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REGULATIONS
of the
COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Middle and High School Learning Environments and the Rhode Island Diploma System

TITLE L – SECONDARY DESIGN
CHAPTER 6

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L-6-1.0. DEFINITIONS

As used in these regulations, the following words and terms have the following meaning, unless the context indicates another or different meaning or intent:

- (a) Applied Learning Skills - 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.
- (b) Certificates – 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.

- 45
46 (c) Commissioner – the commissioner of elementary and secondary education.
47
48 (d) Common Planning Time – regular scheduled opportunities provided to teachers to work in
49 disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary teams for the purpose of improving student achievement.
50
51 (e) Concurrent Enrollment – enrollment of a student in a dual enrollment course that is offered at
52 the secondary school and taught by a secondary school teacher who is approved by the
53 postsecondary institutions.
54
55 (f) Conjunctive Diploma Requirements – the non-compensatory relationship between Rhode
56 Island’s diploma requirements, commencing in 2021. The required elements of a diploma
57 include:
58 1. Successful completion of state and local course requirements; and
59 2. Successful completion of a performance-based diploma assessment.
60
61 (g) Content Standards - the knowledge and skills associated with a particular subject area that
62 defines what students need to know and be able to do.
63
64 (h) Core Content Areas – English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts,
65 and technology.
66
67 (i) Course – a connected series of lessons and learning experiences that:
68 1. Establish expectations defined by recognized content standards,
69 2. Provide students with opportunities to learn and practice skills, and
70 3. Include assessments of student knowledge and skills adequate to determine
71 proficiency at the level of academic rigor required by relevant content standards.
72
73 (j) Course Catalog – A list of courses offered to students during a given timeframe, typically
74 including course name, description, pre-requisites, and instructor.
75
76 (k) Council Designation – a notation on a diploma designating achievement consistent with a
77 standard set for this purpose by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education.
78 Designations approved by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education shall include
79 but not be limited to documentation of student achievement of statewide literacy and numeracy
80 standards and documentation of student completion of a defined course of study consistent with
81 a personal learning goal.
82
83 (l) Diploma System – the comprehensive set of structures, processes, and policies required in
84 all secondary schools to ensure access to rigorous programming and appropriate supports that
85 prepare all students for success in college, careers, and life.
86

- 87 (m) Dual Enrollment – enrollment of a student in a secondary school while simultaneously
88 enrolled part-time or full-time as a non-matriculating student at a postsecondary institution, such
89 as a community college, college or university
90
- 91 (n) Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum – curriculum that provides both the opportunity and time
92 for students to learn. It ensures that the curriculum is implemented consistently by all teachers
93 to all students. It is based on a commitment from the districts and its schools that the written,
94 taught, and learned curriculum is aligned so that all students learn agreed upon standards. See
95 Basic Educational Program (G-13-1.1).
96
- 97 (o) Individual Learning Plan (ILP) – a planning and monitoring tool that customizes and directs
98 students’ goals and development in three domains: academic, career, and personal/social.
99
- 100 (p) Literacy – the ability to read, write, speak, and listen in order to communicate with others
101 effectively, as well as the ability to think and respond critically and to process complex
102 information across content areas.
103
- 104 (q) Local Education Agency (LEA) – a public board of education/school committee or other
105 public authority legally constituted within the State for either administrative control or direction of
106 one or more Rhode Island public elementary schools or secondary schools.
107
- 108 (r) Numeracy – the ability to use and communicate about numbers and measures with a range
109 of mathematical techniques in order to solve quantitative or spatial problems in a range of real-
110 world contexts.
111
- 112 (s) Performance-Based Diploma Assessment – multifaceted assignments that serve as a
113 culminating demonstration of a student’s applied learning skills and knowledge of one or more
114 content areas.
115
- 116 (t) Personalization – a diverse variety of educational programs, learning experiences,
117 instructional approaches and academic support strategies that are intended to address the
118 distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations or cultural backgrounds of individual students
119
- 120 (u) Proficiency –A defined level of knowledge and skills that are expected to be learned
121 signaling that a student is well prepared to progress to the next lesson, course, grade level, or to
122 receive a diploma.
123
- 124 (v) Student Advisory – a structure or structures for consistent groups of students to meet
125 regularly throughout the academic year with at least one assigned adult, in an environment with
126 sufficient time and opportunity to support personalization through student goal setting and
127 achievement in the academic, career, and personal/social domains.
128
129

130 **L-6-2.0 ENSURING GRADE LEVEL LITERACY AND NUMERACY FOR ALL SECONDARY**
131 **RHODE ISLAND STUDENTS.**

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

137
138 **L-6-2.1 Assessing literacy and numeracy proficiency levels of secondary students.**

139 (a) Each LEA in Rhode Island shall evaluate the literacy and numeracy levels of all secondary
140 students. All LEAs shall develop a screening/review process that utilizes state and local
141 assessments to identify students in need of additional diagnostic assessments and instructional
142 support.

143
144 (b) LEAs shall diagnostically assess all secondary students who have been identified through
145 the screening process described herein as performing below grade level to determine and
146 assign appropriate instructional strategies and interventions. The LEAs shall be responsible for
147 costs associated with test procurement, administration, and interpretation. The Commissioner
148 may authorize the use of suitable state or federal funds for such purposes.

149
150 **L-6-2.2 Improving literacy and numeracy for secondary students performing below grade**
151 **level.**

152 (a) Each LEA shall initiate interventions for every student functioning below levels of expected
153 performance for their grade based on the assessments required under section L-6-2.1 of these
154 regulations. Any student who continues to fall below grade level and/or fails to attain proficiency
155 in literacy or numeracy in subsequent years shall continue to receive specialized intervention
156 and supports.

157
158 (b) Ensuring grade level literacy and numeracy is the responsibility of each LEA, and shall
159 include instruction and the provision of school-wide, targeted and intensive supports.
160 Intervention and support for students performing one or more years below grade level shall be
161 documented within the student's Individualized Learning Plan (ILP).

162
163 (c) Each LEA shall ensure that all students who are not demonstrating proficiency as measured
164 by state-adopted math and literacy standards will attain and maintain performance that allows
165 them to engage in grade appropriate curriculum. LEAs shall have mechanisms in place that: (1)
166 identify and support students who are not making progress in literacy and mathematics as
167 measured by local and state assessment data; and, (2) provide universal student access to a
168 guaranteed and viable curriculum aligned to state adopted standards. LEAs shall have
169 mechanisms in place that ensure that all grade levels work collaboratively to transition students
170 between schools within and across LEAs.

171
172 (d) All LEAs shall maintain documentation of the effectiveness of specific literacy and
173 mathematics strategies and programs that have been implemented.

174 **L-6-3.0 RHODE ISLAND DIPLOMA SYSTEM.**

175 Diploma eligibility shall be derived from a conjunctive review of two sources of evidence: (1)
176 successful course completion in conformance with Section L-6-3.1; and (2) successful
177 completion of at least one performance-based diploma assessment as described in section L-6-
178 3.2. In order to be eligible for a diploma, students must meet state and local requirements in
179 these two areas.

180
181 No earlier than the class of 2017, LEAs may choose to include the state assessment or other
182 standardized assessment as a graduation requirement in addition to (1) and (2) above.

183
184 LEAs shall provide students with multiple opportunities and appropriate supports to meet local
185 graduation requirements adopted in compliance with these regulations and to prepare for post-
186 secondary academic and career goals.

187
188 Each Rhode Island school committee shall adopt graduation requirements consistent with L-6-
189 3.1, L-6-3.2, L-6-3.3, L-6-3.4 and L-6-3.5 of these regulations in LEA policy and shall maintain
190 documentation of these policies.

191
192 **L-6-3.1. Coursework requirements.**

193 (a) LEAs shall formally adopt coursework graduation requirements that: (1) apply to all students
194 within the LEA; and, (2) require successful completion of at least twenty courses. The twenty
195 courses must include demonstration of proficiency, as defined by the LEA and aligned with
196 appropriate high school content standards, in the six core content areas: English language arts,
197 math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology. All courses shall be aligned to state
198 adopted high school standards, or locally adopted national standards in those content areas for
199 which there are no state standards. All courses must be of scope and rigor sufficient to allow
200 students to achieve high school level proficiency, as determined by the LEA. Successful
201 completion of a course shall include demonstration of the knowledge, skill and competencies
202 outlined in the course learning objectives. Modified proficiency standards may be applied to
203 coursework requirements for students determined to be eligible for the alternate assessment
204 under federal law, state rules and regulations, and as noted in the student's IEP.

205
206 (b) The twenty courses must include the following content-area courses: four courses of English
207 Language Arts, four courses of mathematics, three courses of science, and three courses of
208 history/social studies. The additional six required courses are presumed to include, but not
209 limited to, world languages, the arts, technology, physical education and health, pursuant to
210 LEA policies and applicable state law. Designation as a content-area course, e.g. "mathematics"
211 or "science," shall be an LEA decision based upon alignment to relevant state adopted
212 standards or, in those content areas not defined by state-adopted standards, other recognized
213 content standards.

214
215 LEAs may integrate multiple core or other content areas and associated learning standards into
216 a single course for the purpose of meeting coursework requirements.

217 (c) The selection and scheduling of courses shall be consistent with the needs of the individual
218 student and, to the maximum degree possible, the student's individual learning plan (ILP). LEA
219 graduation requirements must satisfy all curricular requirements set forth in General Laws and
220 applicable Council on Elementary and Secondary Education regulations.

221
222 (d) Students can meet the requirements set forth in this section, inclusive of the fourteen
223 content-area course requirements, through courses within state-approved career and technical
224 programs, expanded learning opportunities, dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, on-line
225 learning, experiential learning opportunities, and other non-traditional academic and career-
226 readiness learning experiences. Recognition of these learning opportunities as fulfilling the
227 coursework graduation requirements in this section is a local decision and shall be predicated
228 on alignment to state adopted content-area standards and/or other relevant national and/or
229 industry standards. Course catalogs should clearly indicate courses that can fulfill content-area
230 course requirements.

231
232 **L-6-3.2. Performance-based diploma assessments.**
233 Students shall successfully complete at least one performance-based diploma assessment.
234 Successful completion of performance-based diploma assessments shall include
235 demonstrations of both applied learning skills and proficiency in one or more content areas. All
236 performance-based diploma assessments shall be evaluated utilizing an LEA-defined scoring
237 criteria aligned with high school level state-adopted content standards and applied learning
238 standards and/or other relevant nationally-recognized content standards.

239
240 **L-6-3.3. Appeals process for graduation decisions.**
241 Students and families shall have the right to appeal graduation decisions through locally
242 managed appeals policies and processes. Locally managed appeals processes shall consider
243 all valid sources of evidence that demonstrate and document student proficiency at a level
244 commensurate with the requirements set forth in these regulations. LEAs shall maintain
245 documentation on locally managed appeals criteria, processes, and outcomes.

246
247 **L-6-3.4. Council designations**
248 Commencing with the graduating class of 2021, LEAs shall include a designation notation on
249 the diplomas of all students who meet Council-defined criteria. The Council shall (1) determine
250 designations available statewide, and (2) determine the level of achievement necessary for a
251 Council Designation. Designations approved by the Council shall include, but not be limited to
252 documentation of student achievement of a statewide literacy and numeracy standard and
253 documentation of student completion of a course of study consistent with a personal learning
254 goal. LEAs shall provide students with multiple opportunities and appropriate supports to meet
255 designation requirements. LEAs are authorized to award additional locally-developed
256 designations.

257
258 **L-6-3.5. Alternate recognition of high school accomplishment.**
259 LEAs are authorized to recognize any student who does not meet the diploma requirement but
260 has otherwise satisfactorily completed specific courses or other standards-based activities

261 within the high school course of study, as defined by the LEA. Students earning an alternate
262 recognition certificates shall not be considered graduates. Alternate recognition certificates
263 shall document academic achievement, technical skills, work readiness and life skills of the
264 student and may be included as part of a student's transition plan to post-secondary academic
265 or work training programs.
266

267 Students who achieve modified proficiency standards applied to coursework requirements for
268 students determined to be eligible for the alternate assessment under federal law, state rules
269 and regulations, and as noted in the student's IEP, may, at LEA discretion, be awarded a
270 diploma for graduation purposes.
271

272 **L-6-3.6. Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approved diploma system.**

273 The Commissioner reserves the right to establish protocols and criteria for reviewing LEA
274 diploma systems to ensure that they are in compliance with all elements of these regulations.
275 The LEA is responsible for maintaining all records that demonstrate compliance with these
276 regulations. The Commissioner shall develop a progressive system of monitoring and
277 accountability to ensure LEA implementation and compliance with these regulations.
278

279 **L-6-3.7. Local educational agency notification to students, families, and community
280 members of the requirements for graduation.**

281 (a) LEAs shall provide full and effective notice of the state and local graduation requirements to
282 administrators, teachers, students, families, and members of the community. Full and effective
283 notice of the requirements for graduation and Council designations must be provided to
284 students and their families no later than October 1 in the year in which said students enter the
285 ninth grade (or at the time of enrollment into the LEA), after which the local and state diploma
286 system requirements shall not be altered for the affected class. LEAs shall provide notice of the
287 requirements to students enrolled by the LEA in non-public schools or programs and to students
288 attending school in juvenile correction programs.
289

290 (b) LEAs shall provide notification annually of the process by which parents/guardians can
291 access their child's individual learning plan, including information regarding their child's progress
292 toward graduation and Council designation requirements.
293

294 (c) In the event that a student is in jeopardy of not earning a diploma, the LEA must maintain a
295 record of multiple and timely individual notices to the student and his/her family that include: (1)
296 clear notification of the student's academic status; and (2) the opportunity to meet and discuss
297 the student's academic program, support, and planned interventions; and (3) regular updates of
298 student performance and progress. All such communications must be provided in a format
299 accessible to families and students. LEA failure to provide student and family notifications in the
300 manner set forth in these regulations may be addressed through locally managed appeals
301 processes but shall not be presumed to result in the awarding of a diploma.
302

303 **L-6-4.0. MIDDLE LEVEL AND HIGH SCHOOL SUPPORTS TO STUDENTS**

304 **L-6-4.1 Supports for students**

305 Every student enrolled in Rhode Island public schools has the right to an appropriate and
306 individualized opportunity to achieve proficiency as defined the LEA and in accordance with
307 these regulations. For many students, that opportunity will require additional research-based
308 supports from the LEA.

309

310 The range of necessary support mechanisms must include:

311

312 (a) Beginning no later than entry into sixth grade, each student shall have an individual learning
313 plan (ILP) as described in section L-6-4.3 of these regulations. The ILP shall coordinate with the
314 following documents, programs, and plans as appropriate: Individual Educational Program,
315 Section 504 Plan, Personal Literacy Plan, Response to Intervention, transition plans, and
316 English learner services.

317

318 (b) LEAs shall utilize a research-based early warning system to identify students at risk for
319 academic failure and dropout. Identification of students at risk shall occur no later than the sixth
320 grade year (or at the time of enrollment for students enrolling into the LEA after the sixth grade
321 year). LEAs shall communicate regularly with the families of students identified through the early
322 warning system, including providing them with information about the support provided to and
323 progress being made by the student, as described in section L-6-3.7(c) of these regulations.

324

325 (c) LEAs shall be responsible for providing additional academic and instructional support and
326 research-based interventions for all students not on track to meet the diploma requirements
327 established by section L-6-3.1 and L-6-3.2 of these regulations. Students failing to reach the
328 required level of proficiency as established locally and in accordance with these regulations
329 shall be provided a support plan, including the types and duration of academic and educational
330 supports and academic performance targets necessary for earning a diploma. Support plans
331 shall be documented in the ILP and may address academic weaknesses in course performance
332 and/or performance-based diploma assessments. Other academic and instructional supports
333 shall also be documented in the student's ILP.

334

335 (d) All students are expected to present evidence of successful completion of the applicable
336 graduation requirements set forth in L-6-3.1, L-6-3.2, and L-6-3.4 of these regulations to be
337 eligible for a diploma or Council designation, respectively. Students with disabilities have the
338 right under federal law to remain in school until the age of 21.

339

340 (e) LEA failure to provide the supports set forth in this section may be addressed through locally
341 managed appeals processes but shall not be presumed to result in the awarding of a diploma.

342

343 **L-6-4.2. Requirement for personalized learning environments.**

344 All middle level schools and high schools shall implement strategies for creating personalized
345 learning environments, including the provision of a structure by which every student is assigned
346 a responsible adult, in addition to a school counselor, who is knowledgeable about that
347 student's academic, career, and social/personal goals. These personalization strategies must
348 ensure a collective responsibility for individual students. Structures for personalization at the

349 middle level shall be an integral component of the student program in each LEA, inclusive of but
350 not limited to advisory structures. LEAs shall maintain documentation of the effectiveness of
351 such personalization strategies.

352

353 **L-6-4.3 Individual Learning Plan.**

354 (a) LEAs are responsible for developing a student ILP process beginning no later than the sixth
355 grade to help students identify and meet their academic, career, and personal/social goals. The
356 ILP shall document the student’s academic and applied learning interests and learning supports
357 that culminate in graduation, Council designation and preparation for post-secondary success.
358 The ILP shall document additional educational opportunities to help students reach their goals.

359

360 (b) The ILP process shall provide regular and ongoing opportunities for students to review and
361 revisit their goals with the guidance of responsible adults, including parents or legal guardians.
362 In order to ensure the use of the ILP in coordinating appropriate supports, access to courses,
363 and additional learning opportunities necessary to support students in meeting their goals, ILP
364 reviews must occur not less than twice in each school year and during key transition periods
365 including middle to high school and high school to post-secondary placement. LEAs shall
366 maintain documentation of the effectiveness of their ILP process.

367

368 **L-6-4.4. Professional development.**

369 All certified educators in middle level and high schools shall participate in at least fifteen (15)
370 hours of ongoing professional development annually, focused on the priority areas of literacy,
371 numeracy, graduation by proficiency, and personalization. Professional development shall be
372 informed by student achievement data and guided by best practice in curriculum, instruction and
373 assessment.

374

375 **L-6-4.5. Common planning time.**

376 Common planning time shall be used by teams of teachers, administrators, and other educators
377 for the substantive planning of instruction, looking at student achievement data, addressing
378 student needs, and group or embedded professional development. Common planning time must
379 provide for at least one hour per week at the high school level and at least two hours per week
380 at the middle level, focused on the priority areas of vertical articulation, literacy, numeracy,
381 graduation by proficiency, and personalization.

382

383 This common planning time must be in addition to individual faculty planning time and locally
384 determined professional development requirements. As established in Section G-4-11 of the
385 Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Regulations Governing the School Calendar
386 and School Day, common planning time does not qualify as “instructional time” for the purposes
387 of compliance with the required length of the school day.