

**Reforming Structures of
Education Governance:
Legislative Elementary
and Secondary
Education Reform in
Rhode Island, 2019**

August 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

CTE – Career and Technical Education

ELA — English Language Arts

ELL — English Language Learner

ERW — Evidence-Based Reading and Writing

FTE — Full-Time Equivalent

FY — Fiscal Year

LEA — Local Education Agency

MCAS — Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

MGL — Massachusetts General Laws

MTEL — Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure

NAEP — National Assessment of Education Progress

PARCC — Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers

RICAS — Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System

RIDE — Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

RIGL — Rhode Island General Laws

RIPEC — Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council

SEA — State Education Agency

STEM — Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

I. Introduction

This Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (RIPEC) report provides context for, and details of, a package of reforms to Rhode Island’s public elementary and secondary education system that were signed into law in July 2019.

Section II of this report provides background information to put recent education reform legislation in perspective. More specifically, Section II offers an abridged analysis of Rhode Island’s contemporary public education system through comparison to Massachusetts’ system, juxtaposing the 2018 performance of Bay State and Ocean State students on two standardized assessments which differ only in name: the next-generation Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and the Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS).¹ Establishing Massachusetts’ superior education outcomes contextualizes the nature of Ocean State education reform in 2019, not only by helping explain the impetus for reform, but by offering insight into why legislators have sought to bring Rhode Island’s education system closer in line with that of Massachusetts.

Section III of this report analyzes education reform legislation in Rhode Island in 2019 and compares it to existing statutes in Massachusetts. It offers a detailed overview of three sets of companion bills which passed into law and collectively comprise the fruits of an effort by the General Assembly to enact a comprehensive education reform package that would improve statewide systems of curriculum, instruction, governance, and accountability. To provide a fuller view, Section III additionally analyzes four sets of companion bills that were conceived as part of legislators’ education reform package but did not pass into law. It also details additions to Rhode Island’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Budget that are intended to support the implementation of education reform legislation.

Finally, the Appendix of this report includes an implementation timeline that highlights how legislators intend education reform to be implemented over a six-year period, as well as a list of the sources RIPEC cites in this analysis.

¹ For a detailed comparison of the public elementary and secondary education systems in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, see: RIPEC, “[Understanding Institutional Differences in Education Governance: An Updated Comparison of Massachusetts and Rhode Island](#),” March 2019; RIPEC, “[Understanding Institution Differences in Education Governance: A Comparison of Massachusetts and Rhode Island](#),” April 2016.

II. Background

Comparison to Massachusetts

The gap between student outcomes in Massachusetts and Rhode Island is both significant and a long-standing trend. Massachusetts' public PreKindergarten-12 system is routinely and widely ranked as among the best in the nation, while Rhode Island's system is typically ranked in the middle.² In part, Massachusetts' ranking is the product of its public-school students' relatively high performance levels on nationally administered assessments.

Table 1 illustrates this point. It reveals that Massachusetts' fourth and eighth grade students exceeded national proficiency rates on the mathematics and reading portions of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) in 2007, 2015, and 2017. In contrast, the proficiency rates of fourth and eighth graders in Rhode Island hovered around the national average in both subjects during the same period.

State	4th Grade					
	2007		2015		2017	
	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	Math
United States	38%	39%	43%	39%	43%	40%
Massachusetts	49%	58%	50%	54%	51%	53%
Rhode Island	31%	34%	40%	37%	39%	39%
State	8th Grade					
	2007		2015		2017	
	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	Math
United States	29%	31%	33%	32%	35%	33%
Massachusetts	43%	51%	46%	51%	49%	50%
Rhode Island	27%	28%	35%	32%	37%	30%

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

² For example, see: Adam McCann, "[States with the Best & Worst School Systems](#)," *WalletHub*, July 30, 2018; "[Best States: Education](#)," *US News*, May 14, 2018; Samuel Stebbins and Thomas C. Frohlich, "[States With the Best \(and Worst\) Schools](#)," *24/7 Wall St.*, January 29, 2018; Michael B. Sauter, "[States with the Best and Worst Schools](#)," *24/7 Wall St.*, January 8, 2019; Robert Morse, "[How States Compare in the 2019 Best High Schools Rankings](#)," *U.S. News*, April 29, 2019.

Similarly, Table 2 shows that, in 2017 and 2018, high school students in Massachusetts achieved at higher levels on the SAT’s mathematics and evidence-based reading and writing (ERW) sections than their peers nationally and in Rhode Island. Table 2 includes participation rates, because (unlike the NAEP) the SAT is an optional assessment in most states and higher participation rates tend to yield lower mean scores. Table 2 shows that, in 2018, Rhode Island’s SAT participation rate exceeded Massachusetts’ by 17.0 percentage points. However, Table 2 also indicates that Rhode Island’s 97.0 percent participation rate in 2018 cannot fully explain why its students averaged a total score that is 107 points below Massachusetts students’ total average score; in 2017, when Massachusetts’ participation rate exceeded Rhode Island’s by 5.0 percentage points, its students averaged 1107 on the math and ERW portion of the SAT, while Rhode Island students averaged a cumulative score of 1062, a difference of 45 points.³

Table 2
Overall Mean SAT Scores and Participation Rates, 2017-2018

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

NOTE: SAT scores and participation rates are for public schools only.

*Data are for students graduating in the academic year provided. Because the writing portion of the SAT is optional, results for it are not included.

SOURCE: The College Board; WICHE Graduation Estimates; RIPEC calculations

RICAS/MCAS Results

Recognition that Massachusetts’ system of elementary and secondary education consistently produces higher levels of student achievement than Rhode Island’s system helps explain why Rhode Island replaced the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) with the RICAS in the 2017-2018 school year. A direct reproduction of the MCAS, the RICAS is administered to students in grades three through eight and assesses student proficiency in mathematics and English language arts (ELA)/literacy.⁴ The RICAS/MCAS is aligned with the Common Core State Standards, which are used by both Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and which, like all academic 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.⁵

³ In the 2017-2018 school year, Rhode Island become one of ten states to administer the SAT to (nearly) all high school juniors. For more information on the history of the SAT nationally and in Rhode Island, see: [Understanding Institutional Differences in Education Governance: An Updated Comparison of Massachusetts and Rhode Island](#), 14-15.

⁴ Rhode Island Department of Education, [RICAS Assessments](#).

⁵ Cheryl Scott Williams, “[Just the Facts: Common Core State Standards](#),” *Educational Horizons*, vol. 90, no. 4 (April/May 2012): pp. 8-9.

While the gap between student achievement in Rhode Island and Massachusetts has proven consistent across assessments and over time, the results of the 2018 RICAS garnered significant public attention when they were released in late November 2018, yielding renewed broad-based calls for education reform in Rhode Island.⁶ Tables 3 and 4 detail those results and highlight the substantial gap between Rhode Island and Massachusetts in terms of student performance.

Table 3
2018 RICAS/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%
All (3-8)	20%	47%	34%	11%	38%	51%

SOURCE: Rhode Island and Massachusetts Departments of Education

Table 4
2018 RICAS/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%
All (3-8)	22%	50%	27%	12%	40%	48%

SOURCE: Rhode Island and Massachusetts Departments of Education

⁶ Contemporary press reports make clear that the results of the 2018 RICAS were broadly considered a disappointment and helped renew calls for education reform. For example, see: Linda Borg and Paul Edward Parker, "[Education Chief: RI's Poor Results on New Test are 'Our Truth-Telling Moment.'](#)" *Providence Journal*, November 29, 2018; John Bender, "[Reading, Math Proficiency Remain Low for RI Students.](#)" *The Public's Radio*, November 30, 2018; Brian Amaral, "[Raimondo: RICAS Results 'Disappointing,' No Single Reason for Poor Performance.](#)" *Providence Journal*, December 5, 2018; Joseph M. McNamara, "[My Turn: Joseph M. McNamara: Curriculum, Absenteeism, Are Big Problems.](#)" *Providence Journal*, January 1, 2019; James A. Kadamus, "[My Turn: James A. Kadamus: Where's the Plan to Improve R.I. Schools?](#)" *Providence Journal*, January 26, 2019; Maia Rosenfeld, "[R.I. Standardized Test Scores Fall Short of M.A.](#)," *Brown Daily Herald*, February 28, 2019.

“Understanding Institutional Difference in Education Governance: An Updated Comparison of Massachusetts and Rhode Island”

Roughly three months after the results of the RICAS were made public, RIPEC released “Understanding Institutional Differences in Education Governance: An Updated Comparison of Massachusetts and Rhode Island.” This report was a companion to, and update of, a 2016 RIPEC report titled “Understanding Institutional Differences in Education Governance: A Comparison of Massachusetts and Rhode Island,” and like that report, RIPEC’s 2019 analysis showed that there is no demographic or economic difference between Rhode Island and Massachusetts that would explain the two states’ clear and long-standing divergence in terms of student outcomes. Rather, Rhode Island and Massachusetts are similar in terms of student demographics and education funding.⁷

RIPEC’s analysis pointed to the structural differences that—unlike demographic and economic factors—help explain why Massachusetts’ elementary and secondary public education system consistently produces better student outcomes than Rhode Island’s system. More specifically, it compares Massachusetts’ history of comprehensive education reform efforts, beginning with the passage of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA) in 1993, to Rhode Island’s comparatively piecemeal reform efforts.⁸

RIPEC’s analysis also located two key structural differences between Massachusetts and Rhode Island’s systems of public education. First, RIPEC found that state education agencies (SEAs) in Massachusetts exert a greater degree of influence over key education functions, and in consequence they not only help local education agencies (LEAs) translate state-level objectives into actionable policies, but also help make possible system-wide alignment through the development and implementation of key components of the education system that explicitly inform one another. These components include state-wide academic standards, curriculum frameworks, and teacher certification, evaluation, and professional development.⁹

Second, RIPEC found that LEAs in Massachusetts utilize a school-based management model that has been linked by researchers to improved student outcomes, as well as enhanced teacher and administrator satisfaction.¹⁰ Under this model, school committees focus on the policymaking components of local education governance by placing principals in charge of the day-to-day management and administration of their schools and giving them the ability to appoint, review,

⁷ [Understanding Institutional Differences in Education Governance: An Updated Comparison of Massachusetts and Rhode Island](#), 7-10, 17-18, 29-30.

⁸ Ibid, 20-22.

⁹ Ibid, 50-51.

¹⁰ For example, see: Kenneth Leithwood and Teresa Menzies, “Forms and Effects of School-Based Management: A Review,” *Educational Policy* vol. 12, no. 3 (1998): pp. 325-346; 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; 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).

and dismiss teachers and staff. Superintendents, in turn, operate as a district's chief executive officer, while the community and staff members who comprise school councils are tasked with promoting community engagement in school government. In contrast to the school-based management model employed by Massachusetts, Rhode Island's local school committees are vested with the entire care, control, and management of public schools, while principals have limited managerial and administrative authority, and superintendents' function as chief administrative—rather than executive—officers. The equivalent of school councils in Rhode Island, school improvement teams, are required to assist in the preparation of school improvement plans, but their authority is otherwise limited by the school committee.¹¹

In sum, RIPEC's comparative analysis of elementary and secondary education in Massachusetts and Rhode Island found that the chief reasons for a consistent interstate performance gap are differing levels of commitment to long-term reform, as well as two broad distinctions in education governance. Namely, the relative role of SEAs in developing and helping LEAs implement aligned components of the education system differ, as does the structure of local education governance.

¹¹ [Understanding Institutional Differences in Education Governance: An Updated Comparison of Massachusetts and Rhode Island](#), 24-27.

III. Education Reform Legislation

On May 7, 2019, members of Rhode Island’s General Assembly, including the leadership of the House and Senate, presented a package of seven sets of education reform bills during a State House press conference. In introducing this package, legislators explicitly linked the 2018 RICAS results to the reform effort underway and made clear that Massachusetts was used as a model of reform.¹²

Of the seven sets of companion bills introduced on May 7, the revised versions of three companion bills passed through the General Assembly and were thereafter signed into law. This report now turns to that legislation, breaking down the specific requirements of each of the three successful sets of companion bills, which focus on improving curriculum and instruction, as well as governance and accountability.

Curriculum and Instruction Legislation

House Bill 5008 Substitute B/Senate Bill 0863 Substitute B: Standards, Curriculum Frameworks, and High-Quality Curriculum and Materials

House Bill 5008 Substitute B and Senate Bill 0863 Substitute B (hereafter referred to as H. 5008 SUB B/S. 0863 SUB B) are companion bills that received bipartisan support in the General Assembly and were signed into law on July 9, 2019.¹³

H. 5008 SUB B/S. 0863 SUB B amends Section 1, Chapter §16-22 of Rhode Island General Laws (RIGL) and requires the development and implementation of statewide academic standards and curriculum frameworks for six core academic subjects, as well as the use of high-quality curriculum and materials for three core subjects. This legislation additionally requires the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) to provide professional supports to LEAs as they improve curriculum implementation.¹⁴

Though not a direct reproduction of Massachusetts law, this legislation borrows heavily from Rhode Island’s northeastern neighbor, using much of the precise phrasing employed in

¹² State of Rhode Island General Assembly, Press Releases, “[General Assembly Leaders Unveil Package of Comprehensive Education Reform Legislation](#),” May 7, 2019. For examples of media coverage of this press conference, see: Linda Borg, “[Rescue Plan for R.I. Schools Unveiled by Lawmakers](#),” *Providence Journal*, May 7, 2019; “[Democratic Leaders Call for Education Reform in Rhode Island](#),” *AP News*, May 7, 2019; “[Leadership Education Legislation – Does it Go Far Enough?](#),” *Go Local Prov*, May 8, 2019; Bill Rappleye, “[Numerous Bills Seek to Reform RI’s School System](#),” *NBC 10 News*, May 8, 2019.

¹³ State of Rhode Island General Assembly, Press Releases “[Education Reform Bills That Realign Curriculum and Fast-Track Principals Signed Into Law](#),” July 9, 2019; State of Rhode Island General Assembly, Senate Floor Votes, [2019-H 5008 SUB B](#), June 26, 2019, [2019-S 0863 SUB B](#), June 27, 2019; House of Representatives Floor Votes, [2019-S 0863 SUB B](#), June 26, 2019, [2019-H 5008 SUB B](#), June 27, 2019.

¹⁴ State of Rhode Island General Assembly, [2019-H 5008 SUB B](#), [2019-S 0863 SUB B](#). The following educational institutions are defined as LEAs in this bill: public-school districts, regional school districts, state-operated schools, regional collaborative schools, and charter schools.

Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) and setting out a near-identical process for developing, implementing, and reviewing statewide academic standards and curriculum frameworks that are aligned to one another, as well as to statewide assessments.¹⁵ In contrast, MGL do not require that high-quality curriculum and materials are chosen at the state level, as required in Rhode Island under H. 5008 SUB B/S. 0863 SUB B.

Academic Standards

H. 5008 SUB B/S. 0863 SUB B created RIGL §16-22-30, a section of law that requires the council on elementary and secondary education (hereafter referred to as the council) to direct the commissioner of elementary and secondary education (hereafter referred to as the commissioner) to establish a process for developing statewide academic standards in six core subjects: mathematics, ELA, science and technology, history and social studies, world languages, and the arts. The commissioner’s review process may include the revision or adoption of standards, if judged appropriate, and must “be open and consultative,” including in the process “a culturally and racially diverse group of classroom teachers and students.”¹⁶

Through this process, the commissioner is required to develop standards by December 31, 2019. The commissioner is additionally required to submit a copy of those standards to the council at least 60 days prior to their taking effect, while the council is thereafter responsible for making standards available to the public.¹⁷

In addition to requiring that the process for developing academic standards reflect Rhode Island’s diversity, this legislation mandates that standards “avoid perpetuating gender, cultural, ethnic, or racial stereotypes,” and instill respect for diversity and the social contributions of diverse peoples.¹⁸ The remaining requirements for statewide standards are laid out in Table 5, which compares the language in MGL § XII-69-1D to that of RIGL §16-22-30.

As Table 5 illustrates, Rhode Island’s new requirements for statewide standards closely mirror those already in place in Massachusetts, and often use the exact same phrasing as Massachusetts statute. One key difference highlighted in Table 5 is that the Ocean State’s new law calls for standards to be developed for PreK students, while MGL do not. In further contrast, RIGL §16-22-30 requires standards to “be in a form readily comprehensible by the general public,” while MGL § XII-69-1D does not include this clause.¹⁹

¹⁵ See: MGL § [XII-69-1D](#), [XII-69-1E](#), [XII-71-38Q](#).

¹⁶ [2019-H 5008 SUB B](#), [2019-S 0863 SUB B](#), 1.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 1-2

¹⁹ MGL § [XII-69-1D](#).

Table 5
Requirements for Academic Standards in Massachusetts and Rhode Island

MA	RI
"The board shall direct the commissioner to institute a process to develop academic standards for the core subjects of mathematics, science and technology, history and social science, English, foreign languages and the arts"	"The council...shall direct the commissioner...to institute a process to develop statewide academic standards for the core subjects of mathematics, English language arts, science and technology, history and social studies, world languages, and the arts"
"The standards shall cover grades kindergarten through twelve"	The standards shall "cover prekindergarten through grade twelve"
The standards "shall clearly set forth the skills, competencies and knowledge expected to be possessed by all students at the conclusion of individual grades or clusters of grades"	The standards shall "clearly set forth the skills, competencies, and knowledge expected to be demonstrated by all students at the conclusion of individual grades or grade spans"
"The standards shall be formulated so as to set high expectations of student performance and to provide clear and specific examples that embody and reflect these high expectations"	The standards shall "be formulated so as to set high expectations for student performance" and "provide clear and specific examples that embody and reflect these high expectations"
The standards "shall be constructed with due regard to the work and recommendations of national organizations, to the best of similar efforts in other states, and to the level of skills, competencies and knowledge possessed by typical students in the most educationally advanced nations"	The standards shall "be constructed with due regard to the established research and recommendations of national organizations, to the best of similar efforts in other states, and to the level of skills, competencies, and knowledge possessed by typical students in most educationally-advanced nations"
"The skills, competencies and knowledge set forth in the standards shall be expressed in terms which lend themselves to objective measurement, define the performance outcomes expected of both students directly entering the workforce and of students pursuing higher education, and facilitate comparisons with students of other states and other nations"	"The skills, competencies, and knowledge set forth in the standards shall define the performance outcomes expected of both students directly entering the workforce and of students pursuing higher education. In addition, the skills, competencies, and knowledge set forth in the standards shall inform the design and implementation of the [RICAS] in mathematics, English language arts, and science and technology. The RICAS shall align with federal law...and facilitate comparisons of students of other states and nations"
"Academic standards shall be designed to avoid perpetuating gender, cultural, ethnic or racial stereotypes"	The standards shall "be designed to avoid perpetuating gender, cultural, ethnic, or racial stereotypes"
The standards "shall be designed to inculcate respect for the cultural, ethnic and racial diversity of the commonwealth and for the contributions made by diverse cultural, ethnic and racial groups to the life of the commonwealth"	The standards shall "be designed to instill respect for the cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity of this state, and for the contributions made by diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial groups to the life of this state"
"The academic standards shall reflect sensitivity to different learning styles and impediments to learning"	The standards shall "reflect sensitivity to different learning styles" and to "impediments to learning, which may include issues related to but not limited to cultural, financial, emotion, health, and social factors"
N/A	The standards shall "be in a form readily comprehensible by the general public"

SOURCE: MGL § XII-69-1D; RI General Assembly, 20019-H 5008 SUB B, 2019-S 0863 SUB B

RIGL §16-22-30 also implements a review process for academic standards. “The council shall develop procedures for updating, improving, or refining standards...by no later than September 1, 2021,” with the first “review cycle” in 2025. A review is thereafter to be conducted once every four years (in 2029, 2033, etc.). In addition, RIGL §16-22-30 mandates legislative review. “On or before December 1, 2020, and annually thereafter,” the law states that “the commissioner shall report to the governor, President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House, regarding the standards developed and reviewed pursuant to this section.”²⁰

Despite requiring the commissioner to implement a review process, it is important to point out that this legislation does not require the abandonment of existing standards. It is unlikely that Rhode Island will alter its academic standards anytime soon; the Common Core State Standards not only meet the above-detailed requirements but are broadly considered to be of high quality. The Common Core is moreover aligned with the RICAS, which is required under this legislation to “be in place for no fewer than ten (10) years.”²¹

Table 6 provides a timetable for the actions required in RIGL §16-22-30. An implementation timeline for the three sets of companion bills detailed in this report is available in the Appendix.

Date	Action
December 31, 2019	On or before this date, the commissioner is required to develop academic standards for mathematics, ELA, science and technology, history and social studies, world languages, and the arts
December 1, 2020	On or before this date (and annually thereafter), the commissioner is required to report to the governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House about the development, revision, and/or review of standards
September 1, 2021	On or before this date, the council is required to establish procedures for updating, improving, or revising academic standards
2025	During this year, academic standards materials must be reviewed and, if needed, updated, improved, or revised; from 2025 on, reviews must occur once every four years

SOURCE: RI General Assembly, 2019-H 5008 SUB B, 2019-S 0863 SUB B

²⁰ [2019-H 5008 SUB B](#), [2019-S 0863 SUB B](#), 2-3.

²¹ Ibid, 1-2.

Curriculum Frameworks

While Rhode Island had statewide academic standards prior to the passage of H. 5008 SUB B/S. 0863 SUB B, it did not have curriculum frameworks. However, statewide curriculum frameworks—which translate academic standards into a system of instruction by detailing scope and sequence—are now required under RIGL §16-22-31.

H. 5008 SUB B/S. 0863 SUB B requires the council to direct the commissioner to establish a process for developing curriculum frameworks for mathematics, ELA, science and technology, history and social studies, world languages, and the arts. As with academic standards, that process is required to “be open and consultative” and include “a culturally and racially diverse group of classroom teachers and students.” The commissioner’s process may also include “but need not be limited to,” consultation with “community groups, cultural organizations, parents, teacher preparation programs, and leading college and university figures in both subject matter disciplines and pedagogy.”²²

Under this legislation, the commissioner is mandated to develop curriculum frameworks by September 1, 2021, and as with academic standards, the commissioner must submit curriculum frameworks to the council at least sixty days before they take effect. In turn, the council is required to make the curriculum frameworks available to the public.

Table 7 uses the language of RIGL §16-22-31 and MGL §XII-69-1E to compare the Ocean State’s new requirements for curriculum frameworks to those already in effect in the Bay State. It illustrates significant overlap between Massachusetts and Rhode Island law. For instance, both states now require that curriculum frameworks provide enough detail to guide the effective promulgation of statewide assessments, and both require curriculum frameworks to inform the design of pedagogical approaches used in elementary, secondary, and career and technical schools. Table 7 also reveals areas of difference. Namely, RIGL §16-22-31 mandates that frameworks promote capstone projects and enable the demonstration of “holistic proficiency” by students, while MGL §XII-69-1E does not. In further contrast, Rhode Island law requires that frameworks both align with the state’s career and college readiness goals and promote alignment with postsecondary curriculum and instruction, while Massachusetts law does not.

²² [2019-H 5008 SUB B](#), [2019-S 0863 SUB B](#), 3.

Table 7
Requirements for Curriculum Frameworks in Massachusetts and Rhode Island

MA	RI
"The board shall direct the commissioner to institute a process for drawing up curriculum frameworks for" mathematics, science and technology, history and social science, English, foreign languages, and the arts	"The council...shall direct the commissioner...to institute a process to develop curriculum frameworks for mathematics, English language arts, science and technology, history and social studies, world language, and the arts"
"The curriculum frameworks shall present broad pedagogical approaches and strategies for assisting students in the development of the skills, competencies and knowledge called for by [the] standards"	The curriculum frameworks shall "present broad, research-based pedagogical approaches and strategies to assist students to develop the skills, competencies, and knowledge called for by statewide standards"
"The curriculum frameworks shall provide sufficient detail to guide and inform processes for the education, professional development, certification and evaluation of both active and aspiring teachers"	The curriculum frameworks shall "provide sufficient detail to guide and inform processes for the education, professional development, certification, and evaluation of both active and aspiring teachers"
Frameworks "shall provide sufficient detail to guide the promulgation of student assessment instruments"	Frameworks shall "provide sufficient detail to guide the implementation of student assessment instruments"
Frameworks "shall be constructed to guide and assist teachers, administrators, publishers, software developers and other interested parties in the development and selection of curricula, textbooks, technology and other instructional materials, and in the design of pedagogical approaches and techniques for elementary, secondary and vocational-technical schools"	Frameworks "shall be constructed to guide and assist teachers, administrators, publishers, software developers, and other interested parties in the development and selection of curricula, textbooks, technology, and other instructional materials, and in the design of pedagogical approaches and techniques for elementary, secondary, and career and technical schools"
"Frameworks shall be designed to avoid perpetuating gender, cultural, ethnic or racial stereotypes"	"Frameworks shall be designed to avoid perpetuating gender, cultural, ethnic, or racial stereotypes"
"The frameworks shall reflect sensitivity to different learning styles and impediments to learning"	Frameworks shall "reflect sensitivity to different learning styles" and "impediments to learning"
N/A	Frameworks shall "be aligned with the state's commitment to career and college readiness" and "promote better alignment with postsecondary curriculum and instruction, including but not limited to, the expansion and/or use of dual enrollment and dual credit opportunities for high school students"
N/A	Frameworks shall "encourage demanding real-world application, multi-disciplinary problem solving, integration of academic and career and technical curriculum, project-based learning, performance assessment, team teaching, and alignment of classroom instruction with work-based learning opportunities"
N/A	Frameworks shall "encourage capstone projects and associate performance assessments that provide students the opportunity to demonstrate holistic proficiency with respect to research, cross-disciplinary problem solving, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and oral defense"
N/A	Frameworks shall "be in a form readily comprehensible by the public"

SOURCE: MGL § XII-69-1D; RI General Assembly, 20019-H 5008 SUB B, 2019-S 0863 SUB B

As with academic standards, RIGL §16-22-31 mandates a review process for curriculum frameworks. By September 1, 2021, the council is required to “develop procedures for updating, improving, or refining curriculum frameworks.” In further similarity to the process for reviewing academic standards, the review cycle for curriculum frameworks will begin in 2025, with subsequent reviews occurring every four years. The commissioner is required to begin providing annual updates by December 1, 2020 to the governor, Senate President, and Speaker of the House regarding the development and/or review of curriculum frameworks.²³

Table 8 lays out a timeline of actions required by RIGL §16-22-31.

Date	Action
December 1, 2020	On or before this date (and annually thereafter), the commissioner is required to report to the governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House about the development, revision, and/or review of curriculum frameworks
September 1, 2020	On or before this date, the commissioner is required to develop curriculum frameworks for mathematics, ELA, science and technology, history and social studies, world languages, and the arts On or before this date, the council is required to establish procedures for updating, improving, or revising curriculum frameworks
2025	During this year, curriculum frameworks must be reviewed and, if needed, updated, improved, or revised; from 2025 on, reviews must occur once every four years

SOURCE: RI General Assembly, 2019-H 5008 SUB B, 2019-S 0863 SUB B

High-Quality Curriculum and Materials

Rhode Island LEAs have historically located and implemented curricula and materials without direct aid from the state. However, RIDE has recently taken steps to improve local curriculum, utilizing the work of EdReports—a national nonprofit organization that reviews K-12 instruction materials—to help self-selected LEAs identify curriculum and materials that are of high quality and aligned with the state’s academic standards.²⁴

Working off these reforms, RIGL §16-22-32 calls on the council to direct the commissioner to establish “a process for reviewing and identifying curriculum and materials for mathematics, English language arts, and science and technology.” Identified curricula and materials must be both “of high quality” and aligned with academic standards, curriculum frameworks, and the RICAS. For each subject—mathematics, ELA, and science and technology—the commissioner must identify a minimum of five examples of curricula and materials that fulfill the requirements cited above. LEAs, in turn, are mandated to select and implement one example from this menu of options.²⁵

²³ Ibid, 4.

²⁴ RIDE, [Curriculum Survey](#), March 5, 2019.

²⁵ [2019-H 5008 SUB B](#), [2019-S 0863 SUB B](#), 4-5.

As with academic standards and curriculum frameworks, this legislation requires the council to direct the commissioner to institute a review process for curricula and materials by September 1, 2021, with the first review cycle beginning in 2025. Also, like academic standards and curriculum frameworks, the commissioner is required to report on the status of implementation and/or review to the governor, the Speaker of the House, and the Senate President by December 1, 2020, and annually thereafter.²⁶

Implementing high-quality curricula and materials throughout the state is expected to take nearly five years. Table 9 provides a timeline for that process and shows that high-quality curriculum and materials will first be selected for the subjects of mathematics and ELA, and then for the subject of science and technology.

Table 9
Implementation Timeline: High-Quality Curriculum and Materials

Date	Action
December 1, 2020	On or before this date (and annually thereafter), the commissioner is required to report to the governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House about the development, revision, and/or review of high-quality curriculum and materials
January 1, 2021	On or before this date, the commissioner must identify at least five examples of high-quality curriculum and materials for mathematics and ELA
June 30, 2023	On or before this date, LEAs are required to select one of five examples of high-quality curriculum and materials for mathematics and ELA
January 1, 2024	On or before this date, the commissioner must identify five examples of high-quality curriculum and materials for science and technology
June 30, 2025	On or before this date, LEAs are required to select one of five examples of high-quality curriculum and materials for science and technology
2025	During this year, high-quality curriculum and materials must be reviewed and, if needed, updated, improved, or revised; from 2025 on, reviews must occur once every four years

SOURCE: RI General Assembly, 2019-H 5008 SUB B, 2019-S 0863 SUB B

Under this legislation, LEAs are required to implement their chosen curriculum and materials during the school year that immediately follows their selection. There are a few exceptions to this requirement. For one, LEAs may apply for an extension with the commissioner, who may grant the extension if an LEA provides evidence of both financial hardship and continued efforts to complete implementation. There are two options for LEAs wishing to indefinitely use curriculum and materials not identified by the commissioner. First, an LEA may obtain a waiver through a process that must be implemented by the commissioner and that may include developing curriculum goals, communicating rationale, and/or employing a third-party reviewer. Second, an LEA may choose its own curriculum if at least 75.0 percent of all students, as well as 75.0 percent of all student subgroups that have been identified for targeted assistance, have met expectations on the most recent state assessment.²⁷

In effort to enable the successful implementation of high-quality curriculum and materials, this legislation additionally mandates that LEAs “develop and execute a curriculum implementation plan that includes professional development” for teachers and administrators. For its part, the

²⁶ Ibid, 6.

²⁷ Ibid, 5-6.

state is required to develop a “professional development fund” to help support professional development in LEAs that utilize “prioritized curricula and materials” for ELA and mathematics. Priority curricula and materials will be determined by the commissioner.²⁸

LEA Assistance Partners

H. 5008 SUB B/S. 0863 SUB B includes a new section of law on curriculum implementation and accountability, RIGL §16-22-33. It requires RIDE to name an individual within RIDE as an “LEA assistance partner” for each LEA. Each LEA assistance partner is tasked with providing “any and all support requested...regarding access to, implementation of, and professional development for curriculum implementation.” More specifically, LEA assistance partners are required to meet with staff and administrators in their assigned LEA at a minimum of once every three months, and have follow-up meetings as often as requested, in order to discuss issues such as where to locate professional development resources and what constitutes a successful curriculum implementation strategy.²⁹

LEA assistance partners are also required under RIGL §16-22-33 to tour all schools within their assigned LEA with each school’s principal or assistant principal and at least one teacher. During these tours, LEA assistance partners will make observations, discuss ideas to help resolve challenges that teachers may face in implementing curriculum and materials, and answer any questions regarding curriculum implementation. The law does not specify if LEA assistance partners are required to tour any individual school more than once.³⁰

Finally, LEA assistance partners are required keep RIDE abreast of what is happening in each LEA; they are required by RIGL §16-22-33 to report to RIDE on the curriculum implementation status for each of their assigned LEAs at least once every three months.³¹

²⁸ Ibid, 6.

²⁹ Ibid, 6-7.

³⁰ Ibid, 7.

³¹ Ibid, 7.

Governance and Accountability Legislation

House Bill 6084 Substitute A/Senate Bill 0865 Substitute A: School-Based Management and LEA Accountability

House Bill 6084 Substitute A and Senate Bill 0865 Substitute A (hereafter referred to as H. 6084 SUB A/S. 0865 SUB A) are companion bills that received bipartisan support in the Rhode Island General Assembly and were signed into law on July 15, 2019.³²

H. 6084 SUB A/S. 0865 SUB A takes effect on January 1, 2020, and amends RIGL Section 1, Chapters §16-1, 16-2, 16-53, 16-60, and 16-97. It moves local education governance in the Ocean State closer to the school-based management model currently employed in the Bay State by altering the responsibilities of school committees and superintendents, expanding the responsibilities of school improvement teams, and establishing the functions of principals. Additionally, this legislation establishes a new chapter which provides for local accountability through evaluation, assessment, and review requirements.³³

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

One portion of H. 6084 SUB A/S. 0865 SUB A does not relate to school-based management or local accountability, but rather gives the commissioner the responsibility and power needed to realize the curriculum and instruction goals laid out in H. 5008 SUB B/S. 0863 SUB B. It adds the annual preparation of a plan for assisting in the preparation and implementation of professional development plans to the commissioner's list of duties in RIGL §16-1-5. It also obligates the commissioner to institute a process to review and revise academic standards, adopt and develop curriculum frameworks, and review and identify high-quality curriculum and materials. Finally, H. 6084 SUB A/S. 0865 SUB A alters RIGL §16-60-6 by removing the governor as an additional voting member of the council “for the purpose of appointing, retaining, or dismissing a commissioner.”³⁴

School-Based Management

H. 6084 SUB A/S. 0865 SUB A provides for school-based management by altering the functions of school committees, superintendents, principals, and school improvement teams. To legislate change for principals, a new section of law—RIGL §16-2-11.1—was created, while alterations to existing law regarding school committees, superintendents, and school improvement teams were made.

³² State of Rhode Island General Assembly, Senate Floor Votes, [2019-S 0865 SUB A](#), June 28, 2019, [2019-H 6084 SUB A](#), June 28, 2019; House of Representatives Floor Votes, [2019-H 6084 SUB A](#), June 26, 2019, [2019-S 0865 SUB A](#), June 28, 2019; [Legislative Status Report](#).

³³ State of Rhode Island General Assembly, [2019-H 6084 SUB A](#), [S. 0865 SUB A](#).

³⁴ *Ibid*, 2-3, 10.

Table 10 compares the functions of school committees, superintendents, principals, and school improvement teams under Massachusetts’ system of local education governance with Rhode Island’s current system, and the system that will be in place after January 1, 2020, when H. 6084 SUB A/S. 0865 SUB A goes into effect.

Table 10			
Structure of Local Education Governance in Rhode Island and Massachusetts			
	Rhode Island		Massachusetts
	Prior to January 1, 2020	On and after January 1, 2020*	
School Committee	"Employ a superintendent" and "give advice and consent on the appointment by superintendent of all school personnel" (§ 16-2-9)	"Employ a superintendent" (§ 16-2-9)	"Employ a superintendent" (§ XII-71-59)
Superintendent	"Oversee the care, control, and management of school facilities and equipment"; "Appoint all school department personnel with the consent of the school committee"; "Provide for the evaluation of department personnel"; "Be responsible for discipline in the school system" (§ 16-2-11)	"Appoint principals for each public school within the district"; "Appoint administrators and other personnel not assigned to individual schools"; "Appoint, at the recommendation of the principal, personnel at individual schools"; "Provide for the evaluation of department personnel appointed by the superintendent"; "Oversee discipline in the school system" (§ 16-2-11)	"Appoint principals for each public school within the district" (§ XII-71-59B)
Principal	N/A	"The educational administrators and managers of their schools"; "Oversee the care, control, and management of school facilities and equipment"; "In consultation with the school improvement team...recommend the hiring of all" school-level personnel; "Recommend the termination" of school-level personnel"; "Provide for the evaluation of personnel assigned to the school"; "In consultation with the school improvement team...prepare a school budget for consideration by the superintendent"; "In cooperation with the district's leadership... initiate a performance review plan for the school and for individual teachers"; "promote participatory decision making among all professional staff for the purpose of developing educational policy" (§ 16-2-11.1)	"The educational administrators and managers of their schools"; "Supervise the operation and management of their schools and school property"; Hire all school-level personnel; Terminate "all such personnel, subject to review and prior approval by the superintendent"; "Promote participatory decision making among all professional staff for the purpose of developing educational policy" (§ XII-71-59B)
School Improvement Team / School Council**	"Each...shall be composed of the principal... teachers, education support employees, students, parents, and other business and community citizens... provided that vocational-technical center and high school school-improvement teams may include students" (§ 16-53.1-2); "Perform any functions that are prescribed by regulations of the school board or school committee" (§ 16-53.1-3)	"Each...shall be composed of the principal... teachers, education support employees, students, parents, and other business and community citizens...provided that vocational-technical center and high school school-improvement teams may include students"; "At the middle and high school levels...department heads will also be included"; "At a minimum...[they] shall include at least one department head from a humanities subject area and at least one department head from a STEM subject area"; (§ 16-53.1-2); "Meet regularly"; "Assist in the identification of the [students] education needs"; "Make recommendations to the principal for the development, implementation and assessment of a curriculum accommodation plan"; "Assist in the review of the annual school budget and in the formulation of a school improvement plan" (§ 16-53.1-3)	"Consisting of the school principal...parents of students attending the school...professional personnel...other persons [who are] not parents or teachers," and, at the high school level, "at least one student"; "Meet regularly"; "Assist in the identification of the [students] education needs"; Make recommendations to the principal for the development, implementation and assessment of the curriculum accommodation plan"; "Assist in the review of the annual school budget and in the formulation of a school improvement plan" (§ XII-71-59C)

*Principals' functions, as detailed in this column and under H 6084 SUB A/S 0865 SUB A, take effect as soon as "practical," but may be delayed until August 1, 2021

** Rhode Island has school improvement teams, but the Massachusetts equivalent is called a school council

NOTE: This table provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of LEA officials; it does not capture every single duty or responsibility

SOURCE: MGL; RIGL; RI General Assembly, 2019-H 6084 SUB A, 2019-S 0865 SUB A

As Table 10 illustrates, Rhode Island’s new system of local education governance increases the responsibilities of superintendents and principals as day-to-day administrators and managers, while enabling school committees to focus on their policymaking, rather than managerial and administrative, functions. In comparison to Rhode Island’s current system, school improvement teams will be given more clearly defined responsibilities.

Table 10 shows that Rhode Island’s revised local education governance system is closer in line with Massachusetts than its current system, with large portions of H. 6084 SUB A/S. 0865 SUB A directly mirroring MGL. Yet, differences remain. Perhaps the most notable distinction is that Massachusetts principals have the authority to appoint, terminate, and evaluate school-level teachers and staff, while that responsibility will lay with superintendents in Rhode Island. However, principals in the Ocean State should be able to exert greater control over staffing than under the current system; they are charged with providing hiring recommendations to the superintendent under this legislation.

H. 6084 SUB A/S. 0865 SUB A gives districts time to prepare for the transition to a system of greater school-based management in two ways. First, and as mentioned above, the bill does not take effect until January 1, 2020. Second, LEAs may delay in the implementation of RIGL §16-2-11.1 (general powers and duties of school principals) until it is “practical, but no later than August 1, 2021.”³⁵ Legislators have also sought to aid in the implementation of this bill by establishing a program for fast-track principal certification, which will be outlined later in this report.

The Education Accountability Act: Evaluation System

The second half of H. 6084 SUB A/S. 0865 SUB A is comprised of the Education Accountability Act, which seeks to improve education accountability in Rhode Island by prescribing LEA reporting requirements, as well as review and evaluation functions for SEAs. As with the first half of the bill, portions of the Education Accountability Act are direct, or nearly direct, reproductions of MGL.

Table 11 highlights the extent of that overlap; it lays out the requirements that Rhode Island’s Board of Education (hereafter referred to as the board) must meet when adopting a system for the annual evaluation of LEA and individual school performance next to a near-identical set of requirements that are already in place in Massachusetts. Placing the alignment of standards, instruction, and evaluation as central, one of several stipulations captured in Table 11 is that the system should gauge an LEA’s relative success or failure “to improve student performance” by measuring “student acquisition of the skills, competencies, and knowledge called for by the academic standards and embodied in the curriculum framework.”³⁶

³⁵ Ibid, 8.

³⁶ Ibid, 13.

Table 11
Requirements for LEA and School Evaluation Systems in Massachusetts and Rhode Island

MA	RI
"The board shall adopt a system for evaluating on an annual basis the performance of both public school districts and individual public schools"	"The board...shall adopt a system for evaluating, on an annual basis, the performance of both local education agencies...and individual public schools"
"The system shall include instruments designed to assess the extent to which schools and districts succeed in improving or fail to improve student performance, as defined by student acquisition of the skills, competencies and knowledge called for by the academic standards and embodied in the curriculum frameworks...as well as by other gauges of student learning judged by the board to be relevant and meaningful to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and taxpayers"	"The system shall include instruments designed to assess the extent to which schools and LEAs succeed in improving or fail to improve student performance, as defined by student acquisition of the skills, competencies, and knowledge called for by the academic standards and embodied in the curriculum frameworks" as well as "other gauges of student learning judged by the board to be relevant and meaningful to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and taxpayers"
"The system shall be designed both to measure outcomes and results regarding student performance, and to improve the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction"	"The system shall "be designed both to measure outcomes and results regarding student performance, and to improve the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction"
"The system shall strike a balance among considerations of accuracy, fairness, expense and administration"	The system shall "strike a balance among considerations of accuracy, fairness, expense, and administration"
"The system shall employ a variety of assessment instruments" which "shall be criterion referenced, assessing whether students are meeting the academic standards"	The system shall "employ a variety of assessment instruments" which "shall be criterion referenced, assessing whether students are meeting the academic standards"
"As much as is practicable...such instruments shall include consideration of work samples, projects and portfolios, and shall facilitate authentic and direct gauges of student performance"	"As much as practicable," such instruments shall "include consideration of work samples, projects, and portfolios, and shall facilitate authentic and direct gauges of student performance"
"Such instruments shall provide the means to compare student performance among the various school systems and communities in the commonwealth, and between students in other states and in other nations, especially those nations which compete with the commonwealth for employment and economic opportunities"	Instruments shall "provide the means to compare student performance among the various school systems and communities in the state, and between students in other states and in other nations, especially those nations which compete with the state for employment and economic opportunities"
"The board shall take all appropriate action to bring about and continue the commonwealth's participation in the assessment activities of the National Assessment of Educational Progress and in the development of standards and assessments by the New Standards Program"	"The board shall take all appropriate action to bring about and continue the state's participation in the assessment activities of the National Assessment of Educational Progress and in the development of standards and assessments by the New Standards Program"
"Comprehensive diagnostic assessment of individual students shall be conducted at least in the fourth, eighth and tenth grades"	"Comprehensive diagnostic assessment of individual students shall be conducted at least in the fourth, eighth and tenth or eleventh grades"
"Said diagnostic assessments shall identify academic achievement levels of all students in order to inform teachers, parents, administrators and the students themselves, as to individual academic performance"	"Said diagnostic assessments shall identify academic achievement levels of all students in order to inform teachers, parents, administrators, and the students themselves, as to individual academic performance"
"The assessment instruments shall be designed to avoid gender, cultural, ethnic or racial stereotypes and shall recognize sensitivity to different learning styles and impediments to learning"	The assessment shall "be designed to avoid gender, cultural, ethnic, or racial stereotypes" and shall "recognize sensitivity to different learning styles and impediments to learning"
"The system shall take into account on a nondiscriminatory basis the cultural and language diversity of students in the commonwealth and the particular circumstances of students with special needs"	The system shall "take into account, on a nondiscriminatory basis, the cultural and language diversity of students in the state and the particular circumstances of students with special needs"
"Said system shall comply with federal requirements for accommodating children with special needs"	The system shall "comply with federal requirements for accommodating children with special needs"
"All potential English proficient students from language groups in which English language learners programs...are offered... shall also be allowed opportunities for assessment of their performance in the language which best allows them to demonstrate educational achievement and mastery of academic standards and curriculum frameworks"	The system shall "allow all potential English-proficient students from language groups in which English language learners programs are offered opportunities for assessment of their performance in the language which best allows them to demonstrate educational achievement and mastery of academic standards and curriculum frameworks"
"The board shall develop procedures for updating, improving or refining the assessment system"	"The board shall develop procedures for updating, improving, or refining the assessment system"

SOURCE: MGL § XII-69-11; RI General Assembly, 2019-H.6084 SUB A, 2019-S 0865 SUB A

To enable this evaluation system to function, RIGL §16-97.1 requires the board to establish and maintain a data system and authorizes the commissioner to gather all the data that the board may require from individual schools and districts. It additionally dictates that each LEA maintain individual records on each student and employee.³⁷

The Education Accountability Act: District and School Plans

While the Education Accountability Act calls on the board to adopt an evaluation system for schools and districts, it requires schools and districts to submit at least three plans to RIDE: a three-year comprehensive district plan, an annual district action plan, and an annual school improvement plan. Table 12 lays out requirements regarding both the process of writing these plans and their contents. Table 12 also compares RIGL §16-97.1 to MGL §XII-69-1I and shows that they are essentially identical in their language about—and requirements for—district improvement, district action, and school improvement plans. As Table 12 moreover shows, these plans are modeled to build off one another; the district improvement plan sets a three-year vision for the district, the district action plan clarifies how, and with what resources, the district will work towards achieving that vision in the upcoming year, and the school improvement plan requires schools to establish school and student performance goals that are consistent with district policies.

³⁷ Ibid, 14-15.

Table 12
District Improvement, District Action, and School Improvement Plans in Massachusetts and Rhode Island

Plan	MA	RI
District Improvement Plan	<p>"Each district shall file with the commissioner once in each 3 year period a comprehensive, 3 year district improvement plan"</p> <p>"The plan shall, to the extent feasible, be designed to fulfill all planning requirements of state and federal education laws"</p> <p>The plan "shall include, but not be limited to: (a) an analysis of student and subgroup achievement gaps in core subjects; (b) identification of specific improvement objectives; (c) a description of the strategic initiatives the district will undertake to achieve its improvement objectives; and (d) performance benchmarks and processes for evaluating the effect of district improvement initiatives"</p> <p>"The plan shall describe the professional development activities that will support each district improvement initiative and the teacher induction and mentoring activities that will be undertaken to support successful implementation of the district's improvement efforts"</p>	<p>"Each district shall file with the commissioner once in each three (3) year period a comprehensive, three (3) year district improvement plan"</p> <p>The plan shall, "to the extent feasible, be designed to fulfill all planning requirements of state and federal education laws"</p> <p>The plan shall "include, but not be limited to: an analysis of student and subgroup achievement gaps in core subjects; identification of specific improvement objectives; a description of the strategic initiatives the district will undertake to achieve its improvement objectives; and performance benchmarks and processes for evaluating the effect of district improvement initiatives"</p> <p>The plan shall "describe the professional development activities that will support each district improvement initiative and the teacher induction and mentoring activities that will be undertaken to support successful implementation of the district's improvement efforts"</p>
District Action Plan	<p>"On an annual basis, not later than September 1 of each year, each district shall prepare and have available for state review an annual action plan"</p> <p>"The district annual action plan shall enumerate the specific activities, persons responsible, and timelines for action to be taken as part of the strategic initiatives set forth in the district's 3 year improvement plan, and shall identify the staff and financial resources allocated to support these initiatives"</p>	<p>"On an annual basis, not later than September 1 of each year, each district shall prepare and have available for state review an annual action plan"</p> <p>The plan shall "enumerate the specific activities, persons responsible, and timelines for action to be taken as part of the strategic initiatives set forth in the district's three (3) year improvement plan" and "identify the staff and financial resources allocated to support these activities"</p>
School Improvement Plan	<p>"Annually, the principal of each school, in consultation with the school council... shall adopt student performance goals for the schools consistent with the school performance goals established by the department of education... and, consistent with any educational policies established for the district shall assess the needs of the school in light of those goals and formulate a school plan to advance such goals and improve student performance"</p> <p>"The school's plan to support improved student performance shall include, but not be limited to, the same components required for district improvement plans and shall conform to department and district specifications to ensure that such school improvement plans meet state and federal law requirements"</p> <p>"Each school improvement plan shall be submitted to the superintendent for review and approval not later than July 1, of the year in which the plan is to be implemented according to a plan development and review schedule established by the district superintendent"</p>	<p>"Annually, the principal of each school shall in consultation with the school improvement team, adopt student performance goals for the schools consistent with the school performance goals established by the department of education" and "with any educational policies established for the district"; the principal of each school shall "assess the needs of the school in light of those goals" and "formulate a school plan to advance such goals and improve student performance"</p> <p>"The school's plan to support improved student performance shall include, but not be limited to, the same components required for the district improvement plan" and shall "conform to department and district specifications to ensure that such school improvement plans meet state and federal requirements"</p> <p>Each school's plan shall "be submitted to the superintendent who shall review and approve the plan after consultation with the school committee, not later than July 1 of the year in which the plan is to be implemented, according to a plan development and review schedule established by the district superintendent"</p>

SOURCE: MGL § XII-69-II; RI General Assembly, 2019-H 6084 SUB A, 2019-S 0865 SUB A

The Education Accountability Act attempts to “reduce paperwork and eliminate duplication” by stipulating that the district improvement, district action, and school improvement plans “shall replace any district and school plans previously required under general laws or regulation.” The bill further requires RIDE to “identify any additional reports or plans called for by any general law or regulation which can be incorporated into this single filing order.”³⁸

However, under RIGL §16-97.1 many LEAs will be required to submit a RICAS success plan. Table 13 details the elements that may be included in a RICAS success plan, which is required in each district where over 20.0 percent of students fail to achieve grade level expectations on the RICAS. As with Tables 11 and 12, Table 13 moreover compares elements of RIGL §16-97.1 with MGL §XII-69-1I and shows that the Education Accountability Act will bring Rhode Island’s system of education accountability closer in line with Massachusetts’ system.

Table 13 MCAS/RICAS Success Plan	
MA	RI
"Each school district in which more than 20 per cent of the students score below level two on the...MCAS, shall submit an MCAS success plan to the department [of elementary and secondary education]"	"Each school district in which more than twenty percent (20%) of the students do not meet grade level expectations of at least proficient or its equivalent on the [RICAS] shall submit a RICAS success plan to the department [of elementary and secondary education]"
"The plan shall describe the school district's strategies for helping each student to master the skills, competencies and knowledge required for the competency determination"	"The plan shall describe the school district's strategies for helping each student to master the skills, competencies, and knowledge required for the competency determination"
"The department shall determine the elements that shall be required to be included in such plan," which "may include, but are not limited to...(a) a plan to assess each student's strengths, weaknesses and needs; (b) a plan to use summer school, after school and other additional support to provide each child with the assistance needed; and (c) a plan for involving the parents of students"	The department shall "determine the elements that shall be required to be included in such a plan," which "may include, but are not limited to...a plan to assess each student's strengths, weaknesses and needs; a plan to use summer school, after school, and other additional support to provide each child with the assistance needed; and a plan for involving the parents of students"
"The department shall examine each district's plan and determine if it has a reasonable prospect of significantly reducing the school district's failure rates"	The department shall "examine each district's plan and determine if it has a reasonable prospect of significantly reducing the school district's failure rates"
"The department shall coordinate oversight of the MCAS success plans with existing audit and oversight functions and with the MCAS grant program"	The department shall "coordinate oversight of the RICAS success plans with existing education review and oversight functions and with the RICAS grant program"
"The MCAS success plan...and any other report or plan called for by the General Laws or regulation will be covered in the district improvement, district action, or school improvement plan if, "in the professional opinion of the commissioner, [it] would be most effectively presented as part of the coordinated district or school plan for improving student achievement"	The district improvement, district action, and school improvement plan "shall replace any district and school plans previously required under the general laws or regulation which, in the professional opinion of the commissioner, would be most effectively presented as part of the coordinated district or school plan for improving student achievement"

SOURCE: MGL § XII-69-1I; RI General Assembly, 2019-H 6084 SUB A, 2019-S 0865 SUB A

³⁸ Ibid, 16.

While Table 13 shows that the stipulations regarding RICAS and MCAS success plans are near identical, it is important to note that MGL explicitly state that the MCAS success plan may be “presented as part of” a district improvement, district action, or school improvement plan, if “in the professional opinion of the commissioner, [it] would be most effectively presented” in that form. RIGL §16-97.1 gives the same power to the commissioner, but does not reference the RICAS success plan, or any specific plan, which may be presented “as part of the coordinated district or school plan for improving student achievement.”³⁹

The Education Accountability Act: LEA Reporting Requirements

In addition to the plans detailed above, the Education Accountability Act requires each district to file an annual report with RIDE that provides specific demographic, funding, staffing, and policy information. As Table 14 shows, the content of these reports should mirror those produced in Massachusetts under MGL §XII-69-1I, which establishes the same reporting requirements.

MA	RI
"An outline of the curriculum and graduation requirements of the district"	"An outline of the curriculum and graduation requirements of the district"
"Pupil/teacher ratios and class size policy and practice"	"Pupil/teacher ratios and class size policy and practice"
"Teacher and administrator evaluation procedures"	"Teacher and administrator evaluation procedures"
"Statistics, policies, and procedures relative to truancy and dropouts"	"Statistics, policies, and procedures relative to truancy and dropouts"
"Statistics, policies, and procedures relative to expulsions and in-school and out-of-school suspensions"	"Statistics, policies, and procedures relative to expulsions and in-school and out-of-school suspensions"
"Percent of school-age children attending public schools"	"Percent of school-age children attending public schools"
"Racial composition of teaching and administrative staff"	"Racial composition of teaching and administrative staff"
"Enrollment and average daily attendance"	"Enrollment and average daily attendance"
"The annual budgets and expenditures for both the district and the individual schools in the district"	"The annual budgets and expenditures for both the district and the individual schools in the district"

NOTE: This table provides an overview of reporting requirements; it does not capture every requirement
 SOURCE: MGL § XII-69-1I; RI General Assembly, 2019-H 6084 SUB A, 2019-S 0865 SUB A

Under RIGL §16-97.1 and MGL §XII-69-1I, both states require that districts annually file a description of procedures and programs, including: art and music programs; technology education; programs for gifted and talented students; adult education programs; library and media facilities; condition of instruction materials; types and condition of computers and computer software; basic skills remediation programs; drug, tobacco, and alcohol abuse

³⁹ Ibid, 16.

programs; multi-cultural education training for students and teachers; global education; and nutrition and wellness programs.⁴⁰

When H. 6084 SUB A/S. 0865 SUB A takes effect, both states will also require districts to file reports with RIDE concerning special education and English Language Learner (ELL) programs. Table 15 lays out special education reporting requirements under MGL §XII-69-1I and RIGL §16-97.1, and shows that LEAs in both states must annually submit data on students in aggregate form, and disaggregated by factors such as time spent in regular education programs, race, and English proficiency. As shown in Table 15, the only difference between special education reporting requirements in Massachusetts and Rhode Island is that Massachusetts LEAs are obligated to disaggregate student data by religion and Rhode Island LEAs are not.⁴¹

MA	RI
"Each school district and charter school shall file an annual report for the current school year" that "shall include...the number of children receiving services...within each disability category"	Each school district and charter school shall file an annual report for the current school year that "shall include...the number of children receiving services within each disability category"
The report shall include "the number of children, by grade level, within each such disability category and the costs of services provided by each such category for such children receiving their education in a publicly operated day school program"	The report shall include "the number of children, by grade level, within each such disability category and the costs of services provided by each such category for such children receiving their education in a publicly operated day school program"
The report shall include "the number of children, by grade level, within each such disability category and the costs of services provided by each such category for such children receiving their education in a private day setting"	The report shall include "the number of children, by grade level, within each such disability category and the costs of services provided by each such category for such children receiving their education in a private residential setting"
The report shall include "the number of children who remain in the regular education program full time; the number of children who are removed from the regular classroom for up to 25 per cent of the day; the number of children who are removed from the regular classroom between 25 and 60 per cent of the day"	The report shall include ""the number of children who remain in the regular education program full time; the number of children who are removed from the regular classroom for up to twenty-five percent (25%) of the day; the number of children who are removed from the regular classroom between twenty-five percent (25%) and sixty percent (60%) of the day"
The report shall include "the number of children who are placed in substantially separate classrooms on a regular education school site"	The report shall include "the number of children who are placed in substantially separate classrooms on a regular education school site"
The report shall include "the number of children, ages three and four, who are educated in integrated and separate classrooms; and the assignment by sex, national origin, economic status, race and religion, of children by age level to special education classes and the distribution of children residing in the district by sex, national origin, economic status, race and religion of children by age level"	The report shall include "the number of children, ages three and four, who are educated in integrated and separate classrooms; and the assignment by sex, national origin, economic status, and race of children by age level to special education classes and the distribution of children residing in the district by sex, national origin, economic status, and race of children by age level"
The report shall include "the number of children, by grade level, receiving special education services who have limited English proficiency"	The report shall include "the number of children, by grade level, receiving special education services who have limited English proficiency"

SOURCE: MGL § XII-69-1I; RI General Assembly, 2019-H 6084 SUB A, 2019-S 0865 SUB A

⁴⁰ Ibid, 17; [MGL §XII-69-1I](#).

⁴¹ Ibid, 18-19; [MGL §XII-69-1I](#).

Table 16 compares district reporting requisites for ELL programs and limited English proficient students under RIGL §16-97.1 and MGL §XII-69-1I. Along with requisites for LEA plans, reports, and data filings, the ELL reporting requirements detailed in Table 16 show that the Ocean State’s Education Accountability Act borrows heavily from Bay State precedent.

MA	RI
"Each school district required to provide an [ELL] program...shall file...information with the department annually"	"Each district required to provide an [ELL] program shall file...information with the department annually"
That information shall include "the type of [ELL] programs provided"	That information shall include "the type of [ELL] programs provided"
That information shall include "with regard to limited English proficient students (i) the number enrolled in each type of [ELL] program; (ii) the number enrolled in English as a second language who are not enrolled in another [ELL] program; (iii) the results of basic skills, curriculum assessment, achievement and language proficiency testing, whether administered in English or in the native language; (iv) the absentee, suspension, expulsion, dropout and promotion rates; and (v) the number of years each limited English proficient student has been enrolled in an [ELL] program"	That information shall include "with regard to limited English proficient students: (i) the number enrolled in each type of [ELL] program; (ii) the number enrolled in English as a second language who are not enrolled in another [ELL] program; (iii) the results of basic skills, curriculum assessment, achievement, and language proficiency testing, whether administered in English or in the native language; (iv) the absentee, suspension, expulsion, dropout, and promotion rates; and (v) the number of years each limited English proficient student has been enrolled in an [ELL] program"
That information shall include "the number of students each year who have enrolled in institutions of higher education and were formerly enrolled in an [ELL] program"	That information shall include "the number of students each year who have enrolled in institutions of higher education and were formerly enrolled in an [ELL] program"
That information shall include "the academic progress in regular education of students who have completed an [ELL] program"	That information shall include "the academic progress in regular education of students who have completed an [ELL] program"
That information shall include "for each limited English proficient student receiving special education, the number of years in the school district prior to special education evaluation and the movement in special education programs by program placement"	That information shall include "for each limited English proficient student receiving special education, the number of years in the school district prior to special education evaluation and the movement in special education programs by program placement"
That information shall include "the number of limited English proficient students enrolled in programs of occupational or vocational education"	That information shall include "the number of limited English proficient students enrolled in programs of occupational or vocational education"
That information shall include "the name, national origin, native language, certificates held, language proficiency, grade levels and subjects taught by each teacher of an [ELL] program, bilingual aides or paraprofessionals, bilingual guidance or adjustment counselors and bilingual school psychologists"	That information shall include "the name, national origin, native language, certificates held, language proficiency, grade levels, and subjects taught by each teacher of an [ELL] program, bilingual aides or paraprofessionals, bilingual guidance or adjustment counselors, and bilingual school psychologists"
That information shall include "the per pupil expenditures for each full time equivalent student enrolled in an [ELL] program"	That information shall include "the per pupil expenditures for each full time equivalent student enrolled in an [ELL] program"
That information shall include "the sources and amounts of all funds expended on students enrolled in [ELL] programs, broken down by local, state and federal sources, and whether any such funds expended supplanted, rather than supplemented, the local school district obligation"	That information shall include "the sources and amounts of all funds expended on students enrolled in [ELL] programs, broken down by local, state and federal sources, and whether any such funds expended supplanted, rather than supplemented, the local school district obligation"
That information shall include "the participation of parents through parent advisory councils"	That information shall include "the participation of parents through parent advisory councils"
That information shall include "whether there were any complaints filed with any federal or state court or administrative agency, since the program's inception, concerning the compliance with federal or state minimum legal requirements; the disposition of such complaint and the monitoring and evaluation of any such agreement or court order relative to such complaint"	That information shall include "whether there were any complaints filed with any federal or state court or administrative agency, since the program's inception, concerning the compliance with federal or state minimum legal requirements, the disposition of such complaint, and the monitoring and evaluation of any such agreement or court order relative to such complaint"

*ELL refers to English language learners
SOURCE: MGL § XII-69-1I; RI General Assembly, 2019-H 6084 SUB A, 2019-S 0865 SUB A

The Education Accountability Act: Requirements for RIDE

Part of the Education Accountability Act, RIGL §16-97.1-2, lays out additional duties for RIDE that are related to LEA accountability. It borrows from MGL §II-15-55A, which established the Office of School and District Accountability in Massachusetts.

Table 17 compares the functions of Massachusetts' Office of School and District Accountability to the functions that RIDE is expected to perform under the Education Accountability Act. It shows that Massachusetts' Office of School and District Accountability is a part of the Massachusetts Department of Education and is charged with "acting as an auditing body" that objectively reviews "the results of educational measurements and tests conducted by or for the department." Specifically, the Office of School and District Accountability is obligated under MGL §II-15-55A to annually audit 40 school districts. Of which, 30 should be conducted in districts where students are underperforming, five should be conducted in districts where students achieve at high levels, and five should be randomly selected.⁴² In sum, Massachusetts has 406 school districts. Adding state, charter, virtual, and collaborative schools to that number, there are 597 LEAs in Massachusetts.⁴³ Thus, 6.7 percent of Massachusetts LEAs are audited by the Office of School and District Accountability each year. From these audits, "a report of best practices" is annually compiled and distributed to each district by the Office of School and District Accountability, which also must "produce a comprehensive report detailing its findings and observations."⁴⁴

While RIGL §16-97.1-2 does not obligate RIDE to establish an accountability office that performs school district audits, Table 17 highlights that it nevertheless uses language from MGL §II-15-55A, requiring RIDE to "use existing budgetary resources and existing personnel" to perform many of the same functions of the Office of School and District Accountability. Yet, RIDE is called on to "act as an education reviewing body," rather than an auditing body. While LEAs will be reviewed (rather than audited) in Rhode Island, both states require SEAs to assess "the results of education measurements and tests conducted by and for" the state. Table 17 moreover shows that RIGL §16-97.1-2 and MGL §II-15-55A detail a near-identical list of duties relative to audits/reviews, including onsite school inspections, the review of a district's MCAS/RICAS success plan, and the evaluation of the relative alignment of a district's "curriculum and professional development plans with the state curriculum and assessments." In further similarity to MGL §II-15-55A, RIDE is obligated under RIGL §16-97.1-2 to produce both "a report of best practices" from its five annual education reviews and "a comprehensive report detailing its findings and observations."⁴⁵

RIGL §16-97.1-2 requires RIDE to conduct educational reviews of five districts each year. Three of those reviews must focus on districts where students are underperforming, while one must be

⁴² [MGL §II-15-55A](#).

⁴³ Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, School and District Profiles, [Massachusetts](#).

⁴⁴ [MGL §II-15-55A](#).

⁴⁵ *Ibid*; [2019-H 6084 SUB A](#), [2019-S 0865 SUB A](#), 20.

conducted in a district where students achieve at high levels, and one should be randomly selected.⁴⁶ Rhode Island has 32 regular school districts, four regional school districts, and a total of 66 LEAs.⁴⁷ Thus, 7.6 percent of Rhode Island LEAs will be subject to an annual education review by RIDE, in comparison to the 6.7 percent of Massachusetts LEAs that are annually audited by the Office of School and District Accountability.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 20-21.

⁴⁷ RIDE, [RI School Districts](#).

Table 17
SEA Oversight and LEA Accountability in Massachusetts and Rhode Island*

MA	RI
"In order to support the commissioner, department and board in fulfilling their duties" regarding school and district accountability, "there shall be within the department an office of school and district accountability"	"In order to support the commissioner and the board of education...in fulfilling their duties, [RIDE] shall use existing budgetary resources and existing personnel in its implementation of improvement plans" regarding school and district accountability
"The office shall provide a mechanism to review and report on the efforts of schools, charter schools and school districts...to improve the academic achievement of their students and shall inform and assist the board and department in fulfilling their broader responsibilities to promote high levels of achievement in...the commonwealth"	RIDE shall "provide a mechanism to review and report on the efforts of schools, charter schools, and school districts...to improve the academic achievement of their students" and "inform and assist the board in fulfilling their broader responsibilities to promote high levels of achievement in...the state"
"The office shall be under the direction and supervision of 1 individual who shall be appointed by the commissioner; this individual shall also be responsible for the direction and supervision of the targeted assistance and intervention efforts of the department...[and] such assistance efforts as the commissioner deems necessary to correct deficiencies identified by the office and compliance with the accountability provisions of federal law; this individual shall ensure that the auditing and assistance functions of the department are aligned to promote collaboration and communication across the auditing and assistance functions"	RIDE shall "be, for the purposes of school and district accountability, under the direct supervision of one individual who shall be appointed by the commissioner" and "that individual shall be responsible for: (i) the direction and supervision of the targeted assistance and intervention efforts of [RIDE]... (ii) such assistance efforts as the commissioner deems necessary to correct deficiencies identified by [RIDE]; (iii) compliance with the accountability provisions of federal law; and (iv) ensuring that the education reviewing and assistance functions of [RIDE] are aligned to promote collaboration and communication across the education reviewing and assistance functions"
"The office shall ensure that school and district review teams include experienced practitioners in the field of education"	RIDE shall "ensure that school and district review teams include experienced practitioners in the field of education"
"The office shall act as an auditing body objectively reviewing the results of educational measurements and tests conducted by or for the department"; "The office shall perform not less than 40 school district audits annually, not less than 75 per cent of which shall be in districts whose students achieve at low levels either in absolute terms or relative to districts that educate similar student populations"; "the remainder of the audits shall be divided equally among districts whose students achieve at high levels relative to districts that educate similar student populations and randomly selected districts"	RIDE shall "act as an education reviewing body, objectively reviewing the results of educational measurement and tests conducted by or for [RIDE]"; RIDE shall "perform no fewer than five (5) school district education reviews annually, sixty percent (60%) of which shall be in districts whose students achieve at low levels either in absolute terms or relative to districts that educate similar student populations"; "the remainder of the education reviews shall be divided equally among districts whose students achieve at high levels relative to districts that educate similar student populations and randomly selected districts"
"The office shall ensure that no school or district is audited during the administration of any statewide assessments, and shall coordinate with other entities in the department to ensure that a school or district is not subject to multiple comprehensive audits or reviews...within a 9 month period unless the board specifically votes to do so"	RIDE shall "ensure that no school or district is reviewed during the administration of any statewide assessments" and "coordinate with other entities in the department to ensure that a school or district is not subject to multiple comprehensive reviews or reviews...within a nine (9) month period, unless the board specifically votes to do so"
"The office shall have the following duties relative to school district audits: (1) objectively review the accuracy of the school and district reports by conducting or contracting for periodic program and fiscal audits as necessary; (2) undertake inspections of schools, charter schools and school districts...to evaluate efforts to improve and support the quality of instruction and administration; (3) review the district's MCAS success plan...and evaluate the implementation of that plan; (4) review the district's implementation of any MCAS grants received to develop or enhance academic support services for students scoring in level 1 or 2; (5) evaluate the alignment of curriculum and professional development plans with the state curriculum and assessments; (6) review the progress of overall student achievement and; (7) evaluate student performance, school and district management, overall district governance and any other areas deemed necessary by the office"	RIDE shall "have the following duties relative to school district reviews: (A) objectively review the school and district reports; (B) undertake inspections of schools, charter schools, and school districts...to evaluate efforts to improve and support the quality of instruction and administration; (C) review the district's RICAS success plan...and evaluate the implementation of that plan; (D) review the district's implementation of any RICAS grants received to develop or enhance academic support services for students scoring below proficient or its equivalent; (E) evaluate the alignment of curriculum and professional development plans with the state curriculum and assessments; (F) review the progress of overall student achievement; (G) evaluate student performance, school and district management, overall district governance, and any other areas deemed necessary by [RIDE]; and (H) ensure such education reviews are conducted in accordance with standards established by the council of elementary and secondary education"
"Following the school district audit, the office shall produce a comprehensive report detailing its findings and observations which the commissioner shall present to the board along with any recommendations for necessary action," and "the commissioner shall issue recommendations to districts not requiring further action...relative to methods for improving any deficiencies identified by the office"	RIDE shall "following the school district's education review, produce a comprehensive report detailing its findings and observations, which the commissioner shall present to the council along with any recommendations for further action" and "the commissioner shall issue recommendations to districts not requiring further action relative to methods for improving any deficiencies identified by the department"
"The office shall annually compile a report of best practices from the list of audits conducted that year and distribute the...list to all school districts in the commonwealth"	RIDE shall "annually compile a report of best practices from the list of education reviews conducted that year and distribute the...list to all school districts in the state"
"Each school district...shall annually file with the office, on or before October 1, a copy of its current personnel contracts and collective bargaining agreements" and "the office shall ensure that any noncompliance with law, misfeasance or malfeasance shall be referred to the commissioner for appropriate action"	"Each school district...shall annually file with [RIDE], on or before October 1, a copy of its current personnel contracts and collective bargaining agreements" and RIDE "shall ensure that any noncompliance with law, misfeasance, or malfeasance shall be referred to the commissioner for appropriate action"
"The department shall transmit the office's findings, audit reports, recommendations and follow-up reports to the secretary of education, the board of elementary and secondary education, the attorney general and a local public library in the audited districts; the department shall report to the general court the results of its findings, audit reports, recommendations and follow-up reports and file such reports with the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, who shall forward the same to the senate president, the speaker of the house of representatives, the joint committee on education and the house and senate committees on ways and means"	RIDE "shall transmit its findings, education review reports, recommendations, and follow-up reports to the council on elementary and secondary education, the attorney general, and a local public library in the education reviewed districts" and RIDE shall additionally "appear annually before the health, education and welfare committee of the house of representatives and before the senate education committee, to report on these findings, reviews, recommendations, and other reports"

* SEA refers to state education agency; LEA refers to local education agency
SOURCE: MCL § II-15-55A; RI General Assembly, 2019-H. 6084 SUB A, 2019-S. 0865 SUB A

In sum, H. 6084 SUB A/S. 0865 SUB A seeks to alter education governance in Rhode Island in two ways. First, it should establish a greater degree of school-based management. Second, it should provide for greater school and district accountability by altering reporting and planning requirements and compelling RIDE to function as an educational review body. In terms of both changes, Rhode Island’s system of education governance should more closely resemble Massachusetts’ system when H. 6084 SUB A/S. 0865 SUB A goes into effect in January 2020.

Table 18 lays out a timeline for actions required by H. 6084 SUB A/S. 0865 SUB A, showing how the legislation should be implemented over a nineteen-month period. It is worth noting, however, that several of the filing requisites detailed in this legislation do not have specific due dates in law but may acquire deadlines through regulation.

Date	Action
January 1, 2020	H. 6084 SUB A/S. 0865 SUB A takes effect on this date
July 1, 2020	On or before this date (and annually thereafter), each school principal must submit a school improvement plan to their superintendent for review
September 1, 2020	On or before this date (and annually thereafter), each school district must compile a district action plan and make it available to RIDE
October 1, 2020	On or before this date (and annually thereafter), each school district and charter school must file a copy of its current personnel contracts and collective bargaining agreements with RIDE
November 1, 2020	On or before this date (and annually thereafter), each school district and charter school is required to file a report which provides information on special education programs and the students in them with RIDE
August 1, 2021	The powers and duties of principals specified in RIGL §16-2-11.1 must be implemented by this date

SOURCE: RI General Assembly, 2019-H 6084 SUB A, 2019-S 0865 SUB A

House Bill 6085 Substitute A as Amended/Senate Bill 0869 Substitute A: Principal Certification

House Bill 6085 Substitute A as Amended and Senate Bill 0869 Substitute A (hereafter referred to as H. 6085 SUB A/S. 0869 SUB B) are companion bills that received bipartisan support in the General Assembly and were signed into law on July 8, 2019.⁴⁸

H. 6085 SUB A/S. 0869 SUB B amends Section 1, Chapter §16-97 of RIGL and establishes a means of acquiring “fast-track principal certification.”⁴⁹ This legislation complements H. 6084 SUB A/S. 0865 SUB A; it provides a new certification pathway for aspiring principals and thus attempts to prepare applicants to operate effectively in a school-based management structure. In

⁴⁸ “[Education Reform Bills That Realign Curriculum and Fast-Track Principals Signed Into Law](#)”; State of Rhode Island General Assembly, Senate Floor Votes, [2019-H 6085 SUB Aaa](#), June 26, 2019, [2019-S 0869 SUB A](#), June 13, 2019; House of Representatives Floor Votes, [2019-S 0869 SUB A](#), June 26, 2019, [2019-H 6085 SUB Aaa](#), June 28, 2019.

⁴⁹ State of Rhode Island General Assembly, [2019-H 6085 SUB Aaa](#), [2019-S 0869 SUB A](#).

other words, H. 6085 SUB Aaa/S. 0869 SUB B seeks to prepare principals to fulfill their new responsibilities as “the education administrators and managers of their schools.”⁵⁰

Unlike the previous two bills examined in this report, H. 6085 SUB Aaa/S. 0869 SUB B does not have an equivalent in Massachusetts law. Rather, the process of administrator certification in the Bay State is determined primarily through regulation.⁵¹ Similarly, the principal certification process in Rhode Island has historically been determined through regulation.⁵²

Table 19 lays out administrator certification regulations in Massachusetts and compares them to the regulations that are already in place in Rhode Island, as well as those established under H. 6085 SUB Aaa/S. 0869 SUB B. It should be noted that the precise composition of Rhode Island’s fast-track principal certification program is not made entirely clear by H. 6085 SUB Aaa/S. 0869 SUB B; the law obligates RIDE to establish the program but also enables that department to establish some of its components. For instance, H. 6085 SUB Aaa/S. 0869 SUB B states that the program must include courses in school finance, school law, and program evaluation, but it gives RIDE the option to require applicants to complete courses in other subjects.

Regardless, Table 19 reveals that the fast-track principal certification program required by H. 6085 SUB Aaa/S. 0869 SUB B does not lessen standards for building administrator certification in Rhode Island but arguably strengthens them. For example, current regulations require applicants to participate in a 300-hour internship, while H. 6085 SUB Aaa/S. 0869 SUB B requires applicants to participate in a year-long internship. Table 19 also shows that Rhode Island’s requirements for principal certification are similar, but hardly identical, to Massachusetts’ principal certification requirements.

⁵⁰ [2019-H 6084 SUB A](#), [2019-S 0865 SUB A](#).

⁵¹ For Massachusetts legislation on principal certification, see: MGL § [XII-71-38G](#). For regulations, see: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Education Laws and Regulations, [603 CMR 7.00](#): Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval Regulations; Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, “[Overview of Administrator Routes to Initial Licensure 60 CMR 7.00 & Guidelines for the Administrative Apprenticeship/Internship and Panel Review Routes](#),” January 2016.

⁵² See: RIGL § [16-11.1](#), [16-11.4-1](#), [15-11.4-2](#), [16-11.4-3](#), [16-11.4-4](#); Rhode Island Board of Education, Regulations, [200-RICR-20-20-1](#); RIDE, [Requirements for Full Certification – Administrator](#); RIDE, [Required Certification Tests](#).

**Table 19
School Principal Certification in Rhode Island and Massachusetts***

	Rhode Island		Massachusetts
	Principal Certification	Fast-Track Principal Certification	
Application Requirements	Completion of at least three years of professional PreK-12 experience; possession of an advanced degree from a regionally accredited institution; completion of approved program in certification area	Completion of at least ten full years of employment as a teacher consistently evaluated as "effective" or "highly effective"; completion of at least a Master's degree; a recommendation from the superintendent(s) in the district where the candidate is/was employed; a consistent record of leadership within an LEA (may be demonstrated through service as a facilitator of professional development, a dean, a district coach, a department chair, or other leadership position)	Completion of at least three full years of employment in an executive management/ leadership role or in a supervisory, teaching, or administrative role in a public school, private school, higher education, or other educational setting accepted by the Department of Education
Testing Requirements for Licensure	Passing score on the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (ETS assessment)	Passing score on the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (ETS assessment)	Passing score on the MTEL in Communication and Literacy Skills
Program Requirements for Initial Licensure	N/A	Complete courses in school finance, school law, and program evaluation (including data analysis); participation in a year-long internship shadowing a principal in the applicant's district of employment; leading a district or school-wide initiative	Demonstration of successful application of the Professional Standards for Administrative Leadership through completion of a Performance Assessment for Initial License (PAL) and one of the following: (a) an approved post-baccalaureate program of study including a supervised practicum/practicum equivalent (500 hours) in the principal/assistant principal role; (b) an administrative apprenticeship/internship (500 hours) in the principal/assistant principal role with a trained mentor, using Department guidelines; and (c) a panel review (only candidates who have completed a post-baccalaureate program in management/ administration or three full years of employment in an executive management/leadership, supervisory, or administrative role are eligible for this option); possession of a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Endorsement
Requirements for Full Licensure	Demonstration of professional competencies of the Rhode Island Standards for Educational Leadership (RISEL); demonstration of the content and pedagogical competencies as prescribed by the appropriate RIDE-approved national professional associations; internship of at least 300 hours	Completion of a RIDE-approved leadership development program to build leadership skills that support teaching and learning (must occur within the first certification renewal cycle)	Completion of a one-year induction program with a trained mentor; at least three full years of employment under the initial administrator license

* It is also possible to obtain principal certification in Massachusetts and Rhode Island through reciprocity with other states

SOURCE: 2019-H 6085 SUB Aaa, 2019-S 0869 SUB A; Massachusetts Regulations, 603 CMR 7.00; RIDE, "Requirements for Full Certification – Administrator"; Rhode Island Regulations, 200-RICR-20-1

Education Reform Legislation Not Adopted

Four of the seven sets of companion bills that were presented by Rhode Island legislators as part of a comprehensive education reform package in their May 2019 press conference were not passed into law.⁵³ Collectively, this legislation would have brought changes to RIDE, as well as the state’s system of teacher certification, evaluation, and training. The content and purpose of each set of bills is summarized below.

House Bill 6111 and Senate Bill 0864 Substitute A: RIDE and Instruction Support

House Bill 6111 and Senate Bill 0864 Substitute A (hereafter referred to as H. 6111 and S. 0864 SUB A) would have established RIGL §16-22-30, “Instruction support.” They would have required RIDE to assist LEAs in improving student performance through the analysis of budget, demographic, school culture, and assessment data. Though H. 6111 and S. 0864 SUB A aim to achieve the same goals, they are not true companions; they contain differences in terms of what supports RIDE would be obligated to provide LEAs. Additionally, H. 6111 would have required RIDE and LEAs to work collaboratively to identify individuals in leadership positions who would support curricular revisions, while S. 0864 SUB A would not.⁵⁴

House Bill 6098/ Senate Bill 0866 Substitute A: Testing Requirements for Teacher Certification

House Bill 6098 and Senate Bill 0866 Substitute A (hereafter referred to as H. 6098 and S. 0866 SUB A) would have established RIGL §16-11-9, “Testing requirements for new teachers.” These bills would have revised testing, academic, and performance requirements for the initial certification of teachers from July 1, 2021 forward. As with the legislation above, H. 6098 and S. 0866 SUB A have similar aims but are not replicas; H. 6098 includes requirements that S. 0866 SUB A does not. Specifically, under H. 6098, Rhode Island’s teacher certification test would have been based on the Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure (MTEL) and educators would be required to be “of sound moral character,” while the same would not have been true under S. 0866 SUB A. Moreover, S. 0866 SUB A stipulates that teachers seeking certification must take a standardized test, but that failing the test alone cannot disqualify a teacher from certification. H. 6098 includes no such caveat.⁵⁵

House Bill 6099 and Senate Bill 0868 Substitute A: Teacher and Administrator Evaluation

House Bill 6099 and Senate Bill 0868 Substitute A (hereafter referred to as H. 6099 and S. 0868 SUB A) would have established RIGL §16-11-19, “Evaluation requirements.” These bills would have required RIDE to ensure that the state’s teacher and administrator evaluation system is aligned with state standards. Like the bills discussed above, H. 6099 and S. 0868 SUB A are not quite companion bills. H. 6099 would have required the implementation of a new evaluation

⁵³ [General Assembly Leaders Unveil Package of Comprehensive Education Reform Legislation.](#)”

⁵⁴ State of Rhode Island General Assembly, [2019-H 6111](#), [2019-S 0864 SUB A](#).

⁵⁵ State of Rhode Island General Assembly, [2019-H 6098](#), [2019-S 0866 SUB A](#).

system, while S. 0868 SUB A would have only obligated this reform if RIDE first determined that the current system is not aligned with state standards. Additionally, H. 6099 does not include reporting requirements, while S. 0868 SUB A would have obligated RIDE to submit regular reports to the governor, Senate President, and Speaker of the House.⁵⁶

House Bill 6100/Senate Bill 0867 Substitute A: Specialty Skill Teacher Certification

House Bill 6100 and Senate Bill 0867 Substitute A (hereafter referred to as H. 6100 and S. 0867 SUB A) would have established RIGL §6-11-9, “Teacher certification for specialty skills.” Though these bills lay out slightly different protocol, both seek to ease schools’ ability to staff hard-to-fill and in-demand teacher positions. For RIDE to grant provisional licenses, these bills would have required that candidates hold a bachelor’s degree and that LEAs certify to the need for hiring a provisional educator. However, S. 0867 SUB A explicitly includes career and technical education (CTE) instructors as potential candidates for provisional licensure, while H. 6100 does not. And, while H. 6100 includes a provision that candidates be of “sound moral character,” S. 0867 SUB A does not.⁵⁷

Fiscal Year 2020 Budget – Education Additions

To support education reform legislation, RIDE received funding for four new full-time equivalent (FTE) positions in Rhode Island’s FY 2020 budget. These positions include a school improvement position, a school leadership position, a literacy/dyslexia specialist, and a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) specialist.⁵⁸ Additionally included in the FY 2020 budget is funding for three new education initiatives: curriculum adoption promotion, principal/leadership development, and literacy and dyslexia support.

Three of RIDE’s four new FTE positions are linked to the enacted legislation detailed in this report. For \$120,000 in FY 2020, a school improvement position will be created in support of the school-management and accountability provisions of H. 6084 SUB B/S. 0865 SUB A. In support of H. 6085 SUB Aaa/S. 0869 SUB B, fast-track principal certification, the FY 2020 budget allots \$150,000 to create a school leadership position. Finally, \$120,000 is budgeted for a STEM curriculum specialist who is intended to help realize H. 5008 SUB B/S. 0863 SUB B by supporting the implementation of curriculum frameworks, and curriculum and materials.⁵⁹

Of the three new education initiatives to receive funding for FY 2020, two support legislation in the education package detailed in this report. \$200,000 is budgeted for FY 2020 to support the implementation of curriculum frameworks under H. 5008 SUB B/S. 0863 SUB B, while

⁵⁶ State of Rhode Island General Assembly, [2019-H 6099](#), [2019-S 0868 SUB A](#).

⁵⁷ State of Rhode Island General Assembly, [2019-H 6100](#), [2019-S 0867 SUB A](#).

⁵⁸ FY 2020 began in July 2019 and will end in June 2020.

⁵⁹ State of Rhode Island House Fiscal Advisory Staff, [Budget as Enacted, FY 2020: Agency Analyses](#), 249-266.

\$500,000 is dedicated to aid in the implementation of a fast-track principal certification program.⁶⁰

In addition, Rhode Island’s FY 2020 budget includes additional funds for RIDE to support House Bill 5887 Substitute B and Senate Bill 1036, companion bills that address literacy and dyslexia. This legislation requires:

- Teachers to be proficient in scientific reading instruction;
- The creation of a learning laboratory to assist in and promote training for parents, caregivers, guardians, and teachers regarding the recognition and intervention of dyslexia in students; and
- The formation of a commission to study the feasibility of creating schools dedicated to teaching students with dyslexia and developing methods to improve in the identification and intervention of dyslexia.⁶¹

To support this legislation in FY 2020, RIDE was allotted \$250,000 for a new literacy specialist FTE position and initiatives that support curriculum for literacy and students with dyslexia.⁶²

The education additions to Rhode Island’s FY 2020 budget are detailed below, in Table 20.

Reason For Funding	Funding	FTE* Allotted
School Improvement Position	\$120,000	1
School Leadership Position	\$150,000	1
STEM Curriculum Position	\$120,000	1
Literacy/Dyslexia Position	\$250,000**	1
Curriculum Adoption Promotion	\$200,000	N/A
Principal/Leadership Development	\$500,000	N/A
Total	\$1,090,000	4

*FTE refers to full-time equivalent
 **Funds allotted are for supporting curriculum for literacy, students with dyslexia, and hiring a literacy specialist
 SOURCE: House Fiscal Advisory Staff, Budget as Enacted, FY 2020

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ State of Rhode Island General Assembly, [2019-H 5887 SUB B](#), [2019-S 1036](#).

⁶² [Budget as Enacted, FY 2020: Agency Analyses](#), 249-266.

Appendix

Appendix Table 1
Implementation Timeline: Education Reform Legislation

Date	Action
July 8, 2019	H. 6085 SUB A/S. 0869 SUB A (principal certification bill) takes effect
July 9, 2019	H. 5008 SUB B/S. 0863 SUB B (curriculum and instruction bill) takes effect
December 31, 2019	On or before this date, the commissioner is required to develop academic standards for mathematics, ELA, science and technology, history and social studies, world languages, and the arts
January 1, 2020	H. 6084 SUB A/S. 0865 SUB A (school-based management and accountability bill) takes effect
July 1, 2020	On or before this date (and annually thereafter), each school principal must submit a school improvement plan to their superintendent for review
September 1, 2020	On or before this date (and annually thereafter), each school district must compile a district action plan and make it available to RIDE
October 1, 2020	On or before this date (and annually thereafter), each school district and charter school must file a copy of its current personnel contracts and collective bargaining agreements with RIDE
November 1, 2020	On or before this date (and annually thereafter), each school district and charter school is required to file a report which provides information on special education programs and the students in them with RIDE
December 1, 2020	On or before this date (and annually thereafter), the commissioner is required to report to the governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House about the development, revision, and/or review of academic standards, curriculum frameworks, and high-quality curriculum and materials
January 1, 2021	On or before this date, the commissioner must identify at least five examples of high-quality curriculum and materials for mathematics and ELA
August 1, 2021	The powers and duties of principals specified in RIGL § 16-2-11.1 must be implemented by this date
September 1, 2021	On or before this date, the commissioner is required to develop curriculum frameworks for mathematics, ELA, science and technology, history and social studies, world languages, and the arts
	On or before this date, the council is required to establish procedures for updating, improving, or revising academic standards, curriculum frameworks, and high quality curriculum and materials
June 30, 2023	On or before this date, LEAs (with some exceptions) are required to select one of five examples of high-quality curriculum and materials for mathematics and ELA
January 1, 2024	On or before this date, the commissioner must identify five examples of high-quality curriculum and materials for science and technology
June 30, 2025	On or before this date, LEAs are required to select one of five examples of high-quality curriculum and materials for science and technology
2025	During this year, academic standards, curriculum frameworks, and high-quality curriculum and materials must be reviewed and, if needed, updated, improved, or revised; from 2025 on, reviews must occur once every four years (in 2029, 2033, etc.)

SOURCE: RI General Assembly, 20019-H 5008 SUB B, 2019-S 0863 SUB B, 2019-H 6084 SUB A, 2019-S 0865 SUB A, 2019-H 6085 SUB Aaa, 2019-S 0869 SUB A

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