

Diploma System Requirements Frequently Asked Questions: Information for Rhode Island Educators and Administrators

The Rhode Island Board of Regents adopted the Secondary Regulations in March 2011 that include changes in the requirements for earning a high school diploma beginning with the class of 2014. This document is intended to increase your understanding of the requirements and will help you answer questions that you may get from staff, students, families and other community members. To view the 2011 Secondary Regulations go to www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/RIPublicSchools/DiplomaSystem

All students must complete the following, at a minimum, to earn high school diploma:

- *A minimum of 20 courses or the equivalent (4 English Language Arts, 4 math, 3 science, 3 social studies, and PE/Health and other locally required or elective courses)*
- *2 diploma assessments (exhibition, portfolio and/or comprehensive course assessment)*
- *State assessment – meet required score in both Reading and Mathematics*
- *Meet additional requirements of districts and the local schools*

State Assessment Requirement

1. What is the minimum achievement level a student must score on the state assessment?

Students in the classes of 2014 and beyond are required to reach a minimum score of partially proficient (or 2) on the state reading and mathematics NECAP assessments in order to earn a high school diploma.

2. What if a student does not pass the state assessment in their junior year?

If a student does not earn a score of 2 (partially proficient) on the NECAP reading or mathematics tests, the district is responsible for ensuring that the procedure listed below is followed:

- **Progress plan:** The school will develop a plan and a schedule for each student that will detail additional instructional or learning opportunities to be provided in the areas in which a student did not score a 2. Students will also be told exactly what score (amount of progress they must demonstrate on the NECAP to meet the state requirement) they need to get on the NECAP test(s) they take in the fall of their senior year.
- **Communication:** Students and families must be informed of the progress plan and regularly updated about student progress.
- **Retake NECAP test(s):** Students are required to retake the NECAP test in those areas in which they did not score a 2 (partially proficient), in the fall of his/her senior year.

3. What happens if a student does not earn the minimum score that demonstrates progress toward proficiency they were supposed to make when he/she retakes the NECAP?

If a student has received additional instruction, followed his/her progress plan, and still does not show sufficient progress on the NECAP retest in the fall of his/her senior year, they may take a RIDE other approved test to show they are at the required level of proficiency to earn a diploma. The list

of other approved tests can be found on the RIDE website:

www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Diploma-System/RIDE-Approved-Tests-Revised2013.pdf

4. Will students with disabilities be able to earn a diploma?

ALL students are eligible for a diploma. It is the responsibility of each district and school to ensure that students with disabilities have appropriate supports and ample opportunities to learn and meet the requirements to earn a diploma. Some students may require additional time or opportunities to continue working toward earning a diploma. Students with disabilities must receive appropriate accommodations identified through the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process for participation in the state assessment. Students with disabilities who have not earned a diploma in four years of schooling remain eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) to stay in school until they earn a diploma or turn age 21.

5. What happens if a student still does not meet the graduation requirements?

Students must meet all of the state and local graduation requirements in order to be eligible to earn a high school diploma. Students who have not met the requirements after four years of high school, or until they reach the age of 18 (or longer if entitled), will be provided additional opportunities and time to demonstrate their readiness for graduation. As students continue to work toward a diploma, they are entitled to full academic support from their school.

6. Will students participating in the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment (RIAA) get a diploma?

Students with significant cognitive disabilities who meet the participation criteria for the RI Alternate Assessment (RIAA) are not assessed on standards that meet the minimum academic achievement level established by the Board and will **not** be eligible to earn a diploma. All students who participate in the RIAA are eligible to remain in school until they reach the age of 21.

7. The 2011 Secondary Regulations have a section on certificates. What is a certificate and who is eligible for certificates?

Certificates are documents awarded to students in recognition that they have attained specific and recognized skills needed for the workplace, postsecondary education or other credentialed areas. Any student can earn certificates while enrolled in high school. In partnership with other adult service agencies, RIDE developed stackable, portable and recognized certificates that all students may earn. More information on certificates can be found at

www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/RIPublicSchools/DiplomaSystem/tabid/136/LiveAcId/16440/Default.aspx

8. Is a certificate just another form of a diploma?

A certificate is NOT a high school diploma and is not intended to be a substitute for a diploma. All students in the classes of 2014 and beyond can earn certificates whether or not they receive a diploma. No student will be awarded a certificate in lieu of a high school diploma.

9. What are some of the additional learning opportunities that are available for students?

The learning opportunities available for students in secondary schools depend on their goals and individual needs. Districts are required to provide students with expanded learning opportunities that help them meet their academic and career goals and successfully meet the requirements to earn a high school diploma. For example, students may take college courses while still in high school (early college access) and students may participate in virtual learning environments. There

are also many opportunities for extra academic support for students who may need more than their scheduled classes to learn and achieve.

10. If a student stays in school for a fifth year, what are they required to do for graduation? What happens if a student skips a year, what are their requirements for graduation?

Students are required to complete the graduation requirements for their cohort (the class with whom they entered 9th grade) no matter the length of time it takes them to earn a diploma. Even if the student has skipped a year, they must complete the required graduation requirements.

11. If a student transfers in their senior year from another state or from a private school, do they have to meet the NECAP requirement?

For students who transfer in the beginning of the school year, we recommend that they take the NECAP in the fall of their senior year. If they do not score partially proficient (2), they can submit scores from their previous state assessment if they met the state's required level of proficiency or submit a score from other approved tests.

Retest Opportunities and Other Approved Tests

12. The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) is currently on the list of other approved tests. Can students use ASVAB sub-test scores to meet the state assessment requirement?

No, students must submit the ASVAB composite score. The reasoning for use of the composite score is due to the fact that there are so few items in each of the individual areas, that they do not indicate the student's overall readiness. The military uses the individual scores as a method to assign recruits to specific military branches, but use the overall score for acceptance into the military.

13. Does admission into the military qualify as meeting the assessment requirement?

All students admitted into the military must take the ASVAB assessment, and therefore would have fulfilled the state assessment requirement using one of the other approved tests, the ASVAB.

14. For students who need more time, can we have August or December graduation? How can these students meet the state assessment requirement?

It is an LEA decision to hold August or mid-year graduation ceremonies. Students who remain enrolled for additional time may meet the requirement through other approved tests, the waiver process, or by retaking the NECAP in the fall of October 2014.

Waiver Process

15. What is the waiver and who is eligible for a waiver?

In 2011 when the Board of Regents established the graduation requirements, the Board specifically stated in its regulations that students who are "unable to demonstrate graduation readiness through the state assessment or a Regents-approved testing alternative" may apply to their school district "for a waiver of the state-assessment graduation requirements." The regulations go on to state that only students who have "completed the sequence of testing requirements" may seek a

waiver. In keeping with these regulations, which give *school districts* the authority to issue waivers, RIDE issued [guidance](#) in August 2013 to all superintendents to help them determine which students may be eligible for waivers.

16. When can a student, teacher or principal initiate the waiver process?

The waiver process may be initiated after the student has taken the NECAP twice and received their score results. Additional guidance for [waiver eligibility](#) is available on the RIDE website.

17. When did additional guidance get added to waiver? College, City Year etc.

RIDE published additional [guidance](#) on January 3, 2014 stating that evidence of eligibility for a waiver from the state assessment requirement may include acceptance into a 2- or 4-year non-open enrollment (or non-open admissions), accredited higher-education institution or into a national community-service program such as AmeriCorps or City Year. Acceptance into non-open enrollment, accredited postsecondary institutions is an indicator of the student's readiness to succeed after high school. The LEA holds the authority of the final decision to grant a waiver for the state assessment for students where the state assessment is not a good measure of their proficiency.

18. What about students accepted into a foreign, selective postsecondary institution?

Guidance from RIDE states that evidence of eligibility for a waiver may include acceptance into a non-open enrollment, accredited institution. It is the LEAs responsibility to determine if an institution has sufficient evidence to qualify.

19. Is there a list of postsecondary institutions that qualify?

Yes. RIDE has compiled a [list](#) of non-open enrollment, 2- and 4-year accredited institutions in the New England area.

20. How do LEAs define growth in valid local evidence?

It is an LEA decision to determine if there is sufficient evidence of 9th and 10th grade level standards associated with the local evidence to qualify as valid local evidence.

21. Are there other national community service programs besides AmeriCorps and City Year that are acceptable evidence of eligibility for a waiver?

Acceptance into AmeriCorps and City Year community service programs are recognized as evidence of readiness for postsecondary success for the rigorous application process in which student achievement is considered. If LEAs know of another national community service programs that are comparable, RIDE should be notified.

22. English Language Learner (ELL) students are eligible for a Language Proficiency Adjustment (LPA) as part of the waiver process. Who will calculate the LPA and when will the scores be available?

Students eligible for a Language Proficiency Adjustment will receive the LPA calculation in the same data file as the 12th grade retest results. RIDE will provide the LPA calculation. More information about the LPA can be found in the [LPA Guidance](#).

12th Grade Retest (Spring 2014)

23. After a student takes the NECAP a second time, will the results indicate if a student made enough progress to meet the requirement?

Yes, the 12th grade NECAP data file that schools receive will indicate whether a student has or has not made the appropriate progress.

24. What is the window of time for administering the Spring NECAP retest?

Each LEA will have two testing days, one for math and one for reading, between February 25 and March 7.

25. When are spring NECAP retest scores going to be available?

NECAP retest scores will be available in mid-April 2014. RIDE is working with the NECAP test provider to ensure that scores are released as soon as possible.

26. How do students sign up for the Spring NECAP Retest?

Superintendents will receive a Retest Registration file and are responsible for ensuring it is submitted with the appropriate information for all students taking the Spring NECAP retest.

27. Will students who are enrolled in an outplacement facility be tested at their outplacement site? Will LEAs include these students in the NECAP Retest Registration File? For the spring NECAP retest, students must test in their sending district locations. LEAs are responsible for making arrangements for outplacement students to test in their sending district. If there are extenuating circumstances that do not allow a student to test in their sending district, please notify Kate Schulz (kate.schulz@ride.ri.gov).

28. What is the rationale for RIDE requesting a room number for NECAP retest data?

The purpose of requesting a room number is so that RIDE is able to deliver the appropriate number and labeled test booklets to student testing locations. The room number does not need to be an exact room location, but a number is needed to ensure the testing booklets are appropriately organized and labeled.

For additional information about the diploma system requirements, please visit:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/RIPublicSchools/DiplomaSystem>