a graduation requirement in addition to the requirements in §§ 2.3(A)(1) and (2) of this Part.
- D. LEAs shall provide students with multiple opportunities and appropriate supports to meet local graduation requirements adopted in compliance with this Part and to prepare for post-secondary academic and career goals.
- E. Each Rhode Island school committee shall adopt graduation requirements consistent with §§ 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.3.4 and 2.3.5 of this Part in LEA policy and shall maintain documentation of these policies.

2.3.1 Coursework requirements

- A. LEAs shall formally adopt coursework graduation requirements that apply to all students within the LEA and require successful completion of at least twenty courses.
- B. The twenty courses must include demonstration of proficiency, as defined by the LEA and aligned with appropriate high school content standards in the six core content areas: English language arts, math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology.
 - 1. All courses shall be aligned to state adopted high school standards or locally adopted national standards in those content areas for which there are no state standards.
 - 2. All courses must be of sufficient scope and rigor to allow students to achieve high school level proficiency, as determined by the LEA.
 - 3. Successful completion of a course shall include demonstration of the knowledge, skill, and competencies outlined in the course learning objectives.
- C. The twenty courses must include the following content-area courses:

1. Four courses of English language arts;
 2. Four courses of mathematics;
 3. Three courses of science; and,
 4. Three courses of history/social studies.
 5. Pursuant to LEA policies and applicable state law, the additional six required courses are presumed to include, but not limited to world languages, the arts, technology, physical education, and health.
- D. Designation as a content-area course, e.g. “mathematics” or “science,” shall be an LEA decision based upon alignment to relevant state adopted standards or, in those content areas not defined by state-adopted standards, other recognized content standards. LEAs may integrate multiple core or other content areas and associated learning standards into a single course for the purpose of meeting coursework requirements.
- E. The selection and scheduling of courses shall be consistent with the needs of the individual student and, to the maximum degree possible, the student’s individual learning plan (ILP).
- F. LEA graduation requirements must satisfy all curricular requirements set forth in General Laws and applicable Council on Elementary and Secondary Education regulations.
- G. Students can meet the requirements set forth in this Section, inclusive of the fourteen content-area course requirements, through courses within state-approved career and technical programs, expanded learning opportunities, dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, on-line learning, experiential learning opportunities, and other non-traditional academic and career-readiness learning experiences.
- H. Recognition of learning opportunities as fulfilling the coursework graduation requirements in this Section is a local decision and shall be predicated on alignment to state adopted content-area standards and/or other relevant national and/or industry standards. Course catalogs should clearly indicate courses that can fulfill content-area course requirements.
- I. Students who achieve modified proficiency standards applied to coursework requirements for students determined to be eligible for the alternate assessment under federal law, state rules and regulations, and as noted in the student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP), may, at LEA discretion, be awarded a diploma for graduation purposes.

2.3.2 Performance-based diploma assessments

Students shall successfully complete at least one performance-based diploma assessment. Successful completion of performance-based diploma assessments shall include demonstrations of both applied learning skills and proficiency in one or more content areas. All performance-based diploma assessments shall be evaluated utilizing an LEA-defined scoring criteria aligned with high school level state-adopted content standards and applied learning standards and/or other relevant nationally-recognized content standards.

2.3.3 Appeals process for graduation decisions

Students and families shall have the right to appeal graduation decisions through locally managed appeals policies and processes. Locally managed appeals processes shall consider all valid sources of evidence that demonstrate and document student proficiency at a level commensurate with the requirements set forth in this Part. LEAs shall maintain documentation on locally managed appeals criteria, processes, and outcomes.

2.3.4 Council designations

- A. Commencing with the graduating class of 2021, LEAs shall include a designation notation on permanent high school transcripts and on the diplomas of all students who meet Council-defined criteria. The Council shall determine:
 - 1. Designations available statewide; and,
 - 2. The level of achievement necessary for a Council Designation.
- B. Designations approved by the Council shall include, but not be limited to documentation of student achievement of a statewide literacy and numeracy standard and documentation of student completion of a course of study consistent with a personal learning goal.
- C. LEAs shall provide students with multiple opportunities and appropriate supports to meet designation requirements.
- D. LEAs are authorized to award additional locally-developed designations.

2.3.5 Alternate recognition of high school accomplishment

LEAs are authorized to recognize any student who has satisfactorily completed specific courses or other standards-based activities within the high school course of study, as defined by the LEA. Alternate recognition certificates shall not be considered a diploma. Alternate recognition certificates shall document academic achievement, technical skills, work readiness, and life skills of the student and may be included as part of a student's transition plan to post-secondary academic or work training programs.

2.3.6 Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approved diploma system

- A. The Commissioner reserves the right to establish protocols and criteria for reviewing LEA diploma systems to ensure that they are in compliance with all elements of this Part.
- B. The LEA is responsible for maintaining all records that demonstrate compliance with this Part.
- C. The Commissioner shall develop a progressive system of monitoring and accountability to ensure LEA implementation and compliance with this Part.

2.3.7 Local educational agency notification to students, families, and community members of the requirements for graduation

- A. All notices in this Section must be provided in a format accessible to family and students.
 - 1. LEAs shall provide full and effective notice of the state and local graduation requirements to administrators, teachers, students, families, and members of the community. Full and effective notice of the requirements for graduation and Council designations must be provided to students and their families no later than October 1 in the year in which said students enter the ninth grade (or at the time of enrollment into the LEA), after which the local and state diploma system requirements shall not be altered for the affected class. LEAs shall provide notice of the requirements to students enrolled by the LEA in non-public schools or programs and to students attending school in juvenile correction programs.
 - 2. LEAs shall provide notification annually of the process by which parents/guardians can access their child's individual learning plan, including information regarding their child's progress toward graduation and Council designation requirements.
 - 3. In the event that a student is in jeopardy of not earning a diploma, the LEA must maintain a record of multiple and timely individual notices to the student and his/her family that include:
 - a. Clear notification of the student's academic status; and,
 - b. The opportunity to meet and discuss the student's academic program, support, and planned interventions; and,
 - c. Regular updates of student performance and progress.

- B. LEA failure to provide student and family notifications in the manner set forth in this Section may be addressed through locally managed appeals processes but shall not be presumed to result in the awarding of a diploma.

2.4 Middle level and high school supports to students

2.4.1 Supports for students

- A. Every student enrolled in Rhode Island public schools has the right to an appropriate and individualized opportunity to achieve proficiency as defined the LEA and in accordance with this Part. For many students, that opportunity will require additional research-based supports from the LEA.
- B. The range of necessary support mechanisms must include:
 - 1. Beginning no later than entry into sixth grade, each student shall have an individual learning plan (ILP) as described in § 2.4.3 of this Part. The ILP shall coordinate with the following documents, programs, and plans as appropriate: Individual Educational Program, Section 504 Plan, Personal Literacy Plan, Response to Intervention, Transition plans, and English learner services.
 - 2. LEAs shall utilize a research-based early warning system to identify students at risk for academic failure and dropout. Identification of students at risk shall occur no later than the sixth grade year (or at the time of enrollment for students enrolling into the LEA after the sixth grade year). LEAs shall communicate regularly with the families of students identified through the early warning system, including providing them with information about the support provided to and progress being made by the student, as described in § 2.3.7 of this Part.
 - 3. LEAs shall be responsible for providing additional academic and instructional support and research-based interventions for all students not on track to meet the diploma requirements established by §§ 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 of this Part. Students failing to reach the required level of proficiency as established locally and in accordance with this Part shall be provided a support plan, including the types and duration of academic and educational supports and academic performance targets necessary for earning a diploma. Support plans shall be documented in the ILP and may address academic weaknesses in course performance and/or performance-based diploma assessments. Other academic and instructional supports shall also be documented in the student's ILP.
- C. All students are expected to present evidence of successful completion of the applicable graduation requirements set forth in §§ 2.3.1, 2.3.2, and 2.3.4 of this Part to be eligible for a diploma or Council designation, respectively. Students

with disabilities have the right under federal law to remain in school until the age of 21.

- D. LEA failure to provide the supports set forth in this Section may be addressed through locally managed appeals processes but shall not be presumed to result in the awarding of a diploma.

2.4.2 Requirement for personalized learning environments

- A. All middle-level schools and high schools shall implement strategies for creating personalized learning environments, including the provision of a structure by which every student is assigned a responsible adult, in addition to a school counselor, who is knowledgeable about that student's academic, career, and social/personal goals. These personalization strategies must ensure a collective responsibility for individual students.
- B. Structures for personalization at the middle level shall be an integral component of the student program in each LEA, inclusive of but not limited to advisory structures.
- C. LEAs shall maintain documentation of the effectiveness of such personalization strategies.

2.4.3 Individual Learning Plan (ILP)

- A. LEAs are responsible for developing a student ILP process beginning no later than the sixth grade to help students identify and meet their academic, career, and personal/social goals. The ILP shall document the student's academic and applied learning interests and learning supports that culminate in graduation, Council designation and preparation for post-secondary success. The ILP shall document additional educational opportunities to help students reach their goals.
- B. The ILP process shall provide regular and ongoing opportunities for students to review and revisit their goals with the guidance of responsible adults, including parents or legal guardians. In order to ensure the use of the ILP in coordinating appropriate supports, access to courses, and additional learning opportunities necessary to support students in meeting their goals, ILP reviews must occur not less than twice in each school year and during key transition periods including middle to high school and high school to post-secondary placement.
- C. LEAs shall maintain documentation of the effectiveness of their ILP process.

2.4.4 Professional development

All certified educators in middle-level and high schools shall participate in at least fifteen hours of ongoing professional development annually, focused on the priority areas of literacy and numeracy throughout the curriculum, graduation by proficiency, and personalization. Professional development shall be informed by

student achievement data and guided by best practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

2.4.5 Common planning time

- A. Common planning time shall be used by teams of teachers, administrators, and other educators for the substantive planning of instruction, looking at student achievement data, addressing student needs, and group or embedded professional development.
- B. Common planning time must provide for at least one hour per week at the high school level and at least two hours per week at the middle level, focused on the priority areas of vertical articulation, literacy, numeracy, graduation by proficiency, and personalization.
- C. This common planning time must be in addition to individual faculty planning time and locally determined professional development requirements. As established in “Regulations Governing the School Calendar and Length of the School Day”, common planning time does not qualify as “instructional time” for the purposes of compliance with the required length of the school day.