

2014 LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

EDUCATION

- Lawmakers put a three-year moratorium on using standardized assessments to determine a student's ability to graduate, beginning with this current school year when students were assessed using the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP). This would affect seniors graduating prior to 2017.
- The General Assembly approved bills stating that any teacher who is, upon an initial evaluation, rated "highly effective" or given a number "4" mark or the equivalent would only need to be evaluated once every three years. A teacher rated as "effective" or given a number "3" mark would need to be evaluated only every two years. Any teacher who scores a lesser rating could be subject to annual evaluations.
- The General Assembly approved legislation to provide full education aid funding for children enrolled in full-day kindergarten, beginning with the 2016-17 school year.
- Legislators moved the layoff notification date for teachers from March 1 to June 1 in order to avert situations where school districts send layoff notices to every teacher in February to provide maximum flexibility in the face of budget uncertainties ahead.
- The Assembly passed a bill requiring the Board of Education to consider several factors in determining which high school equivalency tests would be recognized by the state, including other states' recognition of the tests in question, the portability of the exam, and other necessary criteria for determining the alignment of the test's standards with those of Rhode Island public schools. Currently, the only accepted exam is the General Education Development (GED) test, which can be costly to students from low-income families. It requires the Board of Education to offer a hardship waiver for low-income students.
- Lawmakers approved the creation of the 1696 Historical Commission, which will develop a comprehensive African-American history curriculum for Rhode Island public schools from kindergarten through grade 12. That curricula could potentially include a history of people of African heritage, including the history of African peoples before the political conflicts that led to the development of slavery, the passage to America and Rhode Island, the enslavement experience in America and Rhode Island, abolition and the contributions of Africans to America and Rhode Island.