



RHODE
ISLAND

House Commission on Youth in State Care *Chair, Rep. Julie Casimiro*

Rhode Island Department of Education
15 September 2025

RIDE's Mission and Vision

- The *mission* of the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) is threefold:
 1. To lead and to support districts, schools, and communities through a unified, strategic direction for education in the state.
 2. To use policy, advocacy, and governance structures to create an environment that advances opportunities for all students.
 3. To maintain collaboration and efficiency in the department that enables innovation, agility, and continuous learning.

- The *vision* of the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) is:

RIDE creates conditions for every Rhode Island student to think critically and collaboratively, and act as a creative, self-motivated, culturally and globally competent learner. Rhode Island students are prepared to lead fulfilling and productive lives, succeed in academic and employment settings, and contribute meaningfully to society.



Focus Areas for School Year 2025-2026

Our focus is on improving outcomes for Rhode Island students; in particular, these four key areas are part of how we are moving the needle.



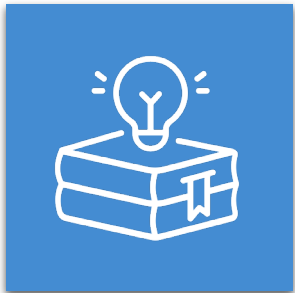
Attendance

Significantly reduce chronic absenteeism. Create the conditions that enable students to be in school and learning.



Postsecondary Success

Students are graduating prepared to succeed after K-12 in college and/or careers



High-Quality Teaching & Learning

Deep focus on high quality teaching and learning to improve outcomes in ELA and Math, across all grade levels



Equity Gaps

For each of these outcomes, focus on closing historic equity gaps, with a focus on MLL and DAS student populations

Defining “Significantly Off-Track” Students

Within the guidance, RIDE has provided LEAs a two-step operating definition of students who are deemed to be “significantly off-track”, focused first on attendance and then on academic performance.

Attendance	Academic Performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- On-track to miss at least ten percent of the school year- Typically, 18 days of a 180 day school year is the threshold for students to be considered chronically absent- For example, a student who missed 3 out of the first 45 days of school would be considered “off-track”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Performed below grade-level expectations in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics based on prior year state assessments, starting with 4th grade students based on 3rd grade state assessment (i.e. <i>performed at a Level 1 “Did Not Meet Expectations” on both RICAS ELA and Math</i>)



Communicating “Promotion in Doubt” Status and Supports

As part of an LEA’s retention policies, LEAs must communicate clearly, early, and often, starting with the end of the first academic quarter and at least on a quarterly basis afterwards.

COMMUNICATION

- Clear. Early. Often.
- Notify and document communication, in home language
- Multiple modalities – written, verbal, letter, phone, email
- Communication within two weeks of identification
- Parents and guardians deserve clear and early signals about readiness for grade level coursework and promotion
- Templates to support communication
 - Promotion in Doubt letters

SUPPORT

- Acting early is key to supporting student success
- Documented supports in Individualized Learning Plan
- Aligned to LEA’s Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)
- Supports and interventions may include but not be limited to: targeted academic assistance, access to out-of-school time programs, and attendance improvement plans



Supporting LEAs in Making Retention Decisions

LEA retention policies should include the following considerations when reviewing and making student retention decisions based upon attendance and academic performance. Retaining a student should always be a last resort.

- **Focus on Elementary and Middle Grades**
 - Intervening early is key
 - Particular focus on moments of critical academic transition: 4th prior to 5th, 7th prior to 8th
- **Align with a Multi-Tiered System of Supports Framework**
 - Retention policy should outline promotion and retention practices in alignment
 - Family navigator, parent liaison, research-based interventions, high dosage tutoring, mental health, Learn 365 programming, community partners
- **Review is Data-Driven, Determination is Team-Based**
 - Team-based, data-driven review to inform decisions
 - Review should minimally include attendance, local student performance data, state assessment data, and any evidence for good-cause exemptions
 - Must include consultation with parents or guardians
- **Intensive Supports for Retained Students**
 - LEA must create an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP)
 - Intensive student-focused supports for academic and attendance needs; goal is to be back on-track



Reminding LEAs of Special Considerations

There are a variety of situations which require special consideration, among them, understanding the needs of youth in care, attending to data collection and quality, and ensuring families understand an appeals process.

- **Special Considerations for Youth in Care**
 - Greater scrutiny and intentionality needed
 - Attendance is even more important for these students
 - May be facing systemic barriers or significant disruptions
 - LEAs must collaborate with child welfare representatives, educational advocates, and caregivers to ensure all supports explored
 - Is retention in the student's long-term best interest?
- **Data Collection and Quality**
 - RIDE's Retention Data Collection
 - LEAs must ensure the usage of appropriate attendance and absence codes to record data
- **Appeals Process**
 1. Start with School Principal
 2. Meet with Superintendent
 3. Present to the School Committee
 4. Appeal to the Commissioner



Final Thoughts

Some of our students simply may need more: more support, more time, more practice, more attention, more adults who care. Needing more is not a bad thing, and luckily, it is something that we, as responsible adults, can and should provide.

- This guidance is about **supporting students** to achieve success and develop lifelong habits
- This guidance is not about punishing students; it is about setting students up for success by communicating early
- This guidance outlines a stepwise process leading to an outcome–
 - **Define** “significantly off-track” students
 - **Communicate** students’ status to parents/guardians
 - **Review** attendance and academic data as a team
 - **Consider** any special circumstances or considerations
 - **Decide** the path for the long-term best interest of student

