

**Understanding  
Institutional Differences  
in Education Governance:  
An Updated Comparison  
of Massachusetts and  
Rhode Island**

March 2019



## **RIPEC Mission Statement**

RIPEC is an independent, nonprofit, and nonpartisan public policy research and education organization dedicated to the advancement of effective, efficient, and equitable government in Rhode Island.

Through in-depth research, program monitoring, advocacy, and public information activities, RIPEC:

- Suggests approaches to help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of government agencies;
- Promotes fiscal responsibility and sound management practices;
- Assists elected officials and their staffs in the development of sound policies and programs;
- Enhances understanding between the private sector and state and local governments;
- Provides objective information and conducts educational programs for the benefit of Council members, public officials, and the general public;
- Builds coalitions with other community groups to promote sound public policies; and
- Promotes a public policy agenda to foster a climate for economic opportunity.

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## Abbreviations

BEP — Basic Education Program

CIS — Composite Index Score

ELA — English Language Arts

ELL — English Language Learner

ERW — Evidence-Based Reading and Writing

ESEA — Elementary and Secondary Education Act

ESSA — Every Student Succeeds Act

FRL — Free and Reduced Lunch

IEP — Individualized Education Program

LEA — Local Education Agency

MCAS — Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

MERA — Massachusetts Education Reform Act

MTEL — Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure

NAEP — National Assessment of Educational Progress

NCLB — No Child Left Behind Act

PARCC — Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers

PLU — Professional Learning Unit

RICAS — Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System

RIDE — Rhode Island Department of Education

RIPEC — Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council

SEA — State Education Agency

USDOE — United States Department of Education

## I. Introduction

This Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (RIPEC) report serves as a companion to, and update of, the 2016 RIPEC report “Understanding Institutional Differences in Education Governance: A Comparison of Massachusetts and Rhode Island.” Like the 2016 report, it takes note of the states’ shared traits in regard to student demographics and education funding; details differences in the institutional structure and governance of each state’s elementary and secondary education system; and shows how Rhode Island students trail behind Massachusetts students on national and state-wide assessments. Both Massachusetts and Rhode Island have altered aspects of their student assessment and school/district accountability systems since 2016, and under obligation of Rhode Island General Laws § 16-97-9, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) has laid out plans for establishing state-wide curriculum frameworks. Regardless, the Bay State’s schools continue to be regarded as among the best in the nation, while the Ocean State’s schools continue to rank with, or slightly ahead of, the middle of the pack.<sup>1</sup> That Rhode Island’s public education system trails behind its northeastern neighbor was recently reinforced with the November 2018 release of the Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS) results. Thus, it seems a fitting time to explore how the two states’ approach to education governance continues to differ.

The second section of this report provides the most recent data for comparing two things: the demographic characteristics of Rhode Island and Massachusetts schools, and each state’s national and state-wide assessment results. As this section details, the two states share similar demography, with comparable percentages of historically underperforming subgroups making up each state’s total student body, and near-equivalent funds spent on educating that body. Overall, this section shows that socioeconomic differences cannot alone explain Massachusetts and Rhode Island’s historic and present-day differences in student performance on three recognized assessment systems: the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the SAT, and the RICAS and next-generation Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS).

The remainder of this report focuses on identifying why educational disparity persists between the Ocean State and the Bay State. Its third section provides an overview of the historical and institutional context of public education in each state, considering how case law and education reform have historically differed between the two. It additionally considers the structure of education governance in Rhode Island as compared to Massachusetts, as well as each state’s collective bargaining laws, content standards, and curriculum.

The fourth section of this report engages education reform in Rhode Island and Massachusetts since 2016. It considers how each state responded to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, and how each has recently reworked its method of student assessment, as well as its framework for school and district accountability. Both states’ rules and regulations regarding educator licensure, educator assessment, and professional development are additionally covered

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<sup>1</sup> Adam McCann, “States with the Best & Worst School Systems,” *WalletHub*, July 30, 2018, <https://wallethub.com/edu/states-with-the-best-schools/5335/>; “Best States: Education,” *US News*, May 14, 2018, <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/education>; Samuel Stebbins and Thomas C. Frohlich, “States With the Best (and Worst) Schools,” *24/7 Wall St.*, January 29, 2018, <https://247wallst.com/special-report/2018/01/29/states-with-the-best-and-worst-schools-6/>.

in this section, and Rhode Island's recent changes to these systems are considered. Focusing in on the Ocean State, this report's fourth section also details the steps which have been taken to bring two components central to Massachusetts' education system to Rhode Island: state-wide curriculum frameworks and a school-based management model.

Finally, the fifth section of this report details RIPEC's perspective on how Rhode Island can emulate Massachusetts' successful education reforms.

## II. Public School Student Demographics and Performance

### Demographics

Academic researchers have consistently found that student achievement and certain demographic factors strongly correlate. Sometimes referred to as “achievement gaps,” significant differences in student performance become apparent when comparisons are made between demographic subgroups split by factors such as socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, and English language proficiency. Thus, in order to rule out the possibility that state-wide differences in student performance can be attributed to demographic distinctions, it is essential to compare the public school demography of Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Using data reported by the National Center for Education Statistics and U.S. Census Bureau, Table 1 presents an overview of student demographic data from the 2015-2016 school year, excepting expenditures per pupil and free and reduced-price lunch (FRL) data, which are from 2014-2015.<sup>2</sup>

	<b>Massachusetts</b>	<b>Rhode Island</b>
<b>2014-2015 School Year</b>		
Total Current Per-Pupil Expenditures*	\$16,566	\$15,797
State Ranking by Per Pupil Expenditures*	7	9
Percent eligible for free/reduced lunch (FRL)	39.9%	47.0%
<b>2015-2016 School Year</b>		
Number of Pupils Enrolled	964,026	142,014
Number of School Districts	406	66
Number of Schools	1,884	316
Number of Charter Schools	law permits 120; 81 operational	law permits 35; 25 operational
Number of FTE Teachers	71,969	10,631
Pupil/Teacher Ratio	13.4	13.4
Percent with Individualized Education Programs (IEP)	17.4%	16.5%
Percent in English Language Learner (ELL) programs	8.6%	7.4%
*Data excludes expenditures for equipment, non-public education, school construction, debt financing, and community services. Ranks include D.C. SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics; U.S. Census Bureau; RIPEC calculations		

<sup>2</sup> More recent expenditure data are unavailable. More recent FRL data are available from Rhode Island, but not Massachusetts, which stopped collecting this data when the United States Department of Agriculture introduced the Community Eligibility Provision, giving schools and districts with a significant percentage of FRL eligible students the option to provide free meals to all of its students. In 2015-2016, Massachusetts began tracking low-income students through participation in government programs for low-income families such as Medicaid. These data are useful for intrastate policy, but interstate socioeconomic comparison is made difficult when different metrics are employed. Some Rhode Island schools have taken advantage of the Community Eligibility Provision, but the state has one of the nation’s lowest participation rates, and continues to track FRL participation. See: Food Research and Action Center, “Community Eligibility Continues to Grow in the 2016-2017 School Year,” March 2017, [www.frac.org/wp-content/uploads/CEP-Report\\_Final\\_Links\\_032317.pdf](http://www.frac.org/wp-content/uploads/CEP-Report_Final_Links_032317.pdf); Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, “Redefining Low Income – A New Metric for K-12 Education Data,” <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/ed.html>.

As Table 1 shows, Rhode Island and Massachusetts’ elementary and secondary schools share similar demographic characteristics across a number of salient variables. In fact, the states shared the same pupil/teacher ratio of 13.4 to 1 in 2015-2016. In contrast, students enrolled in English Language Learner (ELL) programs made up 8.6 percent of Massachusetts’ student body in the 2015-2016 school year, which is slightly greater than the 7.4 percent of Rhode Island’s student body which was enrolled in ELL programs in the same period. Similarly, there is less than a percentage point difference in the share of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP) in each state; 17.4 percent of Massachusetts’ pupils were enrolled in an IEP, compared to 16.5 percent of Rhode Island’s pupils. The only significant difference captured in Table 1 is the rate at which students are eligible to participate in the FRL program. In the 2014-2015 school year, 39.9 percent of Massachusetts students were FRL eligible, while the same was true for 47.0 percent of Rhode Island students.

At \$16,566, Massachusetts’ per pupil expenditures in 2014-2015 were slightly higher than Rhode Island’s per pupil expenditures of \$15,797. Comparable if not exact, these sums ranked Rhode Island and Massachusetts’ per pupil expenditures 9<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation respectively. As Table 2 and Figure 1 illustrate, this marked the third consecutive year in which the Ocean State’s per pupil expenditures were slightly lower than those of the Bay State.

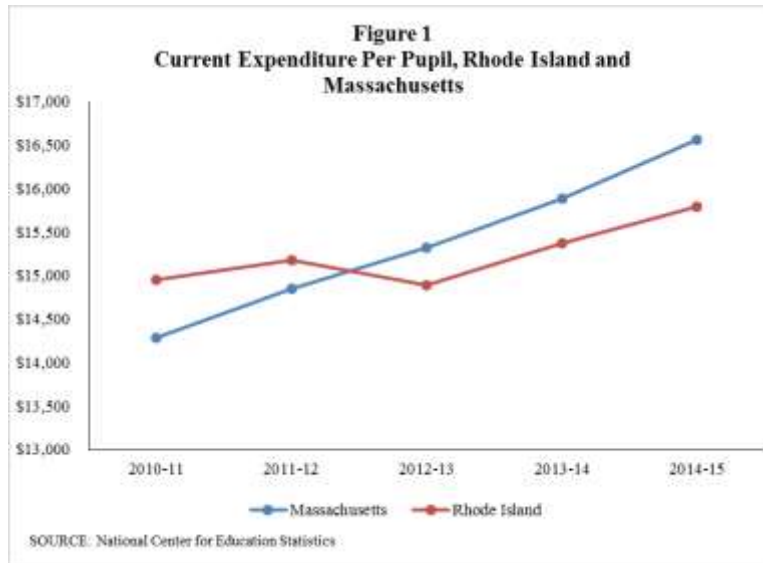
**Table 2**  
**Current Expenditures Per Pupil in Fall Enrollment in Public Elementary and Secondary Education**

	<b>Massachusetts</b>	<b>Rhode Island</b>
2014-15	\$ 16,566	\$ 15,797
2013-14	15,886	15,372
2012-13	15,321	14,889
2011-12	14,844	15,172
2010-11	14,285	14,948

Note: Expenditures for equipment, non-public education, school construction, debt financing, and community services are excluded.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics





However, Massachusetts’ higher per pupil expenditures do not show that more of the state’s resources are allocated to public education. In fact, in 2015 Rhode Island spent \$44.59 per \$1,000 of personal income on elementary and secondary education expenditures, while Massachusetts spent \$36.46. In terms of personal income, these sums respectively ranked Rhode Island and Massachusetts 9<sup>th</sup> and 37<sup>th</sup> highest among the states. In regard to per capita elementary and secondary education expenditures, Rhode Island slightly outspent Massachusetts in 2015; at \$2,283 per capita, Rhode Island ranked 9<sup>th</sup> highest, while Massachusetts ranked 10<sup>th</sup>, spending \$2,259 per capita.<sup>3</sup>

Rhode Island has lower per pupil expenditures than Massachusetts but higher expenditures per \$1,000 of personal income because the Bay State boasts a larger real median household income. Table 3 and Figure 2 demonstrate this distinction and show that the comparatively higher income of Massachusetts’ residents is part of a long-standing trend. Between 2013 and 2017, Rhode Island’s median household income trailed behind Massachusetts’ by as little as \$4,683 and as much as \$12,581. In the latest year for which there are available data, 2017, the median household income in Rhode Island was \$66,390, while Massachusetts’ median household income was \$73,227, a difference of \$6,837. As family income has historically helped predict student success, it stands to reason that the higher average income of Massachusetts households partially explains the comparatively greater assessment performance of Massachusetts students.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
United States	\$ 56,479	55,613	58,476	60,309	61,372
Massachusetts	\$ 65,906	65,454	70,214	73,820	73,227
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>\$ 59,365</b>	<b>60,771</b>	<b>57,633</b>	<b>62,851</b>	<b>66,390</b>

SOURCE: Federal Reserve Economic Data, Bank of St. Louis

<sup>3</sup> Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council, “How Rhode Island Expenditures Compare: 2017 Edition,” [http://www.ripec.org/pdfs/2017\\_HRIC\\_Exp.pdf](http://www.ripec.org/pdfs/2017_HRIC_Exp.pdf).

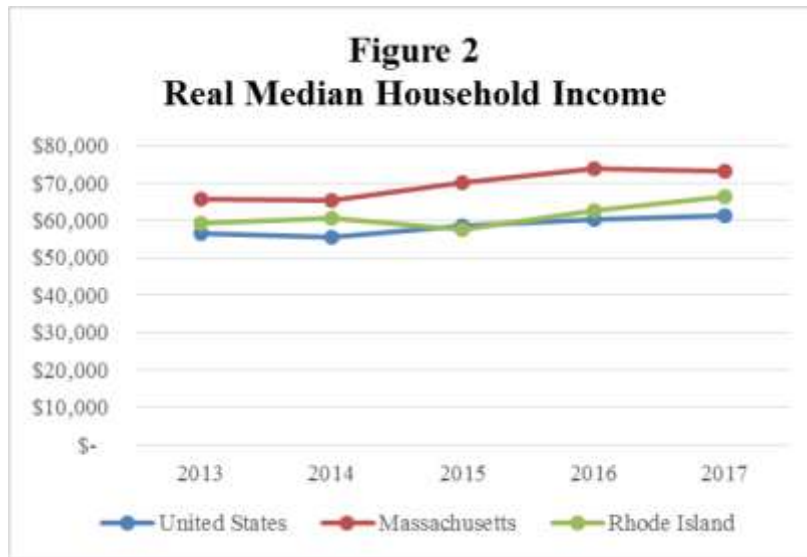


Table 4 captures another noteworthy difference between Massachusetts and Rhode Island’s student bodies: household head’s education level. In similarity to income, higher levels of parental and guardian education strongly correlate with student success. In further similarity, children in Massachusetts have household heads with higher levels of educational attainment when compared to Rhode Island children. The percentage of Rhode Island and Massachusetts children who live in homes with a head who does not have a high school diploma were quite similar in 2016, and the same goes for household heads with an associate degree. However, while 48.0 percent of Massachusetts’ children had a household head with either a bachelor’s or graduate degree, 37.0 percent of their Rhode Island peers could say the same. This distinction is particularly notable in regard to graduate degrees—23.0 percent of Massachusetts children had a household head with a graduate degree in 2016, while the same was true for 15.0 percent of their Rhode Island peers.

**Table 4**  
**Children by Household Head’s Educational Attainment, 2016**

	Not a High School Graduate	High School Diploma or GED	Associate Degree	Bachelor’s Degree	Graduate Degree
United States	14%	44%	9%	20%	13%
Massachusetts	9%	35%	8%	25%	23%
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>15%</b>

Note: Sums are rounded and may not total to 100%  
SOURCE: Kids Count Data Center

The racial and ethnic composition of a student body are also important to consider, because if significant distinctions between two localities are apparent, student performance will also likely be distinct. However, as Table 5 indicates, the Ocean State and the Bay State are relatively similar in this regard. At 62.7 percent, a slightly larger ratio of Massachusetts’ student body identified as white in the 2015-2016 school year than in Rhode Island, where 59.7 percent of students were

white. Likewise, 8.8 percent of Massachusetts’ student body identified as black, compared to 8.2 percent in Rhode Island. At 6.5 percent, Asian or Pacific Islander students represented a larger portion of Massachusetts’ public school students than in Rhode Island, where Asian or Pacific Islander students comprised 3.2 percent of the student body. In contrast, Hispanic students made up 24.2 percent of the student body in Rhode Island, and represented a comparatively smaller 18.6 percent of Massachusetts students. In total, Rhode Island’s minority student population of 40.3 percent exceeded Massachusetts’ rate of 37.3 percent.

**Table 5**  
**Public School Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity**  
**2015-2016 School Year**

	Massachusetts	Rhode Island
White	62.7%	59.7%
Black	8.8%	8.2%
Hispanic	18.6%	24.2%
Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander	6.5%	3.2%
Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.1%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.2%	0.7%
Two or more races	3.2%	3.8%
Total minority	37.3%	40.3%

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics

## Standardized Test Performance

### *National Assessment of Educational Progress*

Also known as *The Nation’s Report Card*, the NAEP is a periodic and national assessment of student performance across subjects ranging from mathematics and science to reading and civics. The NAEP is the only national metric available for interstate comparisons of student performance, and since the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized with the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), states desirous of receiving Title I funding have been required to test fourth and eighth graders in mathematics and reading every two years.<sup>4</sup> A state may participate in other subjects offered by the NAEP at its own discretion.

Table 6 displays the mean scores achieved on the NAEP’s reading assessment by fourth and eighth grade students in Rhode Island and Massachusetts in 2007, 2015, and 2017. As these data indicate, Massachusetts’ NAEP reading scores have consistently outpaced both Rhode Island and the nation at large in the last decade. On the 2017 assessment, 39.0 percent of fourth graders in Rhode Island achieved a score *at or above proficient*, which is a modest four percentage points above the national average of 35.0 percent, and twelve percentage points below Massachusetts’ 51.0 percent proficiency rate. Rhode Island’s eighth grade reading scores were closer to the national average

<sup>4</sup> “Important Aspects of *No Child Left Behind* Relevant to NAEP,” National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nclb.aspx>.

than its fourth grade scores, with 37.0 percent of students scoring *at or above proficient*, compared to a nationwide 35.0 percent. However, as with its fourth grade results, Rhode Island’s eighth grade reading proficiency rate stood twelve percentage points behind Massachusetts’, where 49.0 percent of eighth graders achieved a score *at or above proficient*.

**Table 6  
NAEP Reading Assessment**

Grade 4													
State	Score				Percentage								
	2007	2015	2017	Change 07-17	Below Basic	2007 At or Above Basic	At or Above Proficient	Below Basic	2015 At or Above Basic	At or Above Proficient	Below Basic	2017 At or Above Basic	At or Above Proficient
United States	220	221	221	1	34%	66%	32%	32%	68%	35%	33%	67%	35%
Massachusetts	236	235	236	0	19%	81%	49%	18%	82%	50%	20%	80%	51%
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>39%</b>

Grade 8													
State	Score				Percentage								
	2007	2015	2017	Change 07-17	Below Basic	2007 At or Above Basic	At or Above Proficient	Below Basic	2015 At or Above Basic	At or Above Proficient	Below Basic	2017 At or Above Basic	At or Above Proficient
United States	261	264	265	4	27%	73%	29%	25%	75%	33%	25%	75%	35%
Massachusetts	273	274	278	5	16%	84%	43%	17%	83%	46%	15%	85%	49%
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>37%</b>

NOTE: U.S. scores are for public schools only.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics - The Nation's Report Card - Reading

Table 7 compares the average scores achieved in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and the United States on the NAEP’s mathematics assessment in 2007, 2015, and 2017. As with the NAEP reading assessment, Massachusetts fourth graders outperformed the nation’s fourth graders in 2017, with a respective 53.0 versus 40.0 percent achieving scores *at or above proficient*. In contrast, Rhode Island fell slightly below the national average, with 39.0 percent of its fourth graders earning *at or above proficient* scores. Similarly, Rhode Island’s eighth grade proficiency rate of 30.0 percent is modestly lower than the national average of 33.0 percent, and significantly lower than Massachusetts, where 50.0 percent of students achieved a score *at or above proficient*.

**Table 7**  
**NAEP Mathematics Assessment**

Grade 4													
State	Score				Percentage								
	2007	2015	2017	Change 07-17	2007 Below Basic	2007 At or Above Basic	2007 At or Above Proficient	2015 Below Basic	2015 At or Above Basic	2015 At or Above Proficient	2017 Below Basic	2017 At or Above Basic	2017 At or Above Proficient
United States	239	240	239	0	19%	81%	39%	19%	81%	39%	21%	79%	40%
Massachusetts	252	251	249	-3	7%	93%	58%	10%	90%	54%	13%	87%	53%
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>39%</b>

Grade 8													
State	Score				Percentage								
	2007	2015	2017	Change 07-17	2007 Below Basic	2007 At or Above Basic	2007 At or Above Proficient	2015 Below Basic	2015 At or Above Basic	2015 At or Above Proficient	2017 Below Basic	2017 At or Above Basic	2017 At or Above Proficient
United States	280	281	282	2	30%	70%	31%	30%	70%	32%	31%	69%	33%
Massachusetts	298	297	297	-1	15%	85%	51%	19%	81%	51%	19%	81%	50%
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>30%</b>

NOTE: U.S. scores are for public schools only.  
SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics - The Nation's Report Card - Mathematics

In order to provide all relevant context, NAEP data are not only disaggregated by location, but by factors like socioeconomic status and race and ethnicity. Table 8 presents these data, detailing what percentage of various subgroups achieved a score *at or above proficient* on the 2017 NAEP reading assessment in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Likewise, Table 9 shows each state's proficiency rate on the 2017 NAEP mathematics assessment by subgroup.

**Table 8**  
**NAEP Reading Assessment Results, 2017**  
**Percentage of Subgroups Scoring At or Above Proficient**

	MA	RI		MA	RI
<b>4th Grade</b>			<b>8th Grade</b>		
All Students	51.0%	39.0%	All Students	49.0%	37.0%
<i>Free or Reduced Lunch Eligible</i>			<i>Free or Reduced Lunch Eligible</i>		
Eligible	30.0%	24.0%	Eligible	25.0%	18.0%
Not Eligible (Not receiving)	60.0%	55.0%	Not Eligible (Not receiving)	58.0%	52.0%
<i>Race or Ethnicity</i>			<i>Race or Ethnicity</i>		
White	60.0%	49.0%	White	55.0%	47.0%
Black	29.0%	20.0%	Black	26.0%	16.0%
Hispanic	29.0%	23.0%	Hispanic	28.0%	19.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	64.0%	46.0%	Asian/Pacific Islander	66.0%	42.0%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	American Indian/Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A
Two or More Races	51.0%	32.0%	Two or More Races	63.0%	N/A
<i>Disability or English Language Learner</i>			<i>Disability or English Language Learner</i>		
Student with Disability*	22.0%	9.0%	Student with Disability*	18.0%	10.0%
English Language Learner	14.0%	4.0%	English Language Learner	6.0%	1.0%

\*Includes students with IEP or 504 Plan.  
SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics - The Nation's Report Card - Reading

**Table 9**  
**NAEP Mathematics Assessment Results, 2017**  
**Percentage of Subgroups Scoring At or Above Proficient**

	MA	RI		MA	RI
<b>4th Grade</b>			<b>8th Grade</b>		
All Students	53.0%	39.0%	All Students	50.0%	30.0%
<i>Free or Reduced Lunch Eligible</i>			<i>Free or Reduced Lunch Eligible</i>		
Eligible	29.0%	23.0%	Eligible	28.0%	14.0%
Not Eligible (Not receiving)	64.0%	55.0%	Not Eligible (Not receiving)	58.0%	45.0%
<i>Race or Ethnicity</i>			<i>Race or Ethnicity</i>		
White	62.0%	48.0%	White	56.0%	39.0%
Black	25.0%	20.0%	Black	22.0%	15.0%
Hispanic	31.0%	22.0%	Hispanic	29.0%	12.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	68.0%	57.0%	Asian/Pacific Islander	72.0%	N/A
American Indian/Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	American Indian/Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A
Two or More Races	62.0%	39.0%	Two or More Races	46.0%	28.0%
<i>Disability or English Language Learner</i>			<i>Disability or English Language Learner</i>		
Student with Disability*	22.0%	11.0%	Student with Disability*	16.0%	6.0%
English Language Learner	17.0%	7.0%	English Language Learner	9.0%	2.0%

\*Includes students with IEP or 504 Plan.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics - The Nation's Report Card - Mathematics

As Tables 8 and 9 show, every subcategory of Massachusetts public school student outperformed its Rhode Island counterpart on the 2017 NAEP mathematics and reading assessments. For example, 60.0 percent of white Massachusetts fourth graders scored *at or above proficient* on the NAEP reading assessment in 2017, compared to a 49.0 percent proficiency rate among white Rhode Island fourth graders. Similarly, 16.0 percent of Massachusetts public school eighth graders with a documented disability achieved a score *at or above proficient* on the 2017 NAEP mathematics assessment, while 6.0 percent of their Rhode Island peers did the same.

In the great majority of education-related research, FRL rate stands as a proxy for low-income status, and as discussed above, the FRL rate in Rhode Island's public schools exceeded that of Massachusetts' by 7.1 percentage points in the 2014-2015 school year. However, Tables 8 and 9 show that in both reading and mathematics, Massachusetts FRL eligible fourth and eighth graders surpassed their Rhode Island peers on the 2017 NAEP. By the same token, a smaller percentage of fourth and eighth grade Rhode Island students who were FRL ineligible achieved a score *at or above proficient* in reading and mathematics than did their counterparts in Massachusetts. Thus, the data presented in Tables 8 and 9 indicate that socioeconomic factors cannot alone explain Massachusetts' history of outperforming Rhode Island on the NAEP.

### SAT

The SAT is a college entrance examination administered across the United States and primarily taken by high school juniors and seniors.<sup>5</sup> SAT scores are a mandatory component on many college

<sup>5</sup> SAT initially stood for Scholastic Aptitude Test. In 1993, the assessment's name was changed to the Scholastic Assessment Test, and in 1997 this long-form title was dropped altogether and the acronym SAT was adopted as a complete name in its place. Wayne J. Camara and Ernest W. Kimmel, eds., *Choosing Students: Higher Education Admissions Tools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005), 178.

and university applications, and are intended to objectively reflect a student’s college readiness. The assessment is broken down into two mandatory categories—mathematics and evidence-based reading and writing (ERW)—as well as one voluntary category, writing. Each section is scored on a range from 200 to 800, for total possible scores of either 1600 or 2400, depending on whether or not a student chose to complete the optional writing portion. Prior to 2016, reading stood in place of the SAT’s ERW category, and from 2006 to 2016, the writing section was mandatory.<sup>6</sup> Participation in the SAT is voluntary in most states, including Massachusetts, but in the 2017-2018 school year Rhode Island became one of ten states to administer the SAT to (nearly) all high school juniors in its public school system.<sup>7</sup>

When participation rates in optional tests such as the SAT rise, mean scores typically fall. Yet, as Table 10 illustrates, Massachusetts students achieved higher scores on the mathematics and ERW sections of the SAT in both 2018, when Rhode Island’s participation rate exceeded Massachusetts’ by 17.0 percentage points, and in 2017, when Rhode Island’s participation rate was 5.0 percentage points shy of its northeastern neighbor. As Rhode Island’s SAT participation rate jumped from 71.0 to 97.0 percent between 2017 and 2018, its students’ average score fell 44 points, from 1062 to 1018. In contrast, as Massachusetts’ experienced a relatively marginal increase in its SAT participation rate between 2017 and 2018, from 76.0 to 80.0 percent, it also saw a similarly marginal rise in its mean test scores, from 1107 to 1125. Thus, in 2017 Massachusetts’ average SAT scores exceeded Rhode Island’s by 45 points, and in (at least) partial result of Rhode Island’s increased participation rate that gap grew to 107 points in 2018. As the writing portion of the SAT is optional, these scores were not included in Table 10.

**Table 10**  
**Overall Mean SAT Scores and Participation Rates, 2016-2017**

State	Part. Rate 2018	2018 Mean Scores*			Part. Rate 2017	2017 Mean Scores*		
		ERW	Math	Total		ERW	Math	Total
U.S. Average	62%	536	531	1068	51%	533	527	1060
Massachusetts	80%	562	563	1125	76%	555	551	1107
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>1018</b>	<b>71%</b>	539	524	<b>1062</b>

NOTE: SAT scores and participation rates are for public schools only.  
 \*Data are for students graduating in the academic year provided.  
 SOURCE: The College Board; WICHE Graduation Estimates; RIPEC calculations

<sup>6</sup> “Test Specification for the Redesigned SAT,” College Board, 2015, <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/pdf/test-specifications-redesigned-sat-1.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> The following states also administered the SAT to all high school juniors in the 2017-2018 school year: Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, New Hampshire, and West Virginia. See: Jennifer Zinth and Julie Woods, “SAT Information Request,” Education Commission of the States, July 2, 2018, [https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/State-Information-Request\\_Use-of-ACT-SAT-and-PSAT-for-High-School-Testing-as-Required-by-ESSA.pdf](https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/State-Information-Request_Use-of-ACT-SAT-and-PSAT-for-High-School-Testing-as-Required-by-ESSA.pdf).

*Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System and Next-Generation Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System*

Rhode Island first administered the RICAS in place of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) in the 2017-2018 school year. The RICAS is administered to students in grades three through eight and is aligned with the Common Core State Standards to assess student proficiency in English language arts (ELA)/literacy as well as mathematics.<sup>8</sup> The RICAS was modeled directly off of the next-generation MCAS.

In its original form, the MCAS was administered to Massachusetts’ students in grades three through eight for nearly two decades. In the 2014-2015 school year, Massachusetts began allowing school districts to choose between administering the PARCC and the MCAS, and in 2016-2017 the state ceased using the PARCC but worked elements of that assessment into a new version of the MCAS, informally referred to as the next-generation MCAS. Massachusetts also administers the MCAS to its high school sophomores, who are required achieve a passing grade in order to earn a high school diploma. Unlike Massachusetts’ assessments for students in grades three through eight, this assessment was not altered in 2016-2017.

Table 11 compares the results in Rhode Island and Massachusetts on the 2018 RICAS/next-generation MCAS for grades three through eight in ELA/literacy. As indicated in Table 11, 34.0 percent of Rhode Island’s public school students in grades three through eight met or exceeded expectations on the ELA/literacy component of this assessment, compared to 51.0 percent of their Massachusetts peers. Table 11 moreover suggests that a gap in ELA/literacy achievement between Rhode Island and Massachusetts students is present in the third grade, but more substantial in higher grades. For instance, while the percentage of Rhode Island third graders who met or exceeded expectations is 12.0 percentage points fewer than the percentage of Massachusetts third graders to achieve the same, there is a 23.0 percentage point achievement gap between eighth grade students in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

**Table 11**  
**2018 RICAS/Next-Gen MCAS ELA/Lit Results, Rhode Island and Massachusetts**

Grade	Rhode Island			Massachusetts		
	Did Not Meet Expectations	Partially Met Expectations	Met or Exceeded Expectations	Did Not Meet Expectations	Partially Met Expectations	Met or Exceeded Expectations
3	11%	49%	40%	7%	41%	52%
4	15%	47%	38%	9%	38%	53%
5	14%	49%	37%	8%	38%	54%
6	20%	46%	34%	12%	37%	51%
7	29%	47%	24%	15%	39%	46%
8	30%	42%	28%	15%	34%	51%
<b>All (3-8)</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>51%</b>

SOURCE: Rhode Island and Massachusetts Departments of Education

<sup>8</sup> “RICAS Assessments,” Rhode Island Department of Education, <http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/Assessment/RICASAssessments.aspx>.



Table 12 displays the 2018 RICAS/next-generation MCAS results for grades three through eight in mathematics, and like Table 11, it reveals a substantial gap in performance rates between Massachusetts and Rhode Island students. Overall, 48.0 percent of Massachusetts students met or exceeded expectations in the mathematics component of this assessment, while 27.0 percent of Rhode Island students achieved the same. Massachusetts students outperformed their Rhode Island peers in mathematics at every grade level, but in similarity to the ELA/literacy results, the gap in achievement among Rhode Island and Massachusetts students on the RICAS/next-generation MCAS is least significant among third graders and widens thereafter.

**Table 12**  
**2018 RICAS/Next-Gen MCAS Mathematics Results, Rhode Island and Massachusetts**

Grade	Rhode Island			Massachusetts		
	Did Not Meet Expectations	Partially Met Expectations	Met or Exceeded Expectations	Did Not Meet Expectations	Partially Met Expectations	Met or Exceeded Expectations
3	20%	45%	35%	12%	38%	50%
4	23%	50%	27%	13%	39%	48%
5	21%	52%	27%	10%	44%	46%
6	21%	54%	25%	11%	42%	47%
7	26%	47%	27%	14%	40%	46%
8	24%	53%	23%	12%	38%	50%
<b>All (3-8)</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>48%</b>

SOURCE: Rhode Island and Massachusetts Departments of Education

Table 13 compares selected demographic data with performance on the 2018 RICAS/next-generation MCAS and demonstrates that the top-performing districts in Rhode Island were outperformed by Massachusetts’ top-performing districts. For example, in Massachusetts’ top-performing district in mathematics, Lexington, 80.0 percent of students were deemed proficient, whereas in Rhode Island’s top-performing district in mathematics, Barrington, 69.0 percent of students acquired a proficient score. As with other districts in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, demographic differences cannot alone account for this distinction in performance, because while Lexington has higher expenditures per pupil than Barrington, it also has a significantly larger percentage of students enrolled in ELL programs, as well as students belonging to racial and ethnic minorities. The two districts share similar FRL and IEP participation rates.

Table 13 also illustrates that Massachusetts districts with the highest portion of FRL eligible students performed better on the 2018 RICAS/next-generation MCAS than their counterparts in Rhode Island. For example, while Chelsea, Massachusetts had an FRL rate of 87.0 percent in 2014-2015, and Providence, Rhode Island had an FRL rate of 80.0 percent, the former achieved a proficiency rate in ELA/literacy of 29.0 percent, compared to the latter’s rate of 14.0 percent. In mathematics, 28.0 percent of Chelsea’s students were deemed proficient, while only 10.0 percent of Providence’s students achieved the same. This occurred in spite of the fact that Providence has higher per pupil expenditures than Chelsea. The two districts share comparable rates of ELL participants and ethnic and racial minorities.

**Table 13**  
**Comparison of Selected Massachusetts and Rhode Island Districts, Selected Demographic Information and 2018 MCAS/RICAS Performance**

State and District*	2014-2015**	2015-2016**					2014-2015**	2018	
	Total Current Expenditures per Pupil***	Total Students	% White	% ELL†	% IEP†	% FRL†	MCAS/RICAS % Proficient		
							Grades 3-8††	ELA/Lit	Math
<b>Massachusetts - Top ELA/Lit Performers</b>									
Weston	\$ 23,614	2,207	68%	4%	17%	6%	81%	77%	
Lexington	18,492	7,022	51%	6%	14%	6%	80%	81%	
Carlisle	19,094	615	75%	2%	15%	1%	79%	80%	
Wellesley	13,247	5,134	72%	2%	16%	6%	79%	75%	
Winchester	13,247	4,639	74%	4%	16%	7%	79%	80%	
<b>Rhode Island - Top ELA/Lit Performers</b>									
New Shoreham	\$ 39,178	113	83%	9%	26%	19%	70%	40%	
Barrington	14,102	3,328	87%	1%	13%	4%	69%	61%	
North Smithfield	13,349	1,729	87%	1%	15%	17%	60%	44%	
Jamestown	20,106	496	93%	1%	18%	13%	59%	60%	
East Greenwich	14,758	2,455	84%	1%	12%	7%	56%	53%	
<b>Massachusetts - Top Math Performers</b>									
Lexington	\$ 18,492	7,022	51%	6%	14%	6%	80%	81%	
Southborough	17,294	1,319	74%	7%	13%	4%	75%	81%	
Carlisle	19,094	615	75%	2%	15%	1%	79%	80%	
Winchester	13,247	4,639	74%	4%	16%	7%	79%	80%	
Belmont	12,728	4,446	67%	6%	10%	7%	78%	78%	
Hopkinton	14,116	3,488	84%	2%	13%	3%	78%	78%	
<b>Rhode Island - Top Math Performers</b>									
Barrington	\$ 14,102	3,328	87%	1%	13%	4%	69%	61%	
Jamestown	20,106	496	93%	1%	18%	13%	59%	60%	
East Greenwich	14,758	2,455	84%	1%	12%	7%	56%	53%	
Cumberland	12,324	4,552	81%	3%	16%	25%	56%	50%	
North Kingstown	14,284	4,017	87%	2%	13%	22%	54%	47%	
<b>Massachusetts - Highest % FRL</b>									
Fitchburg	\$ 14,140	5,299	33%	10%	22%	100%	32%	25%	
New Bedford	14,011	12,782	44%	22%	22%	100%	33%	30%	
Wareham	15,423	2,547	73%	1%	24%	100%	37%	30%	
Lawrence	15,184	13,815	5%	29%	18%	90%	28%	29%	
Chelsea	13,691	6,466	7%	24%	13%	87%	29%	28%	
<b>Rhode Island - Highest % FRL</b>									
Providence	\$ 16,192	23,867	9%	24%	17%	80%	14%	10%	
Central Falls	16,076	2,657	10%	24%	24%	79%	10%	7%	
Pawtucket	12,220	9,022	34%	10%	17%	72%	20%	17%	
Woonsocket	12,054	5,908	45%	9%	26%	71%	13%	11%	
Newport	17,079	2,173	43%	7%	20%	62%†††	23%	19%	
<b>Massachusetts Totals</b>	<b>\$ 16,566</b>	<b>964,026</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>48%</b>	
<b>Rhode Island Totals</b>	<b>\$ 15,797</b>	<b>142,014</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>27%</b>	

\* Includes only those districts which serve students in grades 3 through 8. The following districts do not meet that criterion but would otherwise be singled out as a top ELA and/or Mathematics performer: Dover (MA), Sherborn (MA), Dover-Sherborn (MA), and Gloucester (RI). Private and charter schools were also excluded.

\*\* Most recent year for which comparable data are available.

\*\*\* Non-K-12 districts tend to have higher expenditures per pupil. Carlisle (MA), Southborough (MA), and Jamestown (RI) are K-8 districts. Data excludes expenditures for equipment, non-public education, school construction, debt financing, and community services.

† ELL refers to English Language Learners, IEP refers to students with an Individualized Education Program, and FRL refers to Free and Reduced Lunch.

†† Both Rhode Island and Massachusetts students take the RICAS/MCAS in grades 3-8, but Massachusetts students also take the MCAS in grade 10. Grade 10 scores were not factored in.

††† Newport's FRL percentage was calculated with data from the Rhode Island Department of Education. All other FRL data were acquired from the National Center for Education Statistics.

SOURCE: Rhode Island and Massachusetts Departments of Education; National Center for Education Statistics; RIPEC calculations

Complete lists of district-level performance in Rhode Island and Massachusetts on the 2018 RICAS/next-generation MCAS, as well as selected demographic information, are available in the Appendix of this report.

Taken together, the most recent results from the NAEP, SAT, and RICAS/next-generation MCAS show that Massachusetts students consistently outperform their Rhode Island counterparts. This trend is apparent across multiple assessments, between significant demographic groups, and over a number of years. Overall, the two states have relatively similar demographic features, and though there are some significant divergences, disaggregating data by both demographics and performance makes clear that these factors cannot fully explain the existing performance gap. Building upon this understanding of student demographics and performance, this report now turns to other areas of each state's education system which might impact student achievement.

### III. Historical and Institutional Context

#### Constitutional Authority

In the United States, state and local governments have played a part in funding and overseeing education since the colonial era. The nature of that involvement has broadened and shifted in the nearly four hundred years since Massachusetts Bay Colony legislated its ability to levy taxes for schools, and public education has long since become one of the most important functions of state and local governments.<sup>9</sup>

In both Rhode Island and Massachusetts, the state's function as an educator is engrained in the state constitution. Contending that "the diffusion of knowledge as well as virtue" is "essential" to preserving individual "rights and liberties," the Rhode Island Constitution's education clause tasks the general assembly with taking "all means which it may deem necessary and proper to secure to the people the advances and opportunities of education."<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the Massachusetts Constitution's education clause calls on "legislatures and magistrates...to cherish...public schools," because the diffusion of "wisdom," "knowledge," and "virtue" among the people is "necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties."<sup>11</sup>

Despite similarities in the wording of Rhode Island and Massachusetts' education clauses, the two states' judiciaries have produced different interpretations of the clauses' implied directives. In 1993, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled in *McDuffy v. Secretary of the Executive Office of Education* that the state has a constitutionally enforceable duty to provide an education to all child residents in spite of socioeconomic divides, but that children from less affluent families and communities were "not receiving" that "constitutional entitlement." While the justices did not mandate equal funding for public education in *McDuffy*, they reaffirmed the duty of the Commonwealth to provide an adequate education, and clearly established that if local governments are unable to meet this standard, it is the state's obligation to address the problem.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast, in the 1995 case *City of Pawtucket v. Sundlun*, the Rhode Island Supreme Court declined to hear the plaintiffs' contention that the state's method of funding public education violated the Rhode Island Constitution's education and equal protection clauses. Ruling that the Constitution does not guarantee equitable funding in public education, the justices also held that the General Assembly possesses sole province over education funding.<sup>13</sup> Nine years later, in 2014,

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<sup>9</sup> Livia Gershon, "Where American Public Schools Came From," JSTOR Daily, September 1, 2016, <https://daily.jstor.org/where-american-public-schools-came-from/>.

<sup>10</sup> Constitution of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Article XII, Section I, <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/RiConstitution/C12.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Chapter V, Section II, <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/Constitution#chapterISectionI>.

<sup>12</sup> *McDuffy v. Secretary of the Executive Office of Education* Case Reports, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/chapter70/McDuffy-report.docx>.

<sup>13</sup> *City of Pawtucket et al. v. Bruce Sundlun et al.*, July 20, 1995, [https://scholar.google.com/scholar\\_case?case=2372498001429988039&hl=en&as\\_sdt=6&as\\_vis=1&oi=scholar](https://scholar.google.com/scholar_case?case=2372498001429988039&hl=en&as_sdt=6&as_vis=1&oi=scholar).

the Court upheld this decision in *Woonsocket School Committee v. Chafee*, stressing that the General Assembly, not the judiciary, must define what an adequate education entails.<sup>14</sup>

Due to said cases, a constitutional guarantee to education holds somewhat different meaning in the Bay State and the Ocean State. For one, while Massachusetts vests authority over education in both the legislative and executive branches, Rhode Island's legislative branch holds sole authority in this arena. Moreover, whereas an equitable education is considered a constitutional guarantee in Massachusetts, the same is not true in Rhode Island. Both states eventually adopted baseline funding formulas in attempt to address funding inequality, but while Massachusetts is constitutionally mandated to consider equity, Rhode Island legislators are not. Perhaps most importantly, the *McDuffy* decision provided a clear call to action in Massachusetts, setting the stage for comprehensive and state-driven education reform. In contrast, neither *City of Pawtucket* nor *Woonsocket School Committee* provided an impetus for state-wide reform, as the judiciary ruled that the state was not under obligation to act.

### **Education Reform, 1990s-2016**

Rhode Island and Massachusetts both undertook education reform between the 1990s and 2016, though with notable differences in approach, implementation, and outcomes.

In the Bay State, the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA) was signed into law in June 1993, three days after the Court delivered the *McDuffy* decision. Designed to deliver comprehensive reform over a seven-year period, MERA increased education funding, instituted continuing education for educators, empowered principals, set measurable statewide curriculum standards, and put in place a means of accountability. Additionally, MERA mandated "high-stakes" testing, in which students must demonstrate competency over state-wide standards in order to receive a high school diploma.<sup>15</sup>

While Massachusetts took a comprehensive approach to reform with MERA, Rhode Island reform efforts have historically been more piecemeal, and promulgated through a combination of legislation and RIDE directives. During the 2000s, the most substantial of these reforms included the overhaul of the Rhode Island Basic Education Program (BEP). Jointly revised in 2009 by RIDE and the Council for Elementary and Secondary Education,<sup>16</sup> the Rhode Island BEP is an overarching set of regulations which outlines student rights, sets educational standards, and governs the state's public education system (in conjunction with state and federal regulations).<sup>17</sup> In contrast to its replacement, the revised BEP focuses on outputs rather than inputs, giving local education agencies (LEAs) wide latitude in achieving results while focusing on clarifying statewide standards for success. As with the MERA, Rhode Island's revised BEP makes clear that

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<sup>14</sup> *Woonsocket School Committee et al. v. The Honorable Lincoln Chafee in his official capacity as the Governor of the State of Rhode Island et al.*, May 2, 2014, <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/ri-supreme-court/1665522.html>.

<sup>15</sup> "Overview of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993," May 1997, [https://users.wpi.edu/~goulet/teacher\\_prep/Overview%20of%20the%20Massachusetts%20Education%20Reform%20Act%20of%201993.doc](https://users.wpi.edu/~goulet/teacher_prep/Overview%20of%20the%20Massachusetts%20Education%20Reform%20Act%20of%201993.doc).

<sup>16</sup> The Council for Elementary and Secondary Education was known as the Board of Regents in 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education, "Basic Education Program Regulations," June 4, 2009, <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Inside-RIDE/Legal/BEP.pdf>.

the state has the responsibility to provide essential resources, and establish educational standards and expectations. However, MERA comprised a more substantial reform in a number of ways.

For one, it addresses school funding. Under MERA, Massachusetts has minimum spending requirements for school districts and municipalities, as well as a funding formula which takes a school's demographic makeup and operating costs into account. Rhode Island's current funding formula was established with a 2010 public funding reform law, and like Massachusetts' formula, it accounts for high-needs special education students. However, out of concern that a formula partially weighted by demographics may incentivize over-identification and deter student inclusion, Rhode Island's formula deviates from Massachusetts' in not assigning additional weights to historically underperforming subgroups.

## **Structure of Education Governance**

The structure of education governance in Rhode Island and Massachusetts diverged significantly with MERA's 1993 passage. Thus, an examination of how each state has configured education oversight may help explain their divergence in student performance.

### *State-Level Governance Structures*

Employing a secretariat model under MERA, Massachusetts organizes government operations related to education in an Executive Office of Education. Supervised by a governor-appointed Secretary of Education, the Executive Office of Education is comprised of three departments: early education and care, primary and secondary education, and higher education. Each department is overseen by a board, and each has a commissioner who is recommended by the board and appointed by the Secretary of Education. The Secretary of Education is responsible for facilitating coordination and communication between and among the three departments.

In contrast, Rhode Island has a single, unified Board of Education. Created in 2014 by the Rhode Island General Assembly and tasked with "the coordination of education from pre-k through higher education," the Board of Education subsumed two bodies—the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education and the Board of Governors for Higher Education—and is made up of two branches: the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education and the Council on Postsecondary Education.<sup>18</sup> Education policy adopted by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education is implemented by RIDE, which is managed by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Appointed by the Council and approved of by the full Board of Education, the Rhode Island Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education takes on an advisory role in regard to education policy and is required to seek approval from the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education for the majority of actions that they make.<sup>19</sup> In Massachusetts, on the other hand, the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education is charged with developing a "five year master plan for public education" and given wide latitude to make those plans manifest.<sup>20</sup> In both

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<sup>18</sup> Rhode Island General Laws, § 16-97-1, <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE16/16-97/16-97-1.HTM>.

<sup>19</sup> Rhode Island General Laws, § 16-1-5, <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE16/16-1/16-1-5.HTM>.

<sup>20</sup> Massachusetts General Laws, § XII-69-1A, <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1A>.

states, commissioners function as the primary point of contact between the state and local districts. However, in Rhode Island most of the statutory duties involved in this task involve either ensuring local compliance of state-wide laws or providing administrative support. In Massachusetts, the commissioner assists in the implementation of state policies and directives, rather than serving a primarily regulatory or administrative function.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the Rhode Island Board of Education tends to hold more influence over education policy than the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, whereas the commissioner and Board share responsibility in Massachusetts.

Highlighting the similarities in statutory responsibilities between the Massachusetts Secretary of Education and the Rhode Island Board of Education, Table 14 demonstrates an overlap in the key functions and responsibilities of each state's state education agency (SEA). Yet, the states' organization and distribution of authority are distinct from one another. In Massachusetts, state-level governance of education is characterized by a broad and top-down distribution of power, in which the commissioner plays an active role helping LEAs translate state-level objectives into actionable policies. In partial result, Massachusetts holds a relatively high degree of influence over LEAs, whereas in Rhode Island responsibility for implementing statewide education policies is largely the province of local officials.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

**Table 14**  
**Duties of the Massachusetts Secretary of Education Compared to the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education**

Massachusetts (Secretary of Education)	Rhode Island (Board of Education)
N/A	<i>The Board shall</i> maintain a department of elementary and secondary education, to provide for its staffing and organization and to appoint a commissioner of elementary and secondary education pursuant to §16-60-6 who shall serve at its pleasure.
Analyze the present and future goals, needs, and requirements of public education in the commonwealth.	<i>The Board shall</i> approve a master plan implementing the broad goals and objectives for elementary and secondary education in the state that have been established by the board of education. These goals and objectives shall be expressed in terms of what people should know and be able to do as a result of their educational experience. The council on elementary and secondary education shall continually evaluate the efforts and results of education in the pursuit of these objectives. <i>The Board shall</i> adopt standards and exercise general supervision over all elementary and secondary public and nonpublic education in the state.
Review and approve mission statements and five-year master plans encompassing each sector of the public education system. These statements and plans shall take into account the secretary's analysis of goals, needs, and requirements and shall be designed to achieve a well-coordinated system of education.	<i>The Board shall</i> prepare with the assistance of the commissioner a multi-year plan of priority educational goals and objectives. This plan should recommend policy objectives, implementation strategies, and a timetable for major policy initiatives.
Approve the appointments of commissioners of early education and care, elementary and secondary education, and higher education.	There are two councils that make up the Board and appoint the commissioners of elementary and secondary education and the post-secondary commissioner. <i>The Board shall</i> submit an annual report of its activities to the governor, the speaker of the house, and the president of the senate. The report shall provide: a consolidated financial statement of all funds received and expended; a summary of performance during the previous fiscal year including shortcomings and remedies; a briefing on anticipated activities in the upcoming FY; and findings and recommendations for improvements. The director of DOA is responsible for the enforcement of this subsection.
Make recommendations to the secretary of administration and finance and the governor concerning the funding of education in the commonwealth.	<i>The Board shall</i> prepare with the assistance of the commissioner a total educational budget for the elementary and secondary sector which shall include: the budgets of the department of elementary and secondary education; subordinate boards and agencies; and state aid to local school districts. Prior to submitting the budget the council shall present the budget to the board of education for review and approval.
Assist in preparing budget proposals to be put before the legislature on behalf of the boards and departments of early education and care, elementary and secondary education, and higher education.	

SOURCE: Massachusetts and Rhode Island Statutes

### *Local-Level Governance Structures*

In similarity to state-level education governance, the organization and distribution of authority in LEAs differs between Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

In Massachusetts, one of the most significant alterations imposed under MERA was a move towards school-based management. As before, local education governance in Massachusetts is characterized by a broad distribution of authority across four local bodies: school committees, superintendents, principals, and school councils. However, under MERA the occupation of these bodies shifted. Each school's principal is tasked with making the majority of decisions regarding personnel and operations while this task would have previously fallen to the school committee. One of the goals of MERA was to enable school committees to focus on the policymaking



components of education governance, and this was accomplished by giving the principal day-to-day administrative and management duties, while restricting committees' hiring and firing responsibilities to the district superintendent. The superintendent, in turn, operates as a chief executive officer. Finally, under MERA each school must establish a school council, which is tasked with promoting community engagement in school governance, and composed of the principal, teachers, parents, community members, and, at the high school level, students.<sup>22</sup> When taken together, local education governance in Massachusetts resembles the corporate governance model, in which there is a clear demarcation of responsibilities, and an explicit separation between policymaking and management.

In contrast, Rhode Island's local school committees are vested with the entire care, control, and management of public schools, and consequently operate as both policymakers and managers. School committees are elected by the public in most communities and by the mayor in some cities, and each is responsible for school staffing decisions, including the selection and termination of superintendents. In addition, school committees are charged with developing local education policies which relate to topics ranging from curriculum and student conduct to budgeting and collective bargaining.<sup>23</sup> Rhode Island state law also requires that each local school committee establish a school improvement team "composed of the principal... teachers, education support employees, students, parents, and other business and community citizens" in each school.<sup>24</sup> The school improvement team is generally charged with assisting "in the preparation and evaluation of the school improvement plans," as well as providing "any assistance that the principal may request in preparing the school's annual budget and plan." However, a school improvement team's role and relative degree of authority are ultimately determined by the school committee.<sup>25</sup> In further contrast to Massachusetts, a superintendent in Rhode Island is commissioned under state law to act as "the chief administrative agent of the school committee," rather than as a chief executive officer. The superintendent's duties include: providing policy recommendations to the school board, administering school finances and personnel, and evaluating schools and personnel according to committee-adopted standards.<sup>26</sup>

In short, while Massachusetts utilizes school-based management and a corporate governance model, Rhode Island's local education governance is typified by a high concentration of power within a single body: the school committee. This distinction is summarized in Table 15.

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<sup>22</sup> Massachusetts General Laws, § XII-71-59, § XII-71-59A, § XII-71-59B, § XII-71-59C, <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71>; John Portz, "Governing Massachusetts Public Schools: Assessing the 1993 Massachusetts Education Reform Act," *New England Journal of Public Policy* vol. 13, no. 2 (March 1998), pp. 125-142.

<sup>23</sup> Rhode Island General Laws, § 16-2-9, <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE16/16-2/16-2-9.HTM>.

<sup>24</sup> Rhode Island General Laws, § 16-53.1-2, <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE16/16-53.1/16-53.1-2.HTM>.

<sup>25</sup> Rhode Island General Laws, § 16-53.1-3, <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE16/16-53.1/16-53.1-3.HTM>.

<sup>26</sup> Rhode Island General Laws, § 16-2-11, <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE16/16-2/16-2-11.HTM>.

**Table 15**  
**Rhode Island and Massachusetts School Hiring and Firing Authority**

	Massachusetts	Rhode Island
<b>Superintendents</b>	Hired and terminated by school committees	Hired and terminated by school committees
<b>Principals</b>	Appointed and terminated by superintendents, subject to review by the school committee	Appointed and terminated by superintendents, with consent of the school committee
<b>Teachers</b>	Hired by principals, terminated by principals, subject to review by superintendents	Hired and terminated by superintendents, with consent of the school committee
<b>Other School Personnel</b>	Hired by principals, terminated by principals, subject to review by superintendents	Hired and terminated by superintendents, with consent of the school committee

SOURCE: Rhode Island and Massachusetts state law

Each state’s approach to local education governance may be relevant to understanding why Rhode Island continues to lag behind Massachusetts in regard to student achievement. The school-based management model Massachusetts employs has origins in the 1960s, and its relative effectiveness has been the subject of a number of studies. In whole, such studies provide support for the contention that school-based management enhances student performance. In empowering principals to make school staffing decisions, and encouraging teachers to participate in that process, studies show that school-based management improves teacher commitment and morale, which in turn improves instructional programs and heightens student achievement.<sup>27</sup> Studies have also demonstrated that principal satisfaction increases with school-based management, while additional research clarifies that a principal is among the most important factors contributing to a school’s successful reform.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, researchers have found that centralized hiring negatively impacts teacher quality, fit, and satisfaction.<sup>29</sup>

Yet, an LEA’s transfer to school-based management is unlikely to improve students’ educational outcomes if other reforms are not also employed. As one study found, the relative success of this model additionally depends on a shared education vision among LEAs and SEAs, rigorous

<sup>27</sup> For example: Timothy Daly et al., *Mutual benefits: New York City’s shift to mutual consent in teacher hiring*, (New York: The New Teacher Project, 2008); Susan Moore Johnson, Jill Harrison Berg, and Morgaen A. Donaldson, *Who stays in teaching and why: A review of the literature on teacher retention*, The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, (Boston: Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2005); Kenneth Leithwood and Teresa Menzies, “Forms and Effects of School-Based Management: A Review,” *Educational Policy* vol. 12, no. 3 (1998), pp. 325-346; Anthony S. Bryk et al., *Examining Productivity: Ten-Year Trends in Chicago Public Schools*, (Chicago: Consortium of Chicago School Research, 1998); G. Alfred Hess, Jr., “Understanding Achievement (and Other) Changes Under Chicago School Reform,” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* vol. 21, no. 1 (March 1999), pp. 67-83.

<sup>28</sup> For example: John Portz, “Governing Massachusetts Public Schools: Assessing the 1993 Massachusetts Education Reform Act,” *New England Journal of Public Policy* vol. 13, no. 2, (March 1998), pp. 125-142; Priscilla Wollstetter and Kerri L. Briggs, “The Principal’s Role in School-Based Management,” *Principal* vol. 74, no. 2, pp. 14-17 (1994); Kenneth Leithwood et al., *How leadership influences student learning*, (Minneapolis: Center for Applied Research and Education Improvement, University of Minnesota, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> For example: Jessica Levin, Jennifer Mulhern, and Joan Schunk, *Unintended consequences: The case for reforming the staffing rules in urban teachers unions contracts*, (New York: The New Teacher Project: 2005).

performance standards, a well-coordinated professional development plan, and the willingness to make substantive changes.<sup>30</sup>

### *School Discipline and Local-Level Governance Structures*

School discipline entails the behavioral strategies, codes of conduct, and punishments used in classrooms, schools, and districts so as to create a positive and productive learning environment for all students. Discipline is a necessary component of an education system, but as with other aspects of American education, the structure and implementation of school discipline varies widely between states, as well as communities. Examining each state’s approach to school discipline provides one means of illustrating Massachusetts and Rhode Island’s differences regarding the structure of local-level education governance.

As Table 16 shows, the distribution of disciplinary duties in Massachusetts and Rhode Island are dissimilar on a number of levels. Due to Massachusetts’ embrace of school-based management, superintendents and principals take up the majority of essential disciplinary duties in that state. More specifically, superintendents are charged with establishing district policies regarding student conduct, while principals enforce those policies in their schools. Principals in Massachusetts are also tasked with reviewing student discipline data in effort to effectively encourage discipline without unfairly targeting minority students, or else generally discouraging the academic progress of individual students by too enthusiastically taking punitive action.

	<b>Massachusetts</b>	<b>Rhode Island</b>
<b>School Committee</b>	Establish a pupil absence notification program (§ I-12-76-1A)	Create, maintain, and enforce a student discipline code (§ 16-21-21); Conduct disciplinary hearings, or else establish a school principal as a designee (§ 16-2-17); Appoint truant officer(s) (§ 16-19-3)
<b>Superintendent</b>	Establish and publish district policies regarding appropriate teacher and student conduct; Hear appeals of a principal's decision regarding suspension or expulsion (§ I-12-71-37H)	Be responsible for discipline in the school system (§ 16-2-1); Review student discipline data (§ 16-2-17)
<b>Principal</b>	Conduct disciplinary hearings (§ I-12-71-37H); Review student discipline data (§ I-12-71-37H3/4); Distribute sections of law regarding hazing to school groups, teams, and organizations (§ I-12-76-21)	Implement the state-wide bullying policy (§ 16-21-34)

SOURCE: Rhode Island and Massachusetts state law

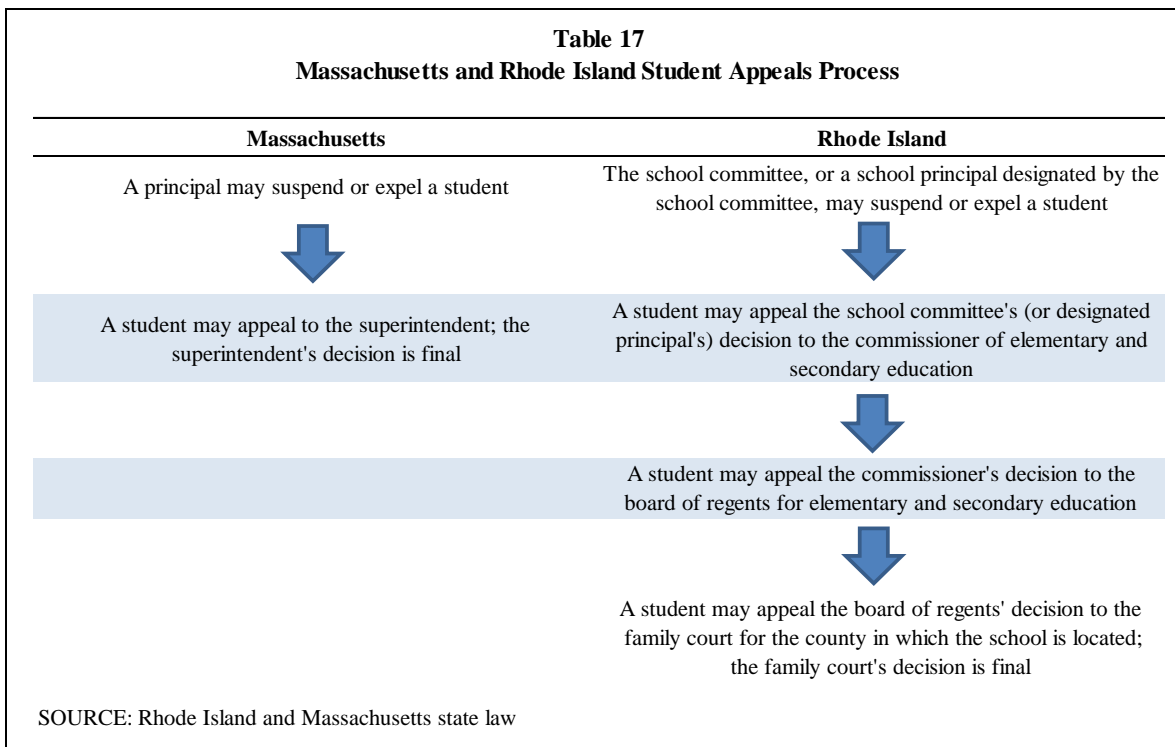
In contrast, many of the disciplinary duties prescribed to Massachusetts principals are taken up by Rhode Island superintendents, while Rhode Island school committees generally take on the duties of Massachusetts superintendents. In the Ocean State, school committees are responsible for creating, maintaining, and enforcing student discipline codes for their districts. Superintendents, on the other hand, are responsible for overseeing and implementing those policies. In further

<sup>30</sup> Kerri L. Briggs and Priscilla Wohlstetter, “Key Elements of a Successful School-Based Management Strategy,” *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* vol. 14, no. 3 (2003), pp. 351-372.

similarity to Massachusetts principals, Rhode Island superintendents are also charged with reviewing their districts' discipline data in effort to more fairly and productively dole out punishment.

The process for a student appealing a punishment such as expulsion or suspension in each state is laid out in Table 17, and further shows how Massachusetts' system of local-level governance provides for more school-level control than Rhode Island's. In Massachusetts, principals have the authority to suspend or expel a student, and each student has the right to appeal that decision to the district's superintendent. A superintendent may overturn or alter a principal's decision, but the appeals process ends with a superintendent's ruling. The appeals process therefore ends at the district level in Massachusetts.

Conversely, principals in Rhode Island only have the authority to expel or suspend students who breach the code of conduct if their district's school committee explicitly designates that power to them. Students facing disciplinary action from the school committee (or designated principal) may appeal that decision outside of their LEA, to the commissioner of elementary and secondary education. The commissioner's decision may then be appealed to the Board of Regents, while a final appeal may be made to family court.



Importantly, the comparative length of Rhode Island's appeals process has not resulted in lower disciplinary rates (which account for major disciplinary actions like in- and out-of-school suspension and expulsion, but not relatively minor actions, such as detention). To the contrary, the

disciplinary rate for Rhode Island public school students was 14.0 percent in 2016-2017,<sup>31</sup> while it was 4.0 percent in Massachusetts.<sup>32</sup> In recent years, the disciplinary rate for public schools in both states has declined, as both have responded to research which shows both that students with special needs and minority students face disciplinary actions at disproportionately high rates, and that out-of-school suspension often has a deleterious effect on students, increasing dropout rates while rarely leading to an improvement in behavior.<sup>33</sup> For instance, both states have begun to collect and utilize discipline data in the last decade, while Massachusetts has also begun to require that schools provide notice and a hearing ahead of disciplinary removals.<sup>34</sup> Despite these changes, Massachusetts' comparatively lower disciplinary rate is likely in part a product of local-level governance; studies show that suspension rates are lower in schools and districts where school-based management is employed.<sup>35</sup>

## Collective Bargaining

Prior to the 1960s, public sector employees were prohibited from collective bargaining throughout the United States. Ultimately becoming one of 33 states to do so,<sup>36</sup> Massachusetts enshrined collective bargaining rights and limitations in its General Laws in 1965.<sup>37</sup> Rhode Island took the same step the following year, in 1966.<sup>38</sup> In both states, teachers unions have since become influential stakeholders, with the great majority of public teachers in Rhode Island and Massachusetts receiving union representation at the collective bargaining table.<sup>39</sup> This begs the question, does one state empower teachers unions more than the other?

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<sup>31</sup> Rhode Island Kids Count, "2018 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook," <http://rikidscount.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Factbook%202017/Education%202017/Suspensions%202017.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education, School and District Profiles, "2016-17 Student Discipline Data Report," <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/ssdr/?orgcode=00000000&fycode=2017>.

<sup>33</sup> Council of State Governments Justice Center, "The School Discipline Consensus Report: Strategies from the Field to Keep Students Engaged in School and Out of the Juvenile Justice System," (New York, 2014), [http://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/The\\_School\\_Discipline\\_Consensus\\_Report.pdf](http://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/The_School_Discipline_Consensus_Report.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, "Discipline in Schools," <http://www.ride.ri.gov/studentsfamilies/healthsafety/disciplineinschools.aspx#3569163-infoworks>; Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice, "Unfinished Business: Assessing Our Progress on School Discipline Under Massachusetts Chapter 222," <http://lawyerscom.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Unfinished-Business-PDF.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> Anita A. Summers and Amy W. Johnson, "The Effects of School-Based Management Plans," in *Improving America's Schools: The Role of Incentives*, eds. Eric A. Hanushek and Dale W. Jorgenson, (National Academy of Science, 1996), pp. 75-96; Robert A. Collins and Marjorie K. Hanson, "School-Based Management/Shared Decision-Making Project 1987-88 through 1989-90. Summative Evaluation Report," (Dade County Public Schools, Office of Educational Accountability, January 1991); Susan Albert Mohrman, "School-Based Management: Organizing for High Performance," (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994)

<sup>36</sup> Agustina S. Paglayan, "Public-Sector Unions and the Size of Government," *American Journal of Political Science* vol. 62, no. 4 (October 2018), pp. 21-36, 22.

<sup>37</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Labor Relations, *A Guide to the Massachusetts Public Employee Collective Bargaining Law*, Eleventh Ed., (Massachusetts: 2016), [https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/09/01/a-guide-to-the-ma-collective-bargaining-law-11-8-16\\_0.pdf](https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/09/01/a-guide-to-the-ma-collective-bargaining-law-11-8-16_0.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> Rhode Island General Laws, § 28-9.3-1, <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE28/28-9.3/28-9.3-1.HTM>.

<sup>39</sup> Amber W. Winkler, Janie Scull, and Dara Zeelandelaar, "How Strong Are U.S. Teacher Unions?: A State-By-State Comparison," Thomas B. Fordham Institute (October 2012), 187, 295. <http://www.edexcellencemedia.net/publications/2012/20121029-How-Strong-Are-US-Teacher-Unions/20121029-Union-Strength-Full-Report.pdf>.

Table 18 addresses this question by comparing the scope of teachers' collective bargaining rights in Massachusetts and Rhode Island General Laws. While not precise replicas of one another, the two states' laws pertaining to public teachers and collective bargaining are quite similar overall. Both states guarantee the right to collective bargaining but explicitly forbid striking. Both states set three years as the typical length of time a collectively bargained contract may cover, and in both the scope of bargaining includes salary, hours, and "other terms" of employment. Before the United States Supreme Court deemed such legislation unconstitutional in the 2018 case *Janus v. AFSCME*, both states additionally required public employees receiving the benefit of union negotiations to pay union dues, regardless of whether or not they were a member of that union.<sup>40</sup> While Massachusetts and Rhode Island have set out somewhat different procedures for negotiating parties who reach an impasse, both require mediation by a third party and enable voluntary arbitration. Thus, the relative strength of teachers unions in the Ocean State and the Bay State does not explain the interstate gap in student achievement.

	Massachusetts	Rhode Island
<b>Legality of Collective Bargaining</b>	"Employees shall have the right of self-organization and the right to form, join, or assist any employee organization for the purpose of bargaining collectively through representatives of their own choosing...and to engage in lawful, concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection, free from interference, restraint, or coercion" (§ XI-150E-2)	"Public school teachers [have] the right to organize, to be represented, to negotiate professionally, and to bargain on a collective basis with school committees"; "it shall be the obligation of the school committee to meet and confer in good faith with the representative...of the negotiating or bargaining agent" (§ 28-9.3-1)
<b>Scope of Bargaining</b>	"Wages, hours, standards of productivity and performance, and other terms and conditions of employment" (§ XI-150E-12)	"Hours, salary, working conditions, and other terms of professional employment" (§ 28-9.3-1)
<b>Bargaining Impasse Procedure</b>	"After a reasonable period of negotiation...either party or the parties acting jointly may petition the board for a determination of the existence of an impasse"; "upon receipt of such petition, the board shall commence an investigation...to determine if the parties have negotiated for a reasonable period of time and if an impasse exists, within ten days of the receipt of such petition, the board shall notify the parties of the results of its investigation"; "within five days after such determination, the board shall appoint a mediator" or "the parties may agree upon a person to serve as a mediator"; "after a reasonable period of mediation...said mediator shall issue to the board a report indicating the results of his services in resolving the impasse"; "if the impasse continues...either party or the parties acting jointly may petition the board to initiate fact-finding proceedings"; "the board shall appoint a fact-finder" who "shall transmit his findings and any recommendations...to the board and to both parties within thirty days after the record is closed"; "if the impasse continues after the publication of the fact-finder's report, the issues in dispute shall be returned to the parties for further bargaining"; "if the impasse remains unresolved ten days after the transmittal of such findings and recommendations, the board shall make them public"; "the parties...may mutually waive the fact-finding provisions contained herein and may petition the board for arbitration"; "Any arbitration award in a proceeding voluntarily agreed to by the parties to resolve an impasse shall be binding" (§ XI-150E-9)	"In the event that the negotiating or bargaining agent and the school committee are unable, within thirty days from and including the date of their first meeting, to reach an agreement on a contract, either of them may request mediation...by the director of labor and training or from any other source"; "the department of labor and training is empowered to compel the attendance of all the parties to any and all meetings it deems necessary until the dispute is resolved"; "the decision of the arbitrators shall be made public and shall be binding...on all matters not involving the expenditure of money" (§ 28-9.3-9; § 28-9.3-12)
<b>Legality of Strikes</b>	"No public employee or employee organization shall engage in a strike, and no public employee or organization shall induce, encourage or condone any strike" (§ XI-150E-9A)	"Nothing contained in this chapter shall be construed to accord to certified public school teachers the right to strike" (§ 28-9.3-1)
<b>Length of Contract</b>	"Any collective bargaining agreement...shall not exceed a term of three years"; "provided, however, that the employer and the exclusive representative through negotiation may agree to include a provision in a collective bargaining agreement stating that the agreement's terms shall remain in full force and effect beyond the 3 years until a successor agreement is voluntarily negotiated by the parties" (§ XI-150E-7)	"No contract shall exceed the term of three years unless a budget commission or a receiver has been appointed...in either case the contract term shall not exceed...five years" (§ 28-9.3-4)
<b>"Right-to-work" Status*</b>	"The commonwealth or any other employer shall require as a condition of employment during the life of a collective bargaining agreement so providing, the payment on or after the thirtieth day following the beginning of such employment" (§ XI-150E-12)	"Teachers shall be free to join or to decline to join any association or organization" but "all nonmembers of the exclusive bargaining representative organization shall pay a service charge as a contribution toward the... procedures involved in securing a contract" (§ 28-9.3-7)

\* In the 2018 case *Janus v. AFSCME* the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that state laws requiring employees to pay union dues are unconstitutional. Consequently, all fifty states are now 'right-to-work' states, and Massachusetts and Rhode Island General Laws stating otherwise are unenforceable. Due to the newness of this ruling, its impact is not yet apparent. So, as to give a full picture of the rules and regulations which helped to create present-day teachers unions, these statutes are included.  
SOURCE: Rhode Island and Massachusetts General Laws

<sup>40</sup> *Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Council 31, et al.*, 16-1466 (2018), [https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/17pdf/16-1466\\_2b3j.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/17pdf/16-1466_2b3j.pdf).



## Content Standards and Curriculum

In Rhode Island and Massachusetts, educators work under standards which are set, circulated, and enforced by the state. Differences in the creation and implementation of content standards and curriculum are considered below, and so too is the implication that such differences are key to understanding variation in student performance across the two states.

Broadly defined, content standards establish the outcomes schools should produce, as well as the knowledge and skills students should acquire as they advance from one grade to the next. Curriculum, on the other hand, links content standards with classroom instruction, serving as a guide to teachers as they help students develop proficiencies and content knowledge. Simply put, content standards encompass *what* students should know, while curriculum lays out *how* to achieve those goals.

Content standards constitute the foundation upon which the rest of the education system is built. They establish the (minimum) goals of the system, and have the capacity to exert substantial influence over the classroom, as other components of the education system—such as curriculum, instruction materials, and educator and student assessment—should be in alignment with those standards.<sup>41</sup> Due to their centrality, the relative quality of content standards tends to reverberate through the education system at large. Indeed, some studies suggest that high-quality standards yield better classroom instruction, particularly when combined with student assessments which are specifically designed to gauge those standards.<sup>42</sup> As with the structure of education governance, however, content standards cannot alone strengthen an education system. More to the point, no matter how clear, comprehensive, and rigorous a set of content standards are, they are unlikely to improve student outcomes if the remainder of the education system does not stand in alignment.

Content standards are set by SEAs in both Rhode Island and Massachusetts, but Massachusetts' content standards have historically been of greater clarity, comprehensiveness, and rigor. The Bay State's content standards were set in 2010 and revised in 2017, and though they were adopted from the Common Core Standards, the Massachusetts Board of Education added its own features. For example, as there are no Common Core Standards for pre-kindergarten, Massachusetts set their own, and unlike Common Core, Massachusetts' framework for ELA/literacy incorporates core subjects like social studies and science. In its 2017 revision, the state worked to strengthen this latter feature, providing “stronger demonstrations of how literacy instruction...is intertwined with” core subjects. Additionally, Massachusetts revised content standards seek to: set “higher ambitions for student achievement,” “provide numerous classroom instructional examples and samples” of student work, and increase “coherence among...Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language Standards.”<sup>43</sup> Even prior to this revamp, Massachusetts' standards were widely regarded

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<sup>41</sup> Chester E. Finn, Jr., Liam Julian, and Michael J. Petrilli, *The State of State Standards 2006* (Washington D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2006), [http://edex.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/publication/pdfs/State%20of%20State%20Standards2006FINAL\\_9.pdf](http://edex.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/publication/pdfs/State%20of%20State%20Standards2006FINAL_9.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid; *Three Paths, One Destination: Standards-Based Reform in Maryland, Massachusetts, and Texas*, (Washington, D.C.: Achieve, Inc., 2002), <https://www.achieve.org/three-paths-one-destination-standards-based-reform-maryland-massachusetts-and-texas>.

<sup>43</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education, “Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for Mathematics” (2017), <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/math/2017-06.pdf>; Massachusetts Department of Education, “Massachusetts

as among the best in the nation.<sup>44</sup> In its 2010 state-by-state comparison, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, bestowed an “A” grade on Massachusetts’ English language arts standards and ranked its mathematics content standards a “B+.”<sup>45</sup>

Rhode Island’s content standards, on the other hand, received a “D” in both ELA and mathematics from the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation in 2010.<sup>46</sup> In recognition of this problem, the state brought its content standards closer in line with those of Massachusetts, adopting the Common Core State Standards in 2010. In further similarity to the Bay State, Rhode Island supplements Common Core with Early Childhood Education Standards for pre-kindergarten pupils.<sup>47</sup>

In dissimilarity, Massachusetts has developed curriculum frameworks which translate content standards into a system of instruction. Implemented under MERA and revised intermittently, Massachusetts’ curriculum frameworks are closely aligned with the state’s content standards and determine the scope and sequence of content to be taught at each grade level throughout the state.<sup>48</sup> Whereas Massachusetts’ consciously aligns content standards and curriculum with top-down authority, Rhode Island has not developed curriculum frameworks. Rhode Island SEAs are granted more autonomy than their Bay State counterparts in absence of clear guidance, but strong alignment between statewide goals and locally-developed curriculum is unfeasible. And, in the absence of such alignment, it is doubtful that strong content standards will have a significant impact on education outcomes.

Along with content standards and curriculum frameworks, performance standards and educator standards each constitute an essential component of an effective education system. These topics are covered in detail in the next section of this report, along with the subject of accountability, and other pertinent alterations in Rhode Island’s education system from 2016 to present.

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Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy” (2017), <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/2017-06.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> For example: *Three Paths, One Destination*; Joanne Jacobs, *It Takes a Vision: How Three States Created Great Academic Standards* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2006); Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, *Building on 20 Years of Massachusetts Education Reform* (November 2014), <http://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/BuildingOnReform.pdf>.

<sup>45</sup> “The State of State Standards—and the Common Core—in 2010,” (Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2010), <https://edexcellence.net/publications/the-state-of-state-of-standards-and-the-common-core-in-2010.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, “The Common Core State Standards: A Guide for Rhode Island Parents,” (October 2011), <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Common-Core/CCSS-Guide-Families.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education, “Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks,” <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>.



## IV. Education Reform, 2016-Present

Since April 2016, when RIPEC published its initial report comparing Massachusetts and Rhode Island's primary and secondary public education systems, both states have made substantive alterations to their performance standards and accountability systems. Additionally, Rhode Island's legislature has taken an initial step towards establishing statewide curriculum frameworks and a school-based management model. Alterations both proposed and realized are detailed below, while continuing differences between the two states are considered.

### Every Student Succeeds Act

In both the Ocean State and Bay State, the impetus for education reform in recent years partially stems from the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which passed with bipartisan support and was signed into law by President Barack Obama on December 10, 2015. ESSA constitutes the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Introduced in 1965 as a component of President Lyndon Johnson's "war on poverty," ESEA increased federal education funding, and tied that funding to a system of accountability.<sup>49</sup>

ESEA comes up for reauthorization every five years, and this occasion offered not only the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress and President Obama the opportunity to impose alterations, but their predecessors, including the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress and President George W. Bush, who collectively established the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2002. ESSA was thus created with the express intention to improve upon NCLB, which required states desirous of federal funding to establish academic standards, and an annual assessment which: met federal requirements, covered mathematics and reading, and was administered to students in grades three through eight, as well as to high school students at least once. Additionally, NCLB required that states disaggregate their student assessment data by subgroup so that the scores of historically underperforming subgroups were not lost in the averages. States and districts unable to meet federal expectations were given time to improve under NCLB, but the legislation called for funding to eventually be withheld if performance did not improve.<sup>50</sup> Generally speaking, NCLB was praised for its focus on closing achievement gaps between historically underperforming subgroups and their majority peers, but criticized for its inflexible and punitive elements.

In effort to address these criticisms, ESSA was designed to give the states greater freedom in regard to their education systems while maintaining NCLB's focus on closing achievement gaps. Under ESSA, states are still required to administer federally-approved annual assessments in mathematics and reading to students in grades three through eight and once during high school. However, under ESSA each state has increased discrepancy to decide both what constitutes a low-performing district or school and what to do with low-performing districts and schools.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> "Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)," United States Department of Education, <https://www.ed.gov/essa>.

<sup>50</sup> "A Guide to Education and *No Child Left Behind*," United States Department of Education (October 2004), <https://www2.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/guide/index.html>.

<sup>51</sup> ESSA made alterations not mentioned above. For instance, it provides funding for prekindergarten education and requires high schools to offer college counseling and advanced coursework to all students. See: "Every Student Succeeds Act Presentation," Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (March 22, 2016), <http://www.doe.mass.edu/federalgrants/essa/stateplan/>.

Each state was compelled under ESSA to submit a consolidated state plan to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE), outlining the state’s goals and how it intends to achieve them, as well as the state’s performance standards and how it intends to impose an accountability system on them.<sup>52</sup> On March 13, 2017, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos issued a revised template for consolidated state plans, which “only asks states to provide detail on their plans in areas (a) explicitly required by law, and (b) deemed absolutely necessary.” According to a USDOE press release, this template provides states “more latitude when it comes to how they hold schools accountable” than its previous incarnation, as it cuts prescriptive mandates on the structure of accountability systems, reduces regulations regarding reporting on teacher equity, and enables greater flexibility in determining how to utilize federal funds.<sup>53</sup>

Massachusetts submitted its consolidated state plan in April 2017 and Rhode Island’s plan was submitted the following September.<sup>54</sup> Along with those produced by every other state, these plans have since been approved by the USDOE.<sup>55</sup> Two essential components of both Rhode Island and Massachusetts’ plans—performance standards and accountability—are addressed in detail in the sections below.

## Performance Standards

Performance standards are closely related to, but distinct from, content standards. As discussed in the previous section of this report, content standards delineate the skills and content knowledge students should possess in each progressive academic grade. In contrast, “performance standards measure a student’s progress toward learning that content,” determining how much a student should know so as to be considered proficient.<sup>56</sup> States varied widely in regard to how they defined and tested student proficiency under NCLB, and this diversity continues under ESSA.<sup>57</sup>

Both Rhode Island and Massachusetts declared an alteration in performance standards and student assessment in the state plans they submitted under ESSA. As discussed in Section II, Massachusetts used both the MCAS and the PARCC to assess student proficiency from the 2014-

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> “ESSA Consolidated State Plan Frequently Asked Questions,” United States Department of Education, (March 13, 2017), <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-secretary-education-betsy-devos-announces-release-updated-essa-consolidated-state-plan-template>.

<sup>54</sup> “Massachusetts Consolidated State Plan Under the Every Student Succeeds Act,” Massachusetts Department of Education (April, 2017, revised August 24, 2017) <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Information-and-Accountability-User-Friendly-Data/ESSA/RhodeIsland-ESSA-State-Plan-Sept2017-FINAL-9-18.pdf>; “Rhode Island’s Every Student Succeeds Act State Plan,” Rhode Island Department of Education (September 14, 2017, revised March 29, 2018), <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Information-and-Accountability-User-Friendly-Data/ESSA/RhodeIsland-ESSA-State-Plan-Sept2017-FINAL-9-18.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> “Approved ESSA Plans: Explainer and Key Takeaways from Each State,” *Education Week* (April 21, 2017, revised October 4, 2018), <https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/key-takeaways-state-essa-plans.html>.

<sup>56</sup> Gary Phillips and Alicia N. Garcia, “Aiming High: Setting Performance Standards for Student Success,” Education Policy Center at American Institutes for Research (February 2015), <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/Aiming-High-Setting-Performance-Standards-for-Student-Success-Feb-2015.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> Paul E. Peterson and Frederick M. Hess, “Few States Set World-Class Standards: In fact, most render the notion of proficiency meaningless,” *Education Next* vol. 8, no. 3 (Summer 2008), <https://www.educationnext.org/few-states-set-worldclass-standards/>.

2015 school year to 2016-2017, when the next-generation MCAS—a composite of the original MCAS and the PARCC—was introduced. Massachusetts’ consolidated state plan explicitly ties the content standards it revised in 2017 to this updated assessment, and states that the next-generation MCAS “builds upon the best aspects of the MCAS assessments that have served the Commonwealth well for the past two decades.”<sup>58</sup> The original MCAS certainly did serve Massachusetts well; the state was only one of three to receive an “A” grade on its performance standards in a 2007 nation-wide analysis.<sup>59</sup>

Historically, Rhode Island’s performance standards have not been as rigorous as those standards employed in Massachusetts. For instance, the same 2007 study referenced above gave the Ocean State a “C+” on its performance standards, signaling that the assessment employed in the state found a significantly greater percentage of its students to be proficient than did the nationally-administered NAEP.<sup>60</sup> In recognition of this, Rhode Island moved its performance standards closer in line with Massachusetts’. In 2014-2015, the state adopted the PARCC exam, and in 2017-2018 it began to use the RICAS, which is modeled directly off of the next-generation MCAS. Indeed, with the exception of its name, the state assessment administered in Rhode Island in 2017-2018 was a precise duplicate of the assessment administered in Massachusetts that year, with the same exact questions and directives.

With the recent adoption of the RICAS, Rhode Island’s assessment standards were rendered near identical to Massachusetts’, with one significant exception. Namely, Massachusetts administers a version of the MCAS to its tenth grade students, who must exhibit proficiency in order to receive a high school diploma at the end of the twelfth grade, while there is no such “high stakes” testing in Rhode Island. In the same academic year in which the RICAS was introduced—2017-2018—Rhode Island began administering the PSAT10 and SAT to all students in grades ten and eleven.<sup>61</sup> Unlike the tenth grade MCAS, these nationally-administered tests are not explicitly tied to Rhode Island’s content standards. Additionally, demonstrated proficiency is not a graduation requirement. However, along with the RICAS, student performance on the PSAT10 and SAT factor into Rhode Island’s updated accountability system, to which this report now turns.

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<sup>58</sup> “Massachusetts Consolidated State Plan Under the Every Student Succeeds Act.”

<sup>59</sup> Peterson and Hess, “Few States Set World-Class Standards.”

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> “PSAT10 and SAT School Day,” Rhode Island Department of Education, <http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/Assessment/PSATandSAT.aspx#39491510-test-administration-manuals-resources-and-information>.

**Table 19**  
**Schedule of Standardized Testing in Rhode Island and Massachusetts**

Grade	Rhode Island	Massachusetts
All Grades	ACCESS for ELLs	ACCESS for ELLs
Grade 3	RICAS - ELA and Mathematics	MCAS - ELA and Mathematics
Grade 4	NAEP - Reading, Mathematics, Science   RICAS - ELA and Mathematics	NAEP - Reading, Mathematics, Science   MCAS - ELA and Mathematics
Grade 5	RICAS - ELA and Mathematics   Rhode Island Science Assessment	MCAS - ELA, Mathematics, Science and Technology\Engineering
Grade 6	RICAS - ELA and Mathematics	MCAS - ELA and Mathematics
Grade 7	RICAS - ELA and Mathematics	MCAS - ELA and Mathematics
Grade 8	NAEP - Reading, Mathematics, Science   RICAS - ELA and Mathematics   Rhode Island Science Assessment	NAEP - Reading, Mathematics, Science   MCAS - ELA, Mathematics, Science and Technology\Engineering
Grade 9		
Grade 10	PSAT - Reading and Mathematics	MCAS - ELA, Mathematics, Science and Technology\Engineering   MCAS - High School Biology
Grade 11	SAT - Reading, Mathematics, and Essay   Rhode Island Science Assessment	
Grade 12		NAEP - Reading, Mathematics, Science

SOURCE: Rhode Island and Massachusetts Departments of Education

## Accountability

Mandated by ESSA and NCLB before it, an accountability system sets standards for schools and districts, and provides aid to those bodies determined to need it. While ESSA mandates that each state’s accountability system take account of certain factors—like achievement gaps—one of the law’s expressed intents was to give each state more control in this regard. Taking hold of this opportunity, both Massachusetts and Rhode Island unveiled novel accountability systems in the consolidated state plans required by ESSA, and both put those systems into effect in the 2017-2018 school year.

### *Accountability in Massachusetts*

Massachusetts’ accountability system was spotlighted as exemplary by the USDOE before 2017-2018, but the state nevertheless took the opportunity presented by ESSA to implement changes.<sup>62</sup> As stated in Massachusetts’ consolidated plan, the state’s old accountability system measured “student achievement, growth, and graduation data, with an emphasis on closing gaps for historically low-performing subgroups.” Its new system, as Tables 20 and 21 indicate, keeps these elements at its core, but additionally considers data such as dropout rates, ninth grade success rates, and chronic absenteeism (in which a student misses 10.0 percent or more school days in a year). Compared to its previous version, the relative value of student improvement is greater in Massachusetts’ updated accountability system, which uses this criterion to establish an “accountability index.” So as to reward improvement, schools are indexed against one another, but also against their own previous performance.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Beth E. Schueler, Joshua S. Goodman, and David J. Deming, “Can States Take Over and Turn Around School Districts?: Evidence from Lawrence, Massachusetts,” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* vol. 39, no. 2 (June 2017), pp. 311-332.

<sup>63</sup> “Massachusetts Consolidated State Plan Under the Every Student Succeeds Act.”

**Table 20**  
**Massachusetts Accountability System Indicators and Measures**

Indicator	Measure(s)
Academic Achievement	Grade 3-8 average scaled MCAS score, ELA and Mathematics; grade 10 average scaled MCAS score, ELA and Mathematics MCAS mean student growth percentile, ELA and Mathematics; measure of growth to predetermined standard; grades 5 and 8 Science MCAS scores
Student Growth	
High School Completion	Four-year cohort graduation rate; extended engagement rate; annual dropout rate
English Language Proficiency	Student attainment of English language proficiency; progress made by students towards attaining English language proficiency
Additional Indicators	Chronic absenteeism (10% or more days absent); percentage of students in grades 11 and 12 completing advanced coursework

SOURCE: Massachusetts Consolidated State Plan; Massachusetts Department of Education

**Table 21**  
**Massachusetts Criterion-Referenced Target Percentage Formula**

	Academic Achievement	Student Growth	High School Completion	English Language Proficiency	Additional Indicators	Total
K-8 with ELL	60.0%	20.0%		10.0%	10.0%	100.0%
K-8 without ELL	67.5%	22.5%			10.0%	100.0%
High School with ELL	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	10.0%	10.0%	100.0%
High School without ELL	47.5%	22.5%	20.0%		10.0%	100.0%

SOURCE: Massachusetts Consolidated State Plan; Massachusetts Department of Education

Under its new accountability system, Massachusetts also altered its framework for district assistance classifications. Prior to 2017-2018, districts and schools in the Bay State were classified as Level 1 to 5, with lower numbers signaling higher achievement. As detailed in Table 22, Massachusetts’ new framework for school and district assistance classifications splits schools and districts into two main groups: “Not Requiring Assistance or Intervention” and “Requiring Assistance or Intervention.” Subgroups stem off from these categories, and schools and districts requiring assistance or intervention are categorized as requiring either “Focused/Targeted Support” or “Broad/Comprehensive Support.”

Schools and districts considered to be in need of broad and comprehensive support will face potential state takeover through receivership. Alternatively, schools and districts in need of focused/targeted support are required to implement a turnaround plan. They are also eligible for a variety of supports and services from the state, including preferred access to professional development, increased funding, and expert assistance. Massachusetts’ framework additionally singles out “Commissioner’s Districts,” which: are the ten largest and highest poverty districts in the state, contain the majority of schools classified as requiring assistant or intervention, and

receive supports and services from the state.<sup>64</sup> Massachusetts’ accountability system gives the state the option to place both schools and districts under receivership, and the state’s 2010 Achievement Gap Act provides the state with particularly expansive authorities in this regard, permitting state authorities to make district-wide decisions and change components of a collective bargaining agreement.<sup>65</sup>

**Table 22**  
**Massachusetts School and District Assistance Classifications and Prescriptions**

Category	Subcategory	Schools	Districts
<b>Not Requiring Assistance or Intervention</b>	Schools of Recognition	Recognized for high achievement, high growth, and/or exceeding targets	N/A
	Meeting Targets	Has a criterion-referenced target percentage of 75.0% or greater	Has a criterion-referenced target percentage of 75.0% or greater
	Partially Meeting Targets	Has a criterion-referenced target percentage lower than 75.0% and does not meet the criteria for a school requiring assistance or intervention	Has a criterion-referenced target percentage lower than 75.0%, and does not meet the criteria for a district requiring assistance or intervention
<b>Requiring Assistance or Intervention</b>	Focused/ Targeted Support	Has not been identified as in need of broad/comprehensive support; scored among the lowest 10.0% of schools statewide in the MCAS; has one or more historically low-performing subgroup that is in the lowest performing 5.0% of that subgroup state-wide; has a graduation rate below 66.7%; and/or has an assessment participation rate below 95.0% for either the whole school or for one or more historically low-performing subgroup in one or more subject; is provided with direct assistance from experts, increased funding and resources, and preferred access to professional development programs	Has not been identified as in need of board/comprehensive support, and has a graduation rate below 66.7%, and/or assessment participation below 95.0% for either the whole district or for one or more subgroup in one or more subject; is provided with direct assistance from experts, increased funding and resources, and preferred access to professional development programs
	Broad/ Comprehensive Support	Designated as underperforming or chronically underperforming by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education; will experience state take-over through receivership, or will establish an alternative governance structure, such as an Innovation Partnership, in which a school or cluster of schools are overseen by an independent and local board	Designated underperforming or chronically underperforming by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education; will experience state take-over through receivership, or will establish an alternative governance structure, such as an Innovation Partnership, in which a school or cluster of schools are overseen by an independent and local board
	Commissioner's Districts	N/A	Is one of the ten largest and highest poverty school districts in the state; is supported with liaisons, program specialists, and partners knowledgeable in collaborating with large urban districts; contain the majority of schools which require assistance or intervention

SOURCE: Massachusetts Consolidated State Plan; Massachusetts Department of Education

A year after the Achievement Gap Act was passed, Lawrence, Massachusetts became the first district to be placed under the authority of a Receiver, Jeffrey Riley. A former teacher and administrator, Riley implemented a number of reforms. Rejecting a “one-size-fits-all structure,” the levels of autonomy and support a school received were based on that school’s prior performance.<sup>66</sup> Under receivership, school hours were extended and programs offering intensive

<sup>64</sup> Ibid; "Massachusetts' Next-Generation Accountability System Presentation," Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Summer 2018), <http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/accountability-2018.pptx>.

<sup>65</sup> Beth E. Schueler, “School District Turnaround: Learning from Leadership in Lawrence, Massachusetts,” Rappaport Institute, Harvard Kennedy School (January 2018), <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/centers/rappaport/files/thirdway%20v5.pdf>.

<sup>66</sup> Carey Borkoski, “Receivership in Lawrence, MA: Problems, Possibilities, and Progress,” Institute for Education Policy, Johns Hopkins School of Education (May 2016), <http://edpolicy.education.jhu.edu/receivership-in-lawrence-ma-problems-possibilities-and-progress/>.



tutoring in core subjects were implemented. Additionally, Riley made substantial alterations regarding human capital: renegotiating the district’s collective bargaining agreement, replacing 56.0 percent of the district’s principals and 8.0 percent of its teachers, raising base salaries for both administrators and educators, and offering a year-long training program to administrators as well as educators with leadership potential.<sup>67</sup> Lawrence achieved greater student assessment scores in the years after it fell into receivership, and is therefore considered a model of effective district takeover. As one policy paper notes, student achievement gains in Lawrence were particularly pronounced among students who participated in “Acceleration Academies.” Acceleration Academies are administered over vacation breaks, focused on core subjects, intensive, and taught by especially selected educators.<sup>68</sup> As of the summer of 2017, three Massachusetts’ districts were in receivership, and one—Springfield—avoided receivership by employing an “alternative governance structure,” through which schools are kept within the district’s control but given new autonomies.<sup>69</sup>

Under ESSA regulations, Massachusetts additionally produces state, district, and school report cards. Publicizing data such as assessment performance, demographics, and expenditures, these report cards aim to make Massachusetts’ SEAs, LEAs, and schools accountable to parents, policy makers, and other education stakeholders.<sup>70</sup>

#### *Accountability in Rhode Island*

Perhaps the greatest difference between Rhode Island’s old and new accountability systems is that the former used a Comprehensive Index Score (CIS) to make its “school accountability determinations,” and the new system does not. According to Rhode Island’s 2017 consolidated state plan, the CIS was too complex to be easily understood by educators and other stakeholders, and had the additionally problematic quality of “masking performance that was in need of improvement.”<sup>71</sup>

Rhode Island’s revised accountability system seeks to rectify those issues with a five star classification system, in which the most stars are awarded to the highest-performing schools. As described in Rhode Island’s consolidated state plan and illustrated in Table 23, “each star rating...requires schools to meet all the criteria associated with the star rating.”<sup>72</sup> In other words, schools can only be categorized as high-achieving if they obtain a sufficient score on every indicator.

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<sup>67</sup> Schueler, Goodman, and Deming, “Can States Take Over and Turn Around School Districts?”

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> “Massachusetts Consolidated State Plan Under the Every Student Succeeds Act.”

<sup>70</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education, “2017 Massachusetts State Report Card,” <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/staterc/default.aspx?fyCode=2017>.

<sup>71</sup> “Rhode Island’s Every Student Succeeds Act State Plan.”

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

**Table 23**  
**Rhode Island School Classification Rules Chart**

<b>Achievement: ELA and Math (max. 8 points)</b>	<b>Growth: ELA and Math (max. 6 points)</b>	<b>English Language Proficiency (max. 4 points)</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations, Absenteeism, &amp; Suspension (max. 15 points)</b>	<b>Graduation Rate (max. 5 points)</b>	<b># of Low- Performing Subgroups</b>	<b>Star Rating</b>
6-8 points (3-4 per subject)	4-6 points (2-3 per subject)	3-4 points	12-15 points	4-5 points	None	★★★★★
5-6 points (2-4 per subject)		2 points	10-11 points		1 subgroup	★★★★
7-9 total points		1 point	7-9 points	3 points	2+ subgroups	★★★
5-6 total points			5-6 points	2 points		★★
2 points	2 points		1 points	★		

SOURCE: Rhode Island’s Every Student Succeeds Act State Plan

Table 24 details the indicators and measures under consideration in Table 23, and shows that while Massachusetts and Rhode Island’s current accountability systems differ, they rely on near-identical indicators. In particular, both Rhode Island and Massachusetts’ accountability systems place significant emphasis on student achievement and growth, while also considering factors such as chronic absenteeism, graduation rates, and the performance of historically low-performing subgroups.

**Table 24**  
**Rhode Island Accountability System Indicators and Measures**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Measure(s)</b>
Achievement	Grade 3-8 average scaled RICAS score, ELA and Mathematics; Grade 3-8 average scaled DLM score, ELA and Mathematics; average scaled SAT (grade 11) scores
Growth	Student growth percentiles on the PSAT and SAT (for high schools); grade 4-8 student growth percentiles on the RICAS (for elementary and middle schools)
English Language Proficiency	Student attainment of English language proficiency; progress made by students towards attaining English language proficiency
School Quality/Student Success	Percentage of students exceeding expectations on the RICAS, DLM, and SAT assessments; chronic absenteeism rate (10% or more days absent) of students and teachers; student suspension rate
Graduation Rate	Four-, five-, and six-year graduation rates
Low-Performing Subgroups	

SOURCE: Rhode Island’s Every Student Succeeds Act State Plan

Once schools are ranked under Rhode Island’s revised accountability system, the state determines which are in need of “comprehensive support and improvement.” Schools in need of



comprehensive support are one-star schools which fall in the lowest performing 5.0 percent of all Rhode Island schools and/or achieve the lowest score for all non-graduation indicators, such as English language proficiency, or student achievement and growth. In addition, this categorization will apply to a high school which fails to graduate at least one-third of its students within four years. If fewer than 5.0 percent of the Ocean State’s public schools receive a one-star ranking upon initial calculation, RIDE will adjust its measurements of academic proficiency and growth to ensure that the 5.0 percent threshold is met.<sup>73</sup>

Schools classified as in need of comprehensive support and improvement are required to implement a school improvement plan, and have four years to meet the state’s exit criteria.<sup>74</sup> These plans are designed by LEAs and implemented in coordination with Community Advisory Boards, comprised of community stakeholders.<sup>75</sup> Improvement Plans are approved by RIDE, and are required to include information such as how resource inequities will be addressed and what intervention strategies will be employed. If four years pass without a school meeting its designated exit criteria, that school’s LEA must implement one of five “School Redesign models.” These models are:

1. Empowerment: a school’s governance is restructured with an “empowered leader” and a list of SEA and LEA-approved performance targets and autonomies;
2. Restart: a charter management organization, education management organization, or other state-approved organization, takes over school management;
3. Small Schools of Choice: the school is restructured into “small schools” of roughly 100 students per grade and employs student-centered personalized learning programs;
4. LEA Proposed Redesign: a school’s redesign is proposed by the LEA, and meets RIDE criteria such as “a high quality school leader” and “a new school model”; and
5. Closure: the school closes and its students are relocated to two-star or higher schools.<sup>76</sup>

RIDE requires LEAs to utilize evidence-based intervention strategies which have been successfully implemented in other systems.<sup>77</sup> Yet, the state has historically found that, once identified, actually turning a school around proves challenging. This challenge was noted in RIDE’s ESSA plan, which states that, since the 2009-2010 school year, 33 schools have been designated as under-performing and consequently placed on school improvement plans. Regardless, by the spring of 2018 only two schools had met the designated exit criteria. Conversely, one of the 33 schools has since closed, and 30 continued to be cited as in need of comprehensive improvement.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, “RIDE School Improvement: 2019 Comprehensive Support and Improvement,” <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Information-and-Accountability-User-Friendly-Data/Accountability/SchoolImprovement/SchoolImprovementProcess-CommunityResources.pdf>.

<sup>76</sup> “Rhode Island’s Every Student Succeeds Act State Plan.”

<sup>77</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, “School Improvement Under ESSA: Practitioners’ Guide to School Improvement Planning,” (January 11, 2019), <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Information-and-Accountability-User-Friendly-Data/Accountability/SchoolImprovement/RI-Practicioners-Guide-to-School-ImprovementPlanning-1.8.19-151.pdf>.

<sup>78</sup> “Rhode Island’s Every Student Succeeds Act State Plan.”

While LEAs have a significant role in Rhode Island’s accountability framework, districts are not made accountable in the same way as schools. Like schools and the state at large, districts are issued an annual public report card which contains information such as assessment results, graduation rates, and the relative experience of teachers and administrators.<sup>79</sup> Unlike schools, however, districts are neither issued improvement plans nor subject to state receivership. In this way, as others, Rhode Island’s accountability system is distinct from Massachusetts’. This may help explain the achievement gap between the two states, as recent scholarship suggests that some school-level problems have district-level origins, and district performance is an essential determinant of student achievement.<sup>80</sup>

## **Educator Standards: Licensure, Professional Development, and Evaluation**

Licensing requirements establish the standards aspiring educators must meet in order to teach, professional development supports teacher growth through structured and systematic instruction, and educator evaluations provide routine assessment of teaching performance. Taken together, licensure, professional development, and educator evaluations are state-mandated tools, used to ensure that educators are not only held to high standards, but capable of achieving state-specific content and assessment standards. As with other components of their state education systems, Rhode Island and Massachusetts differ in regard to how they license, develop, and evaluate instructors. This was the case before Rhode Island’s Council on Elementary and Secondary Education voted unanimously to update its rules and regulations around educator certification regulations on December 4, 2018, and it remains the case after.<sup>81</sup>

### Educator Standards in Massachusetts

#### *Licensure*

Educators who wish to be hired as teachers in Massachusetts are generally required to hold a license issued by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The state’s licensure requirements include the possession of a bachelor’s degree, completion of a Massachusetts approved educator preparation program, and passing scores on the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL).<sup>82</sup> The MTEL was initiated in 1998, during the implementation of MERA, and includes a Communications and Literacy Skills test as well as a number of subject matter assessments. A passing grade on the former is a prerequisite to licensure for all Massachusetts teachers, and additional subject matter tests are administered depending on an aspiring educator’s particular field. The MTEL is designed to achieve two main goals. The first is

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<sup>79</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, “ReportCard,” <https://reportcard.ride.ri.gov/StateSnapshot>.

<sup>80</sup> Schueler, Goodman, and Deming, “Can States Take Over and Turn Around School Districts?”

<sup>81</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, “New Teacher Certification Regulations Prioritize Teacher Preparation and Ongoing Learning,” <http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/AdditionalInformation/News/ViewArticle/tabid/408/ArticleId/529/New-Teacher-Certification-Regulations-Prioritize-Teacher-Preparation-and-Ongoing-Learning.aspx>.

<sup>82</sup> Both Massachusetts and Rhode Island make exemptions for instructors who were certified before testing requirements were introduced. In Massachusetts, instructors who held licensure prior to MERA’s 1994 passage are exempt. In Rhode Island, this exemption applies to individuals who obtained certification prior to January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2002. See: Massachusetts General Laws §XII-69-38G, <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section38G>; Rhode Island General Laws §16-11-2.3, <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE16/16-11/16-11-2.3.HTM>.

that all Massachusetts educators can effectively communicate with students, parents, and other stakeholders. Secondly, the MTEL is designed to ensure teacher competency in regard to state-specific content standards, performance standards, and curriculum frameworks. The MTEL therefore promotes alignment between statewide goals and classroom instruction.<sup>83</sup>

### *Professional Development*

Professional development is implemented through a multi-tier planning process in Massachusetts and is required for teachers, administrators, and other professional staff. In consultation with the Board of Higher Education, the commissioner prepares an annual plan for providing statewide assistance for the creation and implementation of professional development plans. The commissioner's plan is thereafter submitted to the Board of Education for approval. In addition, Massachusetts' LEAs each adopt and implement a district-specific professional development plan. District plans may include training in: new or updated curriculum frameworks, professional collaboration, accommodating diverse learners, and other skills, such as participatory decision making and parent and community involvement. In school districts with high rates of ELL participation, professional development plans also provide training for teachers in second language acquisition techniques.<sup>84</sup>

### *Educator Evaluations*

In Massachusetts, the standards for the evaluation of teachers, principals, and other administrators are set by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education<sup>85</sup> and implemented by the superintendent.<sup>86</sup> Following the adoption of new educator evaluation regulations in 2011, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education worked collaboratively with state educators to develop a comprehensive evaluation system known as the Model System. Centering the evaluation process on student learning, the Model System is explicitly aligned with Massachusetts' curriculum frameworks, and thus assesses teachers' relative effectiveness at teaching this material.<sup>87</sup>

Teachers evaluated under Massachusetts' Model System receive one of four rankings: exemplary, proficient, needs improvement, or unsatisfactory. At the discretion of the evaluator, teachers achieving an exemplary or proficient ranking are placed on either a one- or two-year Self-directed Growth Plan. Massachusetts educators who receive a needs improvement rating are placed on a one-year Directed Growth Plan, and will undergo a summative evaluation at year's end. The educator who does not earn a rating of proficient or higher in this summative evaluation will

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<sup>83</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education, "Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure: About the MTEL," <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mtel/about.html>.

<sup>84</sup> Massachusetts General Laws, § XII-71-38Q, <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section38Q>.

<sup>85</sup> Massachusetts General Laws, § XII-69-1B, <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1B>.

<sup>86</sup> Massachusetts General Laws, § XII-71-38, <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section38>.

<sup>87</sup> Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, *Building on 20 Years of Massachusetts Education Reform*.

receive an unsatisfactory rating and will be placed on an Improvement Plan. A summative evaluation of that teacher will occur at the end of a period determined by that Plan's evaluator.<sup>88</sup>

### Educator Standards in Rhode Island

In effort to increase rigor and efficacy, the rules and regulations surrounding educator standards underwent recent revision in Rhode Island. These new certification regulations were approved in December 2018, and according to RIDE, the guiding principles behind them are: "increasing practical experience for pre-service candidates," "opening additional pathways into the profession for shortage areas," and "re-establishing an ongoing professional learning focus for all educators."<sup>89</sup> In spite of these alterations, Rhode Island's educator standards continue to contrast with Massachusetts', particularly in terms of alignment. More so than Rhode Island, Massachusetts uses state-developed tools to ensure that its processes for licensing, developing, and evaluating educators further state-specific learning outcomes.

#### *Licensure*

For instance, aspiring educators in Massachusetts are required to pass the state-specific MTEL, but Rhode Island's candidates must pass a system of standardized tests employed in nearly all other states in the nation. Praxis Series II exams assess knowledge in content area as well as teaching practices, and passing Praxis scores are a required component of licensure in 46 states. Thus, Praxis Series II tests do not feature any particular alignment with Rhode Island's content and assessment standards.<sup>90</sup> In addition to passing relevant Praxis assessments, educators in Rhode Island must obtain a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited university or college, complete an approved program in their desired certification area, and spend significant time gaining practical experience as a student teacher.<sup>91</sup>

One of the most significant alterations imposed by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education's updated regulations is the specific amount of time future educators are required to spend in the classroom. Currently, applicants must complete at least twelve weeks of student teaching and sixty hours of field experience in order to obtain licensure.<sup>92</sup> However, under the updated certification regulations, and beginning on December 31, 2022, applicants must complete two semesters of student teaching, or equivalent, in addition to sixty hours of field experience.<sup>93</sup> While one guiding principal of the Council's regulations review was to increase aspiring teachers' "practical experience," and hence increase teacher quality, another objective was to open new "pathways into the profession for shortage areas." So, while these updated regulations ask some

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<sup>88</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education, "2015-2016 Educator Evaluation Performance,"

[http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state\\_report/educatorevaluationperformance.aspx](http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/educatorevaluationperformance.aspx).

<sup>89</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of Educator Excellence and Certification Services, "Certification Regulations: Promulgated December 2018," <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Certification/Cert-main-page/CertificationRegulations-Dec4-2018.pdf>.

<sup>90</sup> Educational Testing Service, "State Requirements: Praxis," <https://www.ets.org/praxis/states>.

<sup>91</sup> State of Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, "Regulations Governing the Certification of Educators in Rhode Island," (November 3, 2011; Revised January 1, 2017),

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Certification/Cert-main-page/Regulations-Governing-the-Certification-of-Educators-in-Rhode-Island.pdf>.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, "Certification Regulations: Promulgated December 2018."

prospective Ocean State teachers to do more than before in order to obtain certification, it asks others to do less. In particular, from June 2019 forward, applicants who hold certification in either Massachusetts or Connecticut will be eligible for Rhode Island certification without being obliged to meet any new requirements.<sup>94</sup>

**Table 25**  
**Massachusetts and Rhode Island Requirements for Initial Educator Licensure\***

	Massachusetts	Rhode Island
<b>Elementary</b>	Possession of a bachelor's degree — Passing score on the Communication & Literacy Skills exam — Passing score on the General Curriculum multi-subject exam (including the mathematics subtest OR the Elementary Mathematics subject matter exam) — Passing score on either the Foundations of Reading subject matter exam OR the Reading Specialist subject matter exam — Completion of a Massachusetts approved educator preparation program in Elementary Education	Possession of a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution** — Completion of an approved program in certification area — Completion of 60 hours of field experience — Completion of two semesters student teaching, or equivalent — Demonstration of the professional competencies of the Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards (RIPTS) the Association for Childhood Education International and Content Specific Standards (ACEI), and relevant subject matter association — Passing score on Principles of Learning and Teaching test and Elementary Education: Multiple Subjects test
<b>Middle</b>	Possession of a bachelor's degree — Passing scores on the Communication & Literacy Skills exam — Passing score on relevant subject matter test — Completion of a Massachusetts approved educator preparation program in Middle School Education	Possession of a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution — Completion of approved program in certification area — Completion of 60 hours of field experience — Completion of two semesters student teaching, or equivalent — Demonstration of the pedagogical competencies of the Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards (RIPTS), the Association of Middle Level Education (AMLE), and relevant subject matter association — Passing score on Principles of Learning and Teaching test and relevant subject matter test
<b>Secondary</b>	Possession of a bachelor's degree — Passing Score on the Communication and Literacy Skills Test — Passing score on relevant subject matter test — Completion of a Massachusetts approved educator preparation program in Secondary Education	Possession of a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution — Completion of approved program in certification area — Completion of 60 hours of field experience — Completion of two semesters student teaching, or equivalent — Demonstration of the pedagogical competencies of the Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards (RIPTS), and relevant subject matter association — Passing score on Principles of Learning and Teaching test and relevant subject matter test

\* The Massachusetts requirements detailed here are currently in effect, while the Rhode Island requirements do not go into effect until December 31st, 2022.

\*\* A "Regionally Accredited Institution" is a college or university that awards a bachelor's or higher degree and is fully accredited within the United States, is fully accredited by one of the following regional accrediting bodies: Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

SOURCE: Rhode Island and Massachusetts Departments of Education

### *Professional Development*

Another recent change to Rhode Island's teacher certification process concerns professional development. Prior to this, as well as in present, all of Rhode Island's public educators develop Professional Growth Goals as part of the state's educator evaluation system. These goals are thereafter intended to inform professional development offerings. LEAs not only provide professional development to educators, but in the form of the superintendent, they are responsible for attesting to the ongoing professional development of educators who are seeking to renew their certification.<sup>95</sup> New Rhode Island educators are required to recertify in three years, and thereafter must apply for recertification every seven years.

Under revision, and effective on January 1, 2020, the state will require educators seeking to renew their certification to acquire a certain number of Professional Learning Units (PLUs). For new educators seeking their first certificate renewal, 30 PLUs a year are prescribed, while veteran

<sup>94</sup> Exemptions may be made for special education and ELL instructors, as well as mathematics and reading specialists. See: Rhode Island Department of Education, "Certification Regulations: Promulgated December 2018."

<sup>95</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, "Certification Renewal Audit System Policy," [http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Certification/Cert-main-page/RIDE\\_Certification\\_Renewal\\_Audit\\_System\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Certification/Cert-main-page/RIDE_Certification_Renewal_Audit_System_Policy.pdf).

educators are required to obtain 20 PLUs per annum.<sup>96</sup> Various professional development activities are converted into PLUs by the state, and examples of those conversions are detailed below in Table 26.

Activity	PLUs
1 hour of professional learning activity	1
1 college credit	15
1 demonstrated competency	5 - 10
1 component of National Board Certification	45
Completion of National Board	180
Renewal of National Board	90

SOURCE: Rhode Island Department of Education

While educators are newly compelled to complete a certain number of PLUs, LEAs are newly required to create a professional learning plan in collaboration with educators. These plans are intended to encourage cohesion and have a number of required components, including examples of permissible activities, plans for ensuring that activities are aligned with existing strategic/school improvement plans, and a description of the mechanisms used to approve PLUs. In similarity to Rhode Island’s previous professional development system, the superintendent is responsible for approving educators’ PLUs, while a superintendent’s PLUs are approved by the school committee chair. Providing some regulatory oversight, RIDE is required to audit a percentage of certificate renewal applications each year and determine whether the state’s professional learning requirements are being upheld.<sup>97</sup>

*Educator Evaluations*

Along with professional development, educator evaluations are part of the recertification process in Rhode Island. The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education’s new regulations certify the importance of evaluations in providing educators with feedback and support, but additionally make it so that from January 1, 2020 forward the final effectiveness ratings culled from evaluations will no longer be a requirement for certification renewal.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, “Certification Regulations: Promulgated December 2018.”

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.



Under its system of educator evaluations, Rhode Island teachers receive one of four rankings: highly effective, effective, developing, or ineffective. However, as a 2016 RIDE report found, that evaluation process has not been particularly stringent, with 46.0 percent of educators evaluated that year receiving the highest possible distinction of highly effective, and 94.0 percent achieving the rank of effective.<sup>99</sup> In the same year, a similarly high 95.7 percent of Massachusetts educators were deemed “proficient,” while a comparatively smaller rate, 11.0 percent, received the highest possible distinction of “exemplary.”<sup>100</sup> A large majority of Massachusetts’ teachers thus receive formal notification by way of evaluation that they have room to grow, whereas only a slight majority receive the same message in Rhode Island.

Rhode Island teachers who are classified as developing or ineffective are required to establish a Performance Improvement Plan with the aid of an improvement team. Those who do not demonstrate sufficient improvement may be subject to personnel actions. Educators may also choose to utilize a Performance Improvement Plan at any time in the school year to help improve their performance. LEAs may adopt their own teacher evaluation model, as long as it is approved by RIDE and based off of three criteria: professional practice, professional responsibilities, and student learning.<sup>101</sup>

Recent revisions to the rules and regulations governing educator standards in Rhode Island work towards alignment, but in that regard the state’s education system continues to trail behind Massachusetts.

### **Rhode Island Reform: Curriculum Frameworks and School-Based Management**

Up until this point, this report has focused on comparing the history, structure, and educational outcomes of Massachusetts and Rhode Island’s education systems. In contrast, the remainder of Section IV will address what reforms Rhode Island alone has made in effort to emulate two crucial components of the Bay State’s education system: curriculum frameworks and school-based management. Defined in Section III, curriculum frameworks translate content standards into a system of instruction, and school-based management is a system of operation in which there is a clear demarcation of responsibilities between school and district officials, as well as an explicit separation between policymaking and management duties.

#### *Rhode Island General Laws §16-97-9*

The Rhode Island General Assembly passed H. 8308, An Act Relating to Education —The Rhode Island Board of Education Act, in 2016. Thereafter codified as Rhode Island General Laws §16-97-9, the legislation professes the ultimate objective of establishing “a unified approach for education within and across the state.” It calls on the Board of Education, the commissioner of elementary and secondary education, and the commissioner of postsecondary education to jointly

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<sup>99</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, “Year 3 and 4 Report, Educator Evaluation Results,” (2016), [http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Evaluation/Education-Eval-Main-Page/EducatorEvaluationReport\\_Year3and4.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Evaluation/Education-Eval-Main-Page/EducatorEvaluationReport_Year3and4.pdf).

<sup>100</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education, “2015-2016 Educator Evaluation Performance.”

<sup>101</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, “Rhode Island Model Evaluation & Support System—Teachers,” IV ed., (2015-2016), [http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Evaluation/Guidebooks-Forms/Teacher\\_Guidebook\\_2015-16.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Evaluation/Guidebooks-Forms/Teacher_Guidebook_2015-16.pdf).

produce a “comprehensive study of the alignment of the core curriculum used by the various school districts throughout the state with the goals and objectives of the state’s colleges and universities.” It additionally mandates that this study include recommended policy objectives, implementation strategies, and an implementation timetable for the establishment of curriculum frameworks in primary and secondary education. Recommended policy objectives, implementation strategies, and implementation timetables regarding a school-based management model are also mandated elements of this report. As is a proposed professional development plan which is “based upon the successful implementation of similar programs” elsewhere in the United States. Finally, Rhode Island General Laws §16-97-9 provide a due date for this report to be submitted to the state legislature: July 1, 2017.<sup>102</sup>

*“Unified Approach to Statewide Education”*

As mandated under Rhode Island General Laws §16-97-9, a “Unified Approach to Statewide Education Report” was submitted by RIDE in June 2017. In preparation for the report, RIDE conducted stakeholder outreach with individuals, including superintendents, curriculum directors, and educators. Through this outreach, RIDE located multiple factors which currently hinder effective instruction and may complicate future attempts at alignment. These include: an inconsistent definition of “curriculum” among Rhode Island educators; a sense among educators that professional development is essential but that the programs offered too frequently lack meaningful instruction; the amount of time educators spend searching for curriculum and classroom materials; and hiring timelines which are misaligned with the timelines of preparation program graduations.<sup>103</sup>

Once laying out these roadblocks, RIDE offers recommendations. In good part, they focus on how RIDE can “support” LEAs as they: develop a consistent curriculum in ELA and mathematics; create and/or identify high-quality instructional materials; establish relevant professional development programs; use data and observations to improve curriculum and practices; and support current school and district leaders, while also identifying educators for leadership roles. However, RIDE also recommends that the state take certain actions. Namely, RIDE suggests that the state “develop model curriculum frameworks that provide consistency, guidance, and flexibility.” If this strategy was employed as it is laid out by RIDE, by the end of a three-year period educators would have access to a menu of RIDE-approved mathematics and ELA curriculum which establish a degree of curricular consistency but maintain for “sufficient local flexibility.” RIDE additionally suggests that districts are given the opportunity to “create or identify,” their own “high-quality materials,” and that the state provide these districts with a “process to review materials,” as well as a “Teaching and Learning website” to host reviews of materials.<sup>104</sup>

Regarding school-based management, RIDE proposes in its “Unified Approach...Report” to improve professional development and increase shared leadership. In order to achieve its goal to support the continuing development and growth of its educators, RIDE makes a number of

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<sup>102</sup> Rhode Island General Laws §16-97-9, <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE16/16-97/16-97-9.HTM>.

<sup>103</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, “Unified Approach to Statewide Education Report” (June 2017), <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Instruction-and-Assessment-World-Class-Standards/Assessment/FINAL-UnifiedApproachToStatewideEducationReport.pdf>.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.



recommendations, including the creation of toolkits that provide models of high-quality professional development systems and the establishment of state-wide standards for professional development. Importantly, RIDE also recommends that professional learning serve as a basis for certification progression and renewal, and this recommendation was officially taken up with the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education’s December 2018 update to educator certification regulations. In effort to promote more leadership development within schools and districts, RIDE recommends that the state: create “leadership competencies” for teachers, principals, and superintendents; “provide high-quality leadership training” and “models of shared leadership” to schools and districts; “identify policies and practices that support shared leadership models”; and “improve access to teacher leadership roles.”<sup>105</sup> In sum, RIDE’s “Unified Approach...Report” suggests how leadership may be more effectively cultivated, but does not draft out how the school-based management model employed in Massachusetts could be achieved in Rhode Island.<sup>106</sup>

At present, a few of the recommendations offered in RIDE’s “Unified Approach...Report” have come to fruition. As mentioned above, professional learning recently became a component of educator certificate progression and renewal. RIDE has also taken steps to improve the curriculum used by LEAs, establishing a clear definition of the term and pointing instructors towards high-quality curriculum. More specifically, RIDE now uses the work of EdReports—a national nonprofit organization providing reviews of K-12 instruction materials—to help schools and districts locate high-quality curriculum and instruction materials.<sup>107</sup> A recently-released overview of curriculum data from RIDE shows that only 20.0 percent of the curricula in K-8 reading have been reviewed for quality and alignment. Of that 20.0 percent, less than half have been determined by EdReports to be aligned and of high-quality. The remaining 80.0 percent of curricula remain unrated, and therefore, their quality and degree of alignment are unclear. In terms of K-8 mathematics curricula, 49.0 percent have been reviewed, with slightly more than half considered high-quality. The remaining 51.0 percent of mathematics curricula have not been reviewed.<sup>108</sup>

Finally, RIDE has sponsored the Rhode Island Curriculum Project since fall 2016. Thus far, 57 kindergarten classrooms spanning twelve districts have made use of an interdisciplinary kindergarten curriculum which was established by Boston Public Schools and “revolves around 90-minute interdisciplinary activity centers.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, “Curriculum,”

[https://www.edreports.org/about/our-approach/index.html](http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/Curriculum.aspx#39991557-curriculum-research-and-resources-;EdReports, “Our Mission,” <a href=).

<sup>108</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, “Rhode Island K-8 Reading & Math Curriculum Data, 2018-2019,” [http://media.ride.ri.gov/BOE/CESE/030519Meeting/Encl4a\\_Curriculum\\_Survey.pdf](http://media.ride.ri.gov/BOE/CESE/030519Meeting/Encl4a_Curriculum_Survey.pdf).

<sup>109</sup> Rhode Island Department of Education, “Rhode Island Kindergarten Curriculum Project,”

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/InstructionalInitiativesResources/RhodeIslandKindergartenCurriculumProject.aspx>.

## **V. RIPEC Comments**

In recent years, Rhode Island policymakers have implemented a range of reforms meant to improve the state's public education system. Yet, Rhode Island students continue to test near the national average on standardized assessments, while Massachusetts students lead the pack. In order to understand why Bay State students have consistently outperformed their Ocean State peers, the structure of education governance in each state requires consideration.

When compared, two essential structural differences between Massachusetts and Rhode Island's education systems become apparent. First, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has a greater degree of influence over the governance and provision of local education than does the State of Rhode Island. Second, Massachusetts uses a school-based management model which is distinct from local school governance in Rhode Island, where the entire care, control, and management of public schools is vested in district-level school committees.

### **The Degree of State Influence and Control**

In Rhode Island, there is less state influence over education than in Massachusetts. In part, this difference stems from how each state's judiciary interpreted the education clause of the state constitution. In Massachusetts, the court mandated that the state proactively fulfill its duty to ensure every student receive an adequate education, while Rhode Island's courts made no such mandate. The directive of Massachusetts' judiciary provided impetus for MERA, which set out to overhaul the education system over a seven-year period. In Rhode Island, on the other hand, education reform has historically been more piecemeal.

The degree of state involvement in the governance and provision of education is partially influenced by the roles that each state's education commissioner plays in local education. In both states, the commissioner serves as the primary link between state and local districts. However, while Massachusetts' commissioner plays an active role in helping LEAs translate state-level objectives into actionable policies, the Rhode Island commissioner's duties at the local level primarily involve providing oversight and administrative support. In consequence, Massachusetts' influence over the governance and provision of education at the local level is relatively high, while local officials in Rhode Island are largely responsible for translating and implementing statewide policies.

In recent years, Rhode Island has moved closer to the Massachusetts model, adopting the Common Core State Standards as well as the RICAS. The Common Core provides greater guidance to local communities than previous versions of Rhode Island's content standards, and the RICAS ensures more rigorous performance standards. However, Rhode Island LEAs continue to perform functions that are performed, in whole or in part, at the state level in Massachusetts. For example, Massachusetts Department of Education is charged both with creating curriculum frameworks that are based on the Common Core and translating those standards into a delivery system of instruction. Massachusetts moreover has a state office, the Center for Curriculum and Instruction, that is dedicated to helping districts and schools implement content standards, and that develops model curricula for local communities. Local communities are ultimately responsible for developing curricula in Massachusetts, but the state provides substantial support and guidance,

which, in turn, promotes alignment between statewide standards and the actual curriculum and instruction delivered in classrooms around the state. While RIDE's recent work with EdReports seeks to help Rhode Island schools and districts access high-quality curricula, Massachusetts' development of curriculum frameworks serve as one example of how the power Massachusetts vested in state education agencies provides for greater control over local-level education. The state's enhanced influence over curriculum, as well as aspects of the education system such as teacher certification, professional development, and teacher evaluation, have been crucial to establishing alignment through all components of Massachusetts' education system.

### **School-Based Management**

The second key difference between Massachusetts and Rhode Island is the former's adoption of a school-based management model for governing local-level education. In Rhode Island, the district-level school committee is responsible for both district-wide policymaking and the day-to-day management and administration of individual schools and school personnel. Under this system, the principals and superintendents who are ultimately responsible for students' education outcomes have limited authority.

In contrast, Massachusetts' system of school-based management enables school committees to focus on policy, while school-level officials have greater control over the decision-making process. Massachusetts' model additionally encourages broad participation among key stakeholders such as parents, students, and teachers, which promotes participatory decision-making and a greater level of commitment to achieving common goals and objectives. As research reviewed earlier in this report indicates, school-based management has been linked to improved job commitment among principals and teachers, as well as improved performance among students.

### **RIPEC Recommendations**

RIPEC's recommendations fall into two related categories: system-wide alignment and school governance.

First, RIPEC suggests that Rhode Island move towards the Massachusetts education model by promoting system-wide alignment throughout its educational system. Specifically, RIPEC recommends requiring RIDE to develop a single, state-wide curriculum framework for Math and ELA. The Math and ELA frameworks should provide additional guidance to districts and educators on how to translate the state's content standards into a delivery system of instruction. To aid in the implementation of curriculum frameworks, RIPEC suggests that RIDE additionally help develop high-quality and fully-aligned instructional and other support materials such as sample lesson plans and assignments. RIPEC also recommends requiring RIDE to develop a state-wide plan encompassing teacher certification, teacher evaluation, and professional development that is explicitly aligned with Rhode Island's current, highly-regarded content and performance standards (The Common Core and RICAS).

In support of achieving alignment, RIPEC urges policymakers to consider the system-wide implications of any future reforms. Truly addressing the performance of Rhode Island's public education system will require comprehensive reform that takes the whole system into account.

Consequently, RIPEC recommends that Rhode Island commit to long-term education reform over a ten-year period. Establishing system-wide alignment may require categorical funding, which suggests that legislation, rather than regulatory action, may be needed.

RIPEC's second set of recommendations—which relate to school governance—are also key to achieving system-wide alignment. Massachusetts' system-wide alignment was partially produced by a greater degree of state-level influence and guidance over certain key education functions, and RIPEC thus suggests that RIDE take on new responsibilities. Namely, RIDE should act as a guide for LEAs, providing districts and schools with practical supports and instructional materials for implementing reforms related to curriculum, teacher evaluation, teacher certification, and professional development.

Finally, RIPEC recommends that the Ocean State move towards a school-based management model. As with alignment, school-based management necessitates that RIDE take on greater influence, and provide enhanced support to local officials. In turn, district-wide officials should be empowered to make district-level decisions, while school-based officials should have increased agency over school-level decisions.

## VI. Appendix

**Appendix Table 1:  
Massachusetts School Districts, Selected Demographic Information, and 2018 Next-Gen MCAS Performance**

District*	2014-2015**	2015-2016**					2014-2015**	2018			
	Total Current Expenditures per Pupil	Total Students	% White	% ELL†	% IEP†	% FRL†	MCAS, Grades 3-8***				
							% Proficient ELA/Lit	Math	Avg. Scaled Score†† ELA/Lit	Math	Notes
Abby Kelly Foster Charter Public	\$ 18,556	1,426	24%	8%	10%	66%	44%	37%	497	495	
Abington	12,935	1,960	88%	2%	13%	25%	55%	48%	502	499	
Academy Of The Pacific Rim Charter Public	21,547	524	13%	7%	23%	57%	44%	33%	497	492	5-12 only
Acton-Boxborough	14,075	5,713	59%	4%	17%	7%	73%	72%	513	513	
Acushnet	12,129	990	96%	1%	18%	26%	52%	51%	501	501	
Adams-Cheshire	14,727	1,362	91%	0%	22%	48%	40%	24%	494	487	
Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter	17,547	989	65%	0%	4%	5%	70%	66%	510	509	6-12 only
Agawam	14,226	3,990	85%	4%	16%	33%	53%	50%	499	500	
Alma Del Mar Charter School	20,483	284	33%	9%	14%	80%	50%	54%	501	501	K-6 only
Amesbury	14,086	2,294	87%	1%	21%	28%	47%	43%	499	495	
Amherst	21,897	1,183	49%	17%	18%	44%	50%	47%	501	497	PreK-6 only
Amherst-Pelham	21,330	1,391	59%	4%	21%	28%	57%	54%	501	500	7-12 only
Andover	16,350	6,167	73%	3%	19%	8%	68%	64%	509	508	
Argosy Collegiate Charter School	19,544	202	69%	6%	23%	60%	26%	31%	487	489	6-7 only
Arlington	13,713	5,398	73%	4%	15%	12%	70%	66%	511	508	
Ashburnham-Westminster	13,435	2,361	93%	2%	17%	22%	53%	49%	501	499	
Ashland	14,044	2,742	73%	5%	15%	15%	63%	60%	507	505	
Athol-Royalston	15,487	1,444	86%	2%	27%	60%	36%	33%	492	490	
Atlantis Charter	18,150	1,028	82%	5%	11%	56%	45%	40%	497	495	
Attleboro	13,450	5,956	70%	6%	17%	39%	53%	47%	502	498	
Auburn	14,339	2,470	84%	2%	10%	22%	58%	51%	503	501	
Avon	14,860	737	53%	2%	17%	36%	57%	41%	502	496	
Ayer Shirley School District	14,666	1,732	75%	3%	25%	35%	46%	39%	498	495	
Barnstable	15,984	4,961	74%	8%	16%	42%	47%	44%	498	497	
Barnstable Community Horace Mann Charter Public	17,918	290	63%	18%	10%	53%	67%	64%	507	507	K-3 only
Baystate Academy Charter Public School	19,477	303	6%	11%	8%	79%	19%	19%	484	483	6-9 only
Bedford	17,513	2,610	69%	6%	18%	14%	70%	68%	511	510	
Belchertown	13,238	2,380	89%	1%	17%	22%	46%	38%	498	494	
Bellingham	13,941	2,294	89%	1%	19%	25%	44%	41%	497	496	
Belmont	12,728	4,446	67%	6%	10%	7%	78%	78%	516	517	
Benjamin Banneker Charter Public	27,153	349	3%	4%	11%	67%	68%	65%	512	507	K-6 only
Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public	16,704	446	74%	1%	10%	2%	75%	73%	513	512	
Bentley Academy Charter School	-	254	39%	13%	20%	-	33%	31%	496	491	K-5 only
Berkley	13,028	904	95%	0%	15%	17%	55%	50%	503	500	
Berkshire Arts And Technology Charter Public	22,177	353	74%	2%	23%	56%	48%	48%	501	500	6-12 only
Berkshire Hills	18,742	1,317	83%	2%	19%	23%	47%	38%	498	495	
Berlin	20,183	186	89%	4%	18%	12%	60%	65%	503	502	PreK-5 only
Berlin-Boylston	14,341	570	91%	1%	16%	10%	53%	54%	502	502	6-12 only
Beverly	13,084	4,620	80%	3%	21%	28%	56%	51%	502	500	
Billerica	15,761	5,039	83%	1%	17%	22%	52%	50%	501	500	
Blackstone-Millville	13,584	1,757	89%	3%	18%	14%	44%	41%	497	496	
Boston	21,552	53,885	14%	28%	20%	68%	34%	32%	491	489	
Boston Collegiate Charter	22,557	685	52%	3%	19%	43%	44%	43%	497	498	5-12 only
Boston Green Academy Horace Mann Charter School	-	439	8%	12%	29%	71%	25%	9%	484	478	6-12 only
Boston Preparatory Charter Public	25,440	415	3%	10%	19%	71%	38%	41%	494	495	6-12 only
Boston Renaissance Charter Public	25,651	950	1%	6%	12%	78%	32%	36%	493	492	PreK-6 only
Bourne	15,567	1,941	88%	1%	17%	29%	48%	39%	499	494	
Boxford	16,826	740	91%	1%	18%	2%	71%	67%	508	507	PreK-6 only
Boylston	14,121	303	90%	3%	10%	7%	74%	63%	509	504	PreK-5 only
Braintree	14,086	5,828	75%	4%	21%	24%	65%	59%	508	505	
Brewster	22,198	493	87%	3%	16%	25%	59%	59%	505	504	PreK-5 only
Bridge Boston Charter School	25,529	222	0%	26%	17%	100%	39%	30%	496	488	PreK-4 only
Bridgewater-Raynham	13,204	5,342	87%	1%	15%	21%	57%	58%	504	503	
Brimfield	15,581	288	95%	-	12%	20%	64%	69%	506	508	PreK-6 only
Brockton	14,796	17,197	22%	20%	13%	83%	26%	20%	487	484	
Brooke Charter School	-	-	-	-	-	-	63%	71%	507	509	
Brookfield	11,964	327	90%	1%	10%	34%	57%	57%	505	504	PreK-6 only
Brookline	18,621	7,719	56%	9%	16%	11%	75%	73%	515	512	
Burlington	19,452	3,583	69%	3%	14%	13%	52%	56%	501	503	
Cambridge	28,010	6,771	39%	8%	23%	46%	60%	52%	507	501	
Canton	14,555	3,363	70%	2%	13%	17%	68%	63%	508	507	
Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter	20,971	240	88%	1%	17%	20%	69%	56%	507	502	6-8 only
Carlisle	19,094	615	75%	2%	15%	1%	79%	80%	515	515	
Carver	14,509	1,659	95%	0%	20%	25%	44%	37%	498	495	
Central Berkshire	16,950	1,627	92%	0%	14%	34%	40%	39%	494	494	
Chelmsford	12,834	5,077	77%	3%	17%	13%	67%	61%	509	507	
Chelsea	13,691	6,466	7%	24%	13%	87%	29%	28%	488	487	
Chesterfield-Goshen	15,510	155	95%	-	17%	31%	55%	43%	503	498	PreK-6 only
Chicopee	14,502	7,735	57%	5%	19%	67%	41%	40%	495	495	
Christa McAuliffe Charter Public	18,551	402	70%	3%	24%	21%	53%	51%	501	501	6-8 only
Clarksburg	16,548	165	94%	-	22%	36%	48%	34%	499	492	
Clinton	13,061	1,902	68%	6%	21%	51%	40%	25%	495	487	
Codman Academy Charter Public	29,067	322	0%	5%	25%	63%	10%	3%	483	475	
Cohasset	15,287	1,653	92%	0%	11%	4%	73%	61%	510	504	
Collegiate Charter School of Lowell	-	-	-	-	-	-	36%	28%	494	490	

Community Charter School Of Cambridge	22,035	409	4%	4%	20%	48%	53%	51%	501	500	6-12 only
Community Day Charter Public School - Gateway	21,715	240	3%	55%	8%	100%	78%	74%	517	511	PreK-4 only
Community Day Charter Public School - Prospect	23,718	400	5%	36%	9%	75%	66%	67%	510	507	
Community Day Charter Public School - R. Kingman Webster	21,250	240	5%	41%	5%	100%	75%	77%	514	513	PreK-4 only
Concord	17,707	2,127	77%	2%	18%	6%	77%	75%	515	512	
Conservatory Lab Charter	24,046	403	11%	5%	11%	64%	41%	30%	497	491	
Conway	17,132	154	97%	-	14%	19%	76%	72%	512	508	PreK-6 only
Danvers	14,988	3,658	85%	1%	16%	22%	47%	42%	499	496	
Dartmouth	13,058	3,730	89%	3%	14%	26%	57%	51%	503	500	
Dedham	17,787	2,795	71%	5%	20%	27%	50%	54%	499	501	
Deerfield	14,632	413	87%	1%	19%	21%	54%	47%	505	497	PreK-6 only
Dennis-Yarmouth	17,993	3,127	71%	8%	17%	51%	36%	38%	494	493	
Dighton-Rehoboth	13,642	2,936	91%	0%	13%	19%	54%	49%	502	499	
Douglas	12,072	1,484	93%	-	18%	18%	61%	46%	506	498	
Dover	21,102	480	76%	3%	15%	3%	83%	83%	517	516	PreK-5 only
Dover-Sherborn	19,981	1,215	82%	0%	16%	5%	82%	75%	518	514	6-12 only
Dracut	11,507	3,654	80%	1%	17%	29%	51%	44%	501	497	
Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School	-	255	0%	17%	13%	85%	32%	23%	492	487	PreK-4 only
Dudley-Charlton Reg	12,044	4,027	87%	1%	13%	26%	54%	48%	501	499	
Duxbury	13,834	3,240	93%	0%	15%	6%	72%	66%	510	507	
East Bridgewater	10,452	2,325	92%	1%	18%	19%	56%	49%	503	500	
East Longmeadow	13,960	2,695	84%	2%	18%	21%	63%	53%	505	501	
Eastham	28,984	177	89%	2%	17%	42%	77%	69%	511	507	PreK-5 only
Easthampton	13,280	1,550	82%	1%	18%	36%	37%	36%	494	492	
Easton	13,117	3,773	85%	1%	17%	12%	63%	66%	506	507	
Edgartown	25,741	345	77%	12%	24%	35%	55%	47%	502	499	
Erving	27,807	134	87%	-	22%	46%	42%	28%	498	490	
Everett	13,764	7,210	30%	16%	15%	80%	38%	34%	493	492	
Excel Academy Charter	26,412	785	10%	14%	17%	79%	55%	47%	502	499	5-9 only
Fairhaven	12,328	2,056	87%	2%	15%	31%	53%	48%	501	499	
Fall River	14,678	10,265	57%	9%	19%	80%	34%	30%	491	489	
Falmouth	16,122	3,562	81%	2%	19%	31%	58%	53%	504	502	
Farmington River Reg	29,016	126	94%	-	20%	43%	45%	42%	500	498	
Fitchburg	14,140	5,299	33%	10%	22%	100%	32%	25%	490	486	
Florida	19,247	87	95%	-	31%	48%	34%	34%	495	494	
Four Rivers Charter Public	21,525	217	85%	-	16%	31%	51%	57%	503	504	7-12 only
Foxborough	15,883	2,668	86%	1%	17%	18%	51%	63%	501	505	
Foxborough Regional Charter	15,243	1,255	51%	8%	10%	22%	45%	43%	498	496	
Framingham	18,107	8,705	57%	18%	25%	47%	38%	37%	494	492	
Francis W. Parker Charter Essential	20,728	399	92%	-	16%	4%	63%	59%	505	503	7-12 only
Franklin	12,780	5,568	88%	1%	16%	10%	66%	63%	508	506	
Freetown-Lakeville	12,645	2,876	93%	1%	13%	17%	55%	57%	502	503	
Frontier	18,398	624	88%	1%	21%	22%	40%	48%	495	499	7-12 only
Gardner	13,268	2,447	73%	4%	22%	62%	26%	25%	488	486	
Gateway	17,032	882	91%	1%	19%	35%	47%	40%	500	496	
Georgetown	13,287	1,479	95%	0%	13%	10%	60%	53%	505	500	
Gill-Montague	18,510	956	80%	5%	19%	54%	35%	23%	493	486	
Global Learning Charter Public	19,931	508	53%	8%	14%	64%	30%	33%	491	492	5-12 only
Gloucester	17,233	2,958	85%	4%	24%	46%	47%	44%	499	497	
Grafton	11,782	3,226	79%	1%	17%	12%	64%	60%	506	505	
Granby	12,223	829	88%	3%	15%	24%	48%	45%	498	496	
Greenfield	15,694	1,671	75%	4%	16%	64%	39%	30%	494	489	
Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual District	-	-	-	-	-	-	26%	19%	489	482	
Groton-Dunstable	13,601	2,418	91%	1%	16%	7%	62%	66%	506	508	
Hadley	13,142	612	82%	2%	13%	21%	56%	48%	504	498	
Halifax	12,496	567	92%	1%	16%	26%	57%	58%	503	504	
Hamilton-Wenham	15,881	1,860	89%	1%	15%	8%	72%	63%	512	506	
Hampden Charter School Of Science East	17,767	435	44%	6%	9%	63%	48%	50%	498	499	6-12 only
Hampden-Wilbraham	14,070	3,187	85%	1%	15%	17%	59%	51%	505	501	
Hampshire	17,750	760	94%	1%	21%	17%	53%	44%	500	499	7-12 only
Hancock	18,721	44	98%	-	16%	0%	67%	52%	505	499	PreK-6 only
Hanover	13,193	2,650	95%	1%	19%	10%	61%	58%	506	504	
Harvard	16,955	1,157	81%	1%	13%	3%	75%	70%	513	509	
Hatfield	14,226	450	92%	-	18%	11%	55%	56%	502	501	
Haverhill	13,377	7,385	63%	7%	21%	53%	36%	33%	493	492	
Hawlemont	18,514	102	85%	-	19%	55%	39%	30%	496	491	PreK-6 only
Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public	21,438	217	0%	14%	19%	76%	18%	15%	481	481	6-8 only
Hill View Montessori Charter Public	13,918	306	74%	3%	12%	20%	45%	23%	500	488	
Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public	19,513	211	83%	-	17%	20%	60%	56%	504	502	
Hingham	12,823	4,370	91%	0%	13%	7%	78%	74%	516	511	
Holbrook	13,770	1,230	57%	5%	19%	48%	47%	46%	500	498	
Holland	13,388	224	93%	-	15%	27%	50%	49%	502	500	PreK-6 only
Holliston	13,694	2,929	86%	2%	16%	7%	63%	60%	507	504	
Holyoke	17,007	5,443	16%	23%	24%	77%	16%	10%	480	475	
Holyoke Community Charter	18,257	704	6%	12%	16%	86%	36%	22%	494	488	
Hopedale	12,760	1,191	90%	1%	17%	13%	65%	64%	508	507	
Hopkinton	14,116	3,488	84%	2%	13%	3%	78%	78%	515	515	
Hudson	15,168	2,852	85%	6%	17%	29%	52%	50%	501	499	
Hull	18,137	1,008	92%	0%	14%	37%	55%	52%	503	500	
Innovation Academy Charter	17,687	792	81%	3%	19%	14%	57%	53%	504	502	5-12 only
Ipswich	14,159	1,868	88%	2%	14%	14%	69%	63%	511	506	
King Philip	13,375	2,178	92%	0%	14%	7%	64%	59%	505	503	7-12 only
Kingston	10,903	1,095	92%	1%	17%	17%	55%	54%	504	502	
KIPP Academy Boston Charter School	28,313	428	1%	27%	19%	87%	34%	32%	496	493	
KIPP Academy Lynn Charter	22,893	1,037	8%	24%	12%	83%	41%	44%	495	497	5-12 only
Lanesborough	19,056	206	95%	-	20%	32%	61%	51%	506	501	PreK-6 only
Lawrence	15,184	13,815	5%	29%	18%	90%	28%	29%	487	488	

Lawrence Family Development Charter	19,624	700	1%	18%	7%	93%	64%	59%	506	503	
Lee	19,217	682	86%	3%	13%	39%	51%	50%	501	498	
Leicester	12,985	1,626	85%	1%	16%	35%	36%	35%	494	493	
Lenox	19,606	733	88%	3%	8%	25%	66%	66%	510	509	
Leominster	13,976	6,135	54%	7%	21%	47%	43%	46%	496	498	
Leverett	20,647	130	82%	-	19%	24%	74%	69%	511	508	PreK-6 only
Lexington	18,492	7,022	51%	6%	14%	6%	80%	81%	519	519	
Libertas Academy Charter School	-	-	-	-	-	-	10%	24%	480	486	
Lincoln	21,715	1,244	61%	2%	17%	10%	57%	59%	506	505	
Littleton	13,918	1,655	86%	1%	20%	11%	68%	61%	509	505	
Longmeadow	14,346	2,935	80%	1%	19%	5%	71%	69%	512	509	
Lowell	14,546	14,284	29%	25%	16%	71%	36%	36%	493	492	
Lowell Community Charter Public	19,813	821	4%	48%	17%	84%	53%	54%	502	502	
Ludlow	14,833	2,716	86%	2%	16%	34%	36%	38%	492	494	
Lunenburg	12,793	1,590	87%	1%	19%	15%	50%	53%	500	501	
Lynn	14,491	15,261	18%	19%	15%	82%	34%	30%	492	491	
Lynnfield	14,876	2,239	87%	1%	17%	9%	71%	76%	512	512	
Malden	14,151	6,677	30%	18%	16%	63%	48%	42%	498	495	
Manchester Essex Regional	16,035	1,462	96%	1%	12%	9%	72%	66%	511	506	
Mansfield	14,409	4,066	85%	1%	15%	15%	60%	59%	505	503	
Marblehead	14,633	3,226	86%	4%	19%	11%	69%	64%	509	505	
Marblehead Community Charter Public	19,657	231	92%	1%	16%	6%	58%	60%	503	503	4-8 only
Marion	15,876	457	86%	1%	19%	20%	68%	63%	509	507	
Marlborough	16,468	4,553	49%	17%	18%	50%	40%	37%	494	493	
Marshfield	13,169	4,323	94%	1%	16%	15%	69%	65%	510	506	
Martha's Vineyard Charter	35,768	178	79%	7%	25%	27%	43%	29%	499	490	
Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School of Excellence	21,223	366	2%	9%	14%	89%	47%	62%	499	505	K-5 only
Masconomet	15,392	1,972	91%	1%	16%	3%	71%	72%	511	510	7-12 only
Mashpee	17,819	1,644	79%	2%	19%	31%	52%	48%	501	499	
MATCH Charter Public School	26,876	1,027	4%	28%	16%	80%	43%	39%	496	494	
Mattapoisett	16,492	493	89%	1%	11%	18%	74%	65%	512	508	
Maynard	15,628	1,439	79%	3%	18%	20%	45%	40%	496	495	
Medfield	14,395	2,623	89%	1%	12%	3%	69%	72%	509	510	
Medford	16,733	4,475	62%	8%	18%	38%	49%	40%	499	494	
Medway	13,787	2,401	90%	1%	14%	9%	66%	65%	509	507	
Melrose	12,666	3,765	81%	3%	16%	17%	70%	64%	511	506	
Mendon-Upton	13,569	2,321	90%	1%	16%	10%	57%	53%	504	502	
Methuen	13,171	7,109	55%	8%	16%	48%	45%	40%	497	495	
Middleborough	13,988	3,040	89%	1%	19%	35%	47%	48%	499	499	
Middleton	15,361	717	86%	1%	18%	8%	66%	61%	509	506	PreK-6 only
Millford	13,758	4,169	66%	11%	16%	33%	48%	40%	499	495	
Millbury	15,054	1,753	84%	4%	18%	29%	47%	44%	498	496	
Millis	13,838	1,382	88%	0%	13%	15%	61%	60%	506	505	
Milton	14,528	4,144	69%	2%	15%	13%	65%	67%	508	508	
Mohawk Trail	19,160	1,008	92%	0%	19%	33%	47%	39%	499	495	
Monomoy Regional School District	17,787	1,943	82%	3%	16%	28%	55%	50%	502	500	
Monson	14,683	1,055	92%	0%	14%	27%	50%	44%	502	497	
Mount Greylock	19,565	553	89%	1%	15%	23%	75%	64%	519	506	7-12 only
Mystic Valley Regional Charter	15,386	1,489	55%	2%	14%	26%	61%	56%	506	503	
Nahant	17,180	153	94%	-	8%	7%	55%	53%	505	498	PreK-6 only
Nantucket	21,234	1,574	58%	16%	12%	21%	41%	31%	496	491	
Narragansett	13,717	1,377	90%	-	18%	34%	41%	38%	496	494	
Nashoba	15,099	3,458	89%	1%	14%	9%	73%	72%	512	510	
Natick	14,115	5,502	78%	2%	15%	10%	64%	64%	507	507	
Nauset	19,067	1,522	87%	2%	15%	24%	61%	57%	505	502	6-12 only
Needham	16,517	5,656	79%	2%	16%	8%	76%	72%	515	511	
Neighborhood House Charter	28,555	395	19%	7%	15%	65%	50%	31%	501	491	
New Bedford	14,011	12,782	44%	22%	22%	100%	33%	30%	491	489	
New Heights Charter School of Brockton	-	-	-	-	-	-	32%	21%	489	485	
New Salem-Wendell	16,073	162	88%	-	18%	52%	51%	39%	501	495	PreK-6 only
Newburyport	14,774	2,317	92%	1%	14%	9%	59%	53%	504	501	
Newton	18,612	12,803	64%	6%	20%	13%	70%	71%	510	511	
Norfolk	16,059	911	91%	1%	15%	5%	66%	73%	507	509	PreK-6 only
North Adams	16,270	1,475	83%	1%	26%	65%	37%	26%	493	489	
North Andover	12,014	4,784	77%	1%	17%	17%	60%	60%	506	506	
North Attleborough	11,636	4,461	84%	3%	16%	18%	62%	59%	506	503	
North Brookfield	15,068	572	89%	-	16%	42%	31%	26%	491	490	
North Middlesex	13,927	3,259	90%	1%	20%	20%	59%	53%	505	502	
North Reading	14,581	2,556	90%	1%	17%	9%	69%	68%	510	508	
Northampton	14,456	2,697	69%	4%	22%	30%	53%	48%	502	498	
Northborough	15,404	1,775	75%	6%	18%	11%	65%	62%	507	506	
Northbridge	12,598	2,401	86%	2%	18%	33%	48%	46%	499	497	
Norton	13,403	2,571	89%	1%	20%	20%	54%	48%	502	499	
Norwell	14,498	2,225	93%	0%	15%	6%	73%	68%	511	508	
Norwood	15,383	3,509	69%	7%	19%	29%	49%	52%	500	501	
Oak Bluffs	24,100	432	67%	13%	19%	37%	60%	47%	506	497	
Old Rochester	15,220	1,230	91%	0%	14%	14%	66%	66%	506	506	7-12 only
Old Sturbridge Academy Charter Public School	-	-	-	-	-	-	54%	38%	503	495	
Orange	13,812	607	85%	0%	24%	56%	25%	23%	490	485	PreK-6 only
Orleans	23,000	213	92%	3%	12%	25%	71%	72%	511	510	K-5 only
Oxford	13,646	1,812	84%	0%	16%	37%	41%	37%	497	494	
Palmer	14,262	1,455	83%	2%	20%	48%	47%	33%	498	491	
Peabody	13,906	5,998	79%	7%	19%	38%	46%	42%	498	495	
Pelham	19,375	125	80%	-	21%	16%	65%	75%	509	510	K-6 only
Pembroke	11,875	3,133	96%	1%	13%	18%	56%	60%	502	504	
Pentucket	14,259	2,581	93%	0%	18%	11%	49%	38%	499	494	
Petersham	17,690	120	90%	-	17%	29%	43%	26%	496	484	K-6 only
Pioneer Charter School Of Science	19,606	357	25%	17%	8%	68%	61%	62%	504	504	7-12 only
Pioneer Charter School Of Science II	17,515	270	33%	17%	13%	58%	69%	79%	506	514	7-11 only
Pioneer Valley	15,577	891	93%	-	15%	31%	50%	46%	500	497	
Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter	17,411	439	56%	4%	7%	16%	72%	67%	513	508	

Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public	19,765	403	70%	-	19%	21%	62%	49%	509	500	7-12 only
Pittsfield	16,069	5,651	69%	5%	21%	65%	34%	33%	492	491	
Plainville	14,879	762	82%	3%	16%	17%	56%	53%	503	501	PreK-6 only
Plymouth	15,708	7,716	88%	1%	20%	33%	52%	45%	501	497	
Plympton	15,278	223	96%	-	17%	18%	64%	58%	508	504	
Prospect Hill Academy Charter	25,522	1,150	12%	11%	14%	61%	39%	34%	495	492	
Provincetown	42,369	118	54%	5%	19%	42%	58%	43%	501	496	
Quabbin	14,276	2,428	91%	0%	19%	31%	48%	46%	499	497	
Quabog Regional	12,987	1,419	89%	3%	16%	48%	44%	45%	497	498	
Quincy	15,811	9,309	47%	15%	17%	54%	60%	54%	506	502	
Ralph C Mahar	14,798	822	80%	1%	17%	47%	40%	43%	495	496	6-12 only
Randolph	17,186	2,942	14%	12%	24%	57%	39%	35%	496	494	
Reading	12,659	4,448	88%	1%	17%	9%	68%	63%	509	506	
Revere	13,933	7,292	38%	17%	15%	79%	46%	43%	498	496	
Richmond	22,861	177	89%	-	5%	23%	63%	52%	508	501	
Rising Tide Charter Public	16,228	631	92%	-	14%	12%	59%	59%	503	503	5-12 only
River Valley Charter	19,453	288	90%	-	12%	2%	65%	50%	507	500	
Rochester	14,574	487	91%	1%	17%	20%	58%	54%	506	503	
Rockland	14,099	2,358	79%	3%	17%	46%	46%	40%	499	496	
Rockport	16,973	970	92%	0%	17%	23%	55%	46%	503	499	
Rowe	25,531	54	94%	-	24%	25%	53%	57%	500	501	PreK-6 only
Roxbury Preparatory Charter	25,449	1,144	1%	14%	15%	72%	39%	45%	494	497	5-9 only
Sabis International Charter	16,210	1,573	25%	3%	13%	58%	36%	23%	494	487	
Salem	18,943	3,868	49%	13%	22%	64%	40%	34%	495	491	
Salem Academy Charter	21,453	420	49%	4%	18%	33%	56%	54%	507	502	6-12 only
Sandwich	15,378	2,818	93%	0%	16%	18%	54%	52%	502	500	
Saugus	14,786	2,694	75%	5%	16%	33%	43%	46%	497	498	
Savoy	22,707	44	89%	-	20%	39%	43%	17%	498	486	PreK-5 only
Scituate	14,415	3,028	94%	1%	14%	11%	72%	64%	510	506	
Seekonk	14,629	2,010	87%	2%	16%	22%	62%	57%	505	502	
Seven Hills Charter Public	21,705	690	8%	23%	13%	71%	24%	18%	488	483	
Sharon	16,026	3,506	61%	3%	14%	8%	73%	76%	513	515	
Sherborn	17,839	400	79%	3%	9%	4%	76%	80%	514	512	PreK-5 only
Shrewsbury	12,906	6,114	61%	3%	14%	16%	73%	70%	513	510	
Shutesbury	16,845	132	81%	-	15%	28%	70%	58%	510	503	PreK-6 only
Silver Hill Horace Mann Charter	12,445	580	78%	3%	15%	36%	44%	49%	499	499	K-5 only
Silver Lake	14,791	1,899	96%	-	16%	16%	61%	63%	506	505	6-12 only
Sizer School: A North Central Charter Essential	20,128	355	77%	2%	20%	45%	47%	23%	500	485	7-12 only
Somerset	13,232	1,827	90%	0%	14%	20%	54%	50%	502	499	
Somerville	18,223	4,987	36%	17%	23%	68%	49%	45%	499	496	
South Hadley	14,755	1,851	84%	3%	12%	34%	49%	45%	500	497	
South Shore Charter Public	19,838	597	64%	10%	15%	27%	47%	32%	499	490	
Southampton	10,511	530	89%	3%	20%	15%	54%	46%	502	497	PreK-6 only
Southborough	17,294	1,319	74%	7%	13%	4%	75%	81%	513	517	
Southbridge	14,965	2,221	44%	14%	21%	54%	18%	15%	480	479	
Southern Berkshire	22,790	766	89%	1%	15%	35%	49%	41%	498	494	
Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional School District	14,244	1,637	91%	2%	20%	25%	45%	38%	498	495	
Spencer-E Brookfield	12,926	1,615	84%	1%	21%	44%	41%	36%	496	493	
Springfield	15,755	25,689	12%	16%	20%	82%	30%	24%	489	486	
Springfield Preparatory Charter School	-	108	5%	23%	9%	-	72%	77%	509	513	
Stoneham	14,795	2,396	84%	3%	19%	25%	63%	52%	506	501	
Stoughton	13,923	3,679	61%	5%	15%	37%	52%	49%	501	499	
Sturbridge	13,073	973	87%	-	13%	19%	60%	67%	503	507	PreK-6 only
Sudbury	15,095	2,840	80%	1%	16%	5%	74%	73%	513	512	
Sunderland	15,488	232	67%	7%	15%	32%	56%	50%	504	500	PreK-6 only
Sutton	12,974	1,481	91%	1%	18%	11%	63%	55%	506	501	
Swampscott	15,639	2,271	82%	3%	14%	17%	65%	56%	506	503	
Swansea	13,578	2,050	93%	1%	12%	34%	51%	47%	501	498	
Tantasqua	14,168	1,818	90%	0%	12%	27%	41%	56%	496	502	7-12 only
Taunton	12,431	8,156	69%	4%	19%	54%	39%	35%	494	491	
TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School District	10,711	808	72%	0%	19%	45%	28%	21%	490	483	
Tewksbury	14,404	3,629	90%	1%	17%	20%	56%	52%	503	500	
Tisbury	25,891	325	63%	23%	15%	39%	74%	65%	513	509	
Topsfield	16,401	643	93%	0%	19%	3%	69%	61%	509	505	PreK-6 only
Triton	15,446	2,719	92%	1%	16%	23%	53%	45%	502	498	
Truro	34,859	121	70%	-	16%	35%	53%	33%	503	493	
Tyngsborough	13,713	1,743	85%	1%	15%	13%	54%	51%	502	500	
UP Academy Charter School Of Boston	-	466	8%	23%	19%	76%	28%	34%	488	491	6-8 only
UP Academy Charter School Of Dorchester	-	671	14%	18%	16%	79%	29%	23%	488	484	PreK-7 only
Up-Island Regional	29,075	378	85%	3%	23%	20%	63%	62%	508	506	
Uxbridge	13,668	1,925	90%	1%	14%	24%	49%	45%	500	497	
Veritas Preparatory Charter School	19,541	307	7%	10%	15%	83%	54%	53%	500	499	5-8 only
Wachusett	11,973	7,398	88%	2%	13%	13%	67%	64%	508	506	
Wakefield	13,997	3,531	86%	2%	16%	13%	54%	53%	501	502	
Wales	13,253	168	90%	-	13%	34%	66%	60%	504	503	PreK-6 only
Walpole	14,587	3,954	82%	3%	16%	17%	66%	65%	508	507	
Waltham	20,807	5,455	45%	17%	20%	47%	48%	44%	499	497	
Ware	13,764	1,280	87%	1%	15%	57%	40%	27%	493	489	
Wareham	15,423	2,547	73%	1%	24%	100%	37%	30%	494	489	
Watertown	20,992	2,598	69%	10%	22%	28%	52%	43%	501	495	
Wayland	18,494	2,701	68%	2%	20%	8%	78%	76%	515	514	
Webster	14,649	1,932	66%	5%	19%	60%	32%	19%	490	483	
Wellesley	18,395	5,134	72%	2%	16%	6%	79%	75%	516	511	
Wellfleet	29,466	113	84%	3%	20%	30%	68%	74%	508	505	PreK-5 only
West Boylston	15,190	925	85%	2%	17%	22%	57%	57%	506	503	
West Bridgewater	11,841	1,336	88%	0%	11%	20%	58%	47%	502	499	
West Springfield	13,731	4,034	70%	8%	20%	69%	48%	48%	498	498	
Westborough	14,960	3,705	60%	9%	15%	11%	75%	73%	513	513	



Westfield	14,351	5,633	80%	5%	18%	41%	51%	47%	500	498	
Westford	13,429	5,184	71%	1%	13%	6%	74%	77%	512	513	
Westhampton	14,557	141	92%	2%	24%	11%	71%	72%	511	510	PreK-6 only
Weston	23,614	2,207	68%	4%	17%	5%	81%	77%	518	514	
Westport	14,015	1,533	91%	1%	18%	30%	53%	55%	501	501	
Westwood	16,690	3,172	83%	1%	18%	6%	75%	71%	514	511	
Weymouth	13,430	6,642	78%	3%	17%	31%	50%	42%	499	496	
Whately	17,793	131	94%	–	15%	28%	57%	51%	501	499	PreK-6 only
Whitman-Hanson	11,699	4,109	91%	0%	14%	26%	52%	44%	500	496	
Williamsburg	19,032	165	97%	2%	15%	22%	53%	35%	503	497	PreK-6 only
Williamstown	15,172	452	82%	–	11%	21%	75%	72%	512	513	PreK-6 only
Wilmington	15,350	3,442	86%	1%	18%	12%	58%	63%	504	506	
Winchendon	14,814	1,312	86%	1%	20%	48%	30%	25%	490	487	
Winchester	13,247	4,639	74%	4%	16%	7%	79%	80%	516	516	
Winthrop	12,961	1,893	84%	6%	17%	28%	56%	52%	502	501	
Woburn	15,819	4,767	73%	4%	17%	29%	52%	46%	501	498	
Worcester	14,632	25,527	32%	35%	19%	74%	35%	29%	492	488	
Worthington	–	49	96%	–	12%	–	41%	29%	498	488	PreK-6 only
Wrentham	13,821	1,065	90%	1%	15%	9%	73%	64%	514	506	PreK-6 only
<b>Massachusetts Totals</b>	<b>\$ 16,566</b>	<b>964,026</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>498</b>	

\* Does not include districts which exclusively serve students in grades 9-12.

\*\* Most recent year for which comparable data are available.

\*\*\* Massachusetts administers the MCAS to grade 10 pupils as a graduation requirement. Grade 10 scores were not factored in.

† ELL refers to English Language Learners, IEP refers to students with an Individualized Education Program, and FRL refers to Free and Reduced Lunch.

†† Scores are demarcated as follows: 530-560, Exceeding Expectations; 500-529, Meeting Expectations; 470-499, Partially Meeting Expectations; 440-469, Not Meeting Expectations.

– Indicates that the data are missing, unavailable, or inapplicable.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, Massachusetts Department of Education, RIPEC calculations

**Appendix Table 2:  
Rhode Island School Districts, Selected Demographic Information, and 2018 RICAS Performance**

District*	2014-2015**	2015-2016**					2014-2015**	2018			
	Total Current Expenditures per Pupil	Total Students	% White	% ELL***	% IEP***	% FRL***	RICAS, Grades 3-8				
							% Proficient	Avg. Scaled Score†	Notes		
						ELA/Lit	Math	ELA/Lit	Math		
Achievement First Rhode Island	\$ 24,011	520	5%	20%	7%	85%	57%	56%	505	502	K-6 only
Barrington	14,102	3,328	87%	1%	13%	4%	69%	61%	509	504	
Beacon Charter School	13,230	276	69%	-	17%	48%	19%	15%	486	485	6-12 only
Blackstone Valley Prep, ARI Mayoral Academy	14,410	1,397	36%	9%	10%	53%	46%	42%	497	496	
Bristol Warren	14,281	3,328	90%	2%	13%	36%	51%	40%	500	494	
Burrillville	13,342	2,383	92%	0%	16%	36%	25%	17%	488	483	
Central Falls	16,076	2,657	10%	24%	24%	79%	10%	7%	474	470	
Charlo	17,047	3,237	92%	0%	12%	21%	54%	45%	501	497	
Coventry	14,283	4,750	92%	0%	15%	34%	46%	29%	497	490	
Cranston	14,752	10,441	57%	5%	14%	42%	35%	23%	492	486	
Cumberland	12,324	4,552	81%	3%	16%	25%	56%	50%	502	499	
DCYF	-	65	25%	6%	95%	96%	†	†	†	†	8-12 only
East Greenwich	14,758	2,455	84%	1%	12%	7%	56%	53%	502	501	
East Providence	14,310	5,282	72%	3%	17%	49%	32%	25%	489	486	
Exeter-West Greenwich	19,103	1,638	93%	1%	13%	14%	43%	47%	496	498	
Foster	14,585	277	98%	-	16%	23%	36%	26%	493	487	K-5 only
Foster-Glocester	19,613	1,155	96%	0%	10%	19%	43%	29%	497	491	6-12 only
Glocester	17,176	545	97%	1%	13%	16%	60%	51%	504	500	PreK-5 only
Highlander	15,369	458	7%	13%	14%	78%	15%	10%	482	478	
International Charter	14,649	342	32%	40%	9%	62%	32%	23%	492	485	K-5 only
Jamestown	20,106	496	93%	1%	18%	13%	59%	60%	504	503	
Johnston	16,723	3,217	73%	4%	21%	36%	28%	22%	488	486	
Kingston Hill Academy	15,122	185	77%	-	12%	16%	71%	67%	511	510	K-5 only
Learning Community	15,449	557	4%	29%	16%	86%	39%	33%	495	492	
Lincoln	17,381	3,012	87%	1%	17%	27%	40%	42%	493	495	
Little Compton	22,581	243	97%	-	14%	13%	53%	46%	502	500	
Middletown	14,993	2,287	69%	5%	17%	28%	34%	35%	492	492	
Narragansett	20,214	1,321	89%	1%	19%	21%	54%	46%	501	496	
New Shoreham	39,178	113	83%	9%	26%	19%	70%	40%	504	497	
Newport	17,079	2,173	43%	7%	20%	62%††	23%	19%	483	482	
North Kingstown	14,284	4,017	87%	2%	13%	22%	54%	47%	501	497	
North Providence	14,949	3,562	62%	2%	19%	49%	29%	20%	490	484	
North Smithfield	13,349	1,729	87%	1%	15%	17%	60%	44%	505	497	
Paul Cuffee Charter Sch	15,315	786	10%	10%	19%	62%	16%	20%	484	485	
Pawtucket	12,220	9,022	34%	10%	17%	72%	20%	17%	482	481	
Portsmouth	14,705	2,480	89%	1%	16%	15%	50%	47%	499	497	
Providence	16,192	23,867	9%	24%	17%	80%	14%	10%	477	474	
R.I. Sch For The Deaf	-	63	49%	21%	100%	71%	††	††	458	452	
Scituate	15,631	1,366	97%	-	13%	20%	39%	32%	493	493	
Segue Institute For Learning	14,233	238	3%	16%	14%	89%	27%	13%	488	482	6-8 only
Smithfield	15,077	2,390	88%	1%	13%	16%	52%	39%	500	494	
South Kingstown	17,259	3,249	84%	1%	13%	19%	46%	46%	498	497	
SouthSide Charter School	17,522	48	2%	6%	10%	0%	23%	14%	488	479	K-5 only
The Compass School	14,988	164	96%	-	19%	12%	55%	49%	504	501	
The Hope Academy	21,444	72	18%	4%	8%	44%	47%	22%	494	485	K-4 only
Tiverton	14,996	1,843	93%	1%	16%	28%	38%	35%	494	493	
Trinity Academy For The Performing Arts	15,190	208	2%	5%	15%	89%	15%	††	478	471	7-12 only
Urban Collaborative	-	141	3%	11%	16%	73%	††	††	466	468	7-9 only
Warwick	17,455	9,140	81%	1%	18%	34%	37%	27%	493	488	
West Warwick	15,631	3,485	75%	2%	20%	49%	26%	16%	488	481	
Westerly	18,013	2,908	80%	1%	18%	39%	40%	33%	494	491	
Woonsocket	12,054	5,908	45%	9%	26%	71%	13%	11%	478	476	
<b>Rhode Island Totals</b>	<b>\$ 15,797</b>	<b>142,014</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>487</b>	

\* Does not include districts which exclusively serve students in grades 9-12.

\*\* Most recent year for which comparable data are available.

\*\*\* ELL refers to English Language Learners, IEP refers to students with an Individualized Education Program, and FRL refers to Free and Reduced Lunch.

† Scores are demarcated as follows: 530-560, Exceeding Expectations; 500-529, Meeting Expectations; 470-499, Partially Meeting Expectations; 440-469, Not Meeting Expectations.

†† Newport's FRL percentage was calculated with data from the Rhode Island Department of Education. All other FRL data were acquired from the National Center for Education Statistics.

‡ Indicates that data are suppressed to ensure confidentiality because the minimum reporting size requirement was not met.

††† Indicates that data are suppressed to ensure confidentiality because greater than 95% of students did not meet expectations.

- Indicates that the data are missing, unavailable, or inapplicable.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, Rhode Island Department of Education, RIPEC calculations