



## **Information Works!**

- ▶ **The Commissioner's Address**
- ▶ **Introduction**
- ▶ **A Word About the Data**
- ▶ **Field 1: Assessment Elements**
- ▶ **Field 2: Statistically Generated Performance Range/Actual Performance**
- ▶ **Field 3: Demographic Profile**
- ▶ **Field 4: Performance by Characteristics**
- ▶ **Field 5: School Highlights**
- ▶ **Field 6: Defining Features of High Performing Schools**
- ▶ **Field 7: Various School Indicators**
- ▶ **Field 8: School Expenditures**
- ▶ **Field 8: District Expenditures Per Pupil**
- ▶ **Field 8: K-12 Expenditures for All Students**
- ▶ **Field 8: Instructional Expenditures Per Pupil**
- ▶ **Field 9: Longitudinal Achievement Data and Adequate Yearly Progress**
- ▶ **Field 10: Summative Statement**
- ▶ **Wish List for the Future**

# **Information**

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# **Works!**

**Measuring  
Rhode Island  
Schools  
for Change  
1998**



Spring 1998

Dear Fellow Rhode Islanders:

We are very pleased to present you with *Information Works*, the first product of Rhode Island's new public education information initiative. This work is a result of new partnerships building information technologies designed to facilitate the labors of those who have been working hard to strengthen our schools for our children and our state's future. We are beholden to the many people who made this considerable undertaking possible.

In 1996, Governor Almond convened a group of 60 Rhode Islanders to develop a plan to improve the state's public schools. That plan, Rhode Island's *Comprehensive Education Strategy*, calls for setting high academic standards for all students and for regular state testing to measure how well students are meeting these high standards. The *Strategy* also calls for the public reporting of those test results to be done in a way that helps parents, schools and the public see where students are making progress, and where they need additional help to meet achievement goals.

The *Strategy* was adopted by the Board of Regents, endorsed by Governor Lincoln Almond and built into law through Article 31 of the 1998 budget. This historic and laudable public policy agreement provided the drive and authority to accelerate our state's school improvement initiative.

The first task has been to create an information system that can serve both the public's demand for accountability and schools' need to inform their decision-making. Therefore, the Rhode Island Department of Education entered into a unique partnership with the University of Rhode Island's National Center on Public Education (NCPE). NCPE brings cutting edge technology and years of nationally recognized research experience to the job of building a system capable of presenting valuable, systematic information about schools, to schools and a wider public, on a regular and on-going basis.

*Information Works* is only the first product of this information engine. Over time, we will grow increasingly sophisticated about gathering, analyzing and reporting the complicated web of facts that describes a school's health and well being.

We strongly urge that you use the enclosed information to get involved in the project of making our schools the finest in the nation. The Department of Education welcomes and appreciates your responses.

Sincerely,



Peter McWalters  
Commissioner

## Table of Contents

### I. User's Guide

### II. School and District Reports

*Arranged Alphabetically*

#### Barrington

Barrington High School  
Barrington Middle School  
Hampden Meadows School  
Nayatt School  
Primrose Hill School  
Sowams Elementary School

#### Burrillville

Austin T. Levy School  
Burrillville High School  
Burrillville Middle School  
Steere Farm Elementary School  
William L. Callahan School

#### Central Falls

Alan Shawn Feinstein School  
Capt. G. Harold Hunt School  
Central Falls Jr - Sr High School  
Dr. Earl F. Calcutt Middle School  
Ella Risk School  
Margaret I. Robertson School  
Veterans Memorial Elementary School

#### Coventry

Blackrock School  
Coventry High School  
Coventry Middle School  
Hopkins Hill School  
Oak Haven School  
Tiogue School  
Washington Oak School  
Western Coventry School

#### Cranston

Arlington School  
Chester W. Barrows School  
Cranston High School East  
Cranston High School West  
Daniel D. Waterman School  
Eden Park School  
Edgewood Highland School  
Edward S. Rhodes School  
Garden City School

George J. Peters School  
Gladstone Street School  
Glen Hills School  
Hope Highlands Elementary School  
Hugh B. Bain Middle School  
John W. Horton School  
Norwood Avenue School  
Oak Lawn School  
Park View Middle School  
Stadium School  
Stone Hill School  
Western Hills Middle School  
William R. Dutemple School  
Woodridge School

#### Cumberland

Ashton School  
B.F. Norton Elementary School  
Community School  
Cumberland High School  
Cumberland Hill Annex  
Cumberland Hill School  
Cumberland Middle School  
Garvin Memorial School  
North Cumberland Middle School

#### East Greenwich

Archie R. Cole Junior High School  
East Greenwich High School  
Frenchtown School  
George Hanaford School  
James H. Eldredge Elementary School  
Meadowbrook Farms School

#### East Providence

Agnes B. Hennessey School  
Alice M. Waddington School  
East Providence High School  
Edward R. Martin Junior High School  
Emma G. Whiteknact School  
Grove Avenue School  
James R. D. Oldham School  
Kent Heights School  
Meadowcrest School  
Myron J. Francis Elementary School  
Orlo Avenue School  
Riverside Junior High School  
Silver Spring School  
Thompson School  
W. R. Watters School

#### Foster

Captain Isaac Paine School

#### Glocester

Fogarty Memorial School  
West Glocester Elementary School

#### Jamestown

Jamestown School-Lawn  
Jamestown School-Melrose

#### Johnston

Brown Avenue School  
George C. Calef School  
Graniteville School  
Johnston Senior High School  
Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School  
Sarah Dyer Barnes School  
Thornton School  
Winsor Hill School

#### Lincoln

Fairlawn Elementary School  
Lincoln Central Elementary School  
Lincoln Middle School  
Lincoln Senior High School  
Lonsdale Elementary School  
Northern Lincoln Elementary School  
Saylesville Elementary School  
St. James School  
St. Patrick's School

#### Little Compton

Wilbur & McMahan Schools

#### Middletown

Aquidneck School  
Forest Avenue School  
John F. Kennedy School  
Joseph H. Gaudet School  
Linden School  
Middletown High School

#### Narragansett

Narragansett Elementary School  
Narragansett High School  
Narragansett Pier School

#### Newport

Carey School  
Coggeshall School  
Cranston - Calvert School  
Dr. M. H. Sullivan School

Frank E. Thompson Middle School  
George H. Triplett School  
Rogers High School  
Sheffield School  
William J. Underwood School

#### New Shoreham

Block Island School

#### North Kingstown

Davisville Elementary School  
Davisville Middle School  
Fishing Cove School  
Forest Park School  
Hamilton Elementary School  
North Kingstown Senior High School  
Quidnessett Elementary School  
Stony Lane School  
Wickford Elementary School  
Wickford Middle School

#### North Providence

Birchwood School  
Centredale School  
Dr. Edward A. Ricci School  
Dr. Joseph A. Whelan Elementary School  
Greystone School  
James L. McGuire School  
Marieville Elementary School  
North Providence High School  
Stephen Olney School

#### North Smithfield

Dr. Harry L. Halliwell Memorial School  
North Smithfield Elementary School  
North Smithfield Jr - Sr High School

#### Pawtucket

Agnes E. Little School  
Curvin-McCabe School  
Elizabeth Baldwin School  
Fallon Memorial School  
Flora S. Curtis Memorial School  
Francis J. Varieur School  
Goff Junior High School  
Henry J. Winters School  
Joseph Jenks Junior High School  
M. Virginia Cunningham School

Nathanael Greene School  
 Potter-Burns School  
 Samuel Slater Junior High School  
 Shea Senior High School  
 William E. Tolman Senior High School

**Portsmouth**

Elmhurst School  
 Howard Hathaway School  
 Melville Elementary School  
 Portsmouth High School  
 Portsmouth Middle School  
 Prudence Island School

**Providence**

Alternate Learning Project  
 Asa Messer Annex  
 Asa Messer School  
 Birch Vocational Center  
 Broad Street School  
 Camden Avenue School  
 Carl G. Lauro Memorial School  
 Central High School  
 Classical High School  
 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. School  
 Edmund W. Flynn School  
 Esek Hopkins Middle School  
 Feinstein High School  
 Flynn Annex  
 Flynn Annex II  
 George J. West School  
 Gilbert Stuart School  
 Hope High School  
 Laurel Hill Annex  
 Laurel Hill Avenue School  
 Mary E. Fogarty School  
 Mount Pleasant High School  
 Nathan Bishop Middle School  
 Nathanael Greene Middle School  
 Oliver Hazard Perry Middle School  
 Pleasant View School  
 Reservoir Annex  
 Reservoir Avenue School  
 Robert F. Kennedy School  
 Robert L. Bailey, IV Elementary School  
 Roger Williams Middle School  
 Sackett Street School  
 Samuel W. Bridgham Middle School

Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy  
 Vartan Gregorian Elementary School at Fox Point  
 Veazie Annex #1  
 Veazie Annex II  
 Veazie Street School  
 Webster Avenue School  
 West Broadway School  
 William D'Abate School  
 Windmill Street School  
 Windmill Street School Annex #1

**Scituate**

Clayville Elementary School  
 Hope Elementary School  
 North Scituate Elementary School  
 Scituate High School  
 Scituate Middle School

**Smithfield**

Anna M. McCabe School  
 Old County Road School  
 Raymond C. LaPerche School  
 Smithfield Senior High School  
 Vincent J. Gallagher Middle School  
 William Winsor School

**South Kingstown**

Hazard School  
 Matunuck School  
 Peace Dale Elementary School  
 South Kingstown High School  
 South Kingstown Junior High School  
 South Road Elementary  
 Wakefield Elementary School  
 West Kingston Elementary School

**Tiverton**

Fort Barton School  
 Nonquit School  
 Pocasset School  
 Tiverton High School  
 Tiverton Middle School  
 Walter E. Ranger School

**Warwick**

Aldrich Junior High School  
 Cedar Hill School  
 Cottrell F. Hoxsie School  
 Drum Rock Elementary School  
 E. G. Robertson School

Francis School  
 Gorton Junior High School  
 Greenwood School  
 Harold F. Scott School  
 Holliman School  
 John Greene School  
 John Wickes School  
 Lippitt School  
 Norwood School  
 Oakland Beach Elementary School  
 Park School  
 Pilgrim High School  
 Potowomut School  
 Randall Holden School  
 Rhodes School  
 Sherman School  
 Toll Gate High School  
 Warwick Neck School  
 Warwick Veterans Memorial High School  
 Winman Junior High School  
 Wyman School

**Westerly**

Babcock Middle School  
 Bradford School  
 Dunn's Corners School  
 Springbrook Elementary School  
 State Street Elementary School  
 Tower Street School  
 Westerly High School

**West Warwick**

Greenbush Elementary School  
 John F. Deering Middle School  
 John F. Deering Middle School Annex  
 John F. Horgan Elementary School  
 Maisie E. Quinn Elementary School  
 Providence Street School  
 West Warwick Senior High School

**Woonsocket**

Bernon Heights School  
 Citizens Memorial School  
 Fifth Avenue School  
 Globe Park School  
 Grove Street School  
 Harris School  
 Kendrick Avenue School

Kevin K. Coleman Elementary School  
 Leo A. Savoie School  
 Pothier School  
 Second Avenue School  
 Social Street School  
 Woonsocket High School  
 Woonsocket Middle School

**Bristol-Warren Regional**

Byfield School  
 Child Street School  
 Colt-Andrews School  
 Guiteras School  
 Hugh Cole School  
 Kickemuit Middle School  
 Main Street School  
 Mt. Hope High School  
 Oliver School  
 Reynolds School  
 Rockwell School  
 Walley School

**Exeter-West Greenwich Regional**

Exeter-West Greenwich Regional High School  
 Exeter-West Greenwich Regional Junior High School  
 Metcalf School  
 Mildred E. Lineham School  
 Wawaloam School

**Chariho Regional**

Ashaway Elementary School  
 Chariho Regional High School  
 Chariho Regional Middle School  
 Charlestown Elementary School  
 Hope Valley Elementary School  
 Richmond Elementary School

**Foster-Glocester Regional**

Ponaganset High School  
 Ponaganset Middle School

**State-Operated Schools**

William M. Davies Career & Technical Center  
 Rhode Island School for the Deaf  
 Metropolitan Center

# Information Works!

## Measuring Rhode Island Schools for Change 1998

### How Do We Improve the Very Process of School Reform?

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Probably the most frustrating aspect of school reform is the uncertainty. What works? How do we know? If it works, do we understand why? Why does one program appear to produce excellent results in one school, but not in another? Were there other factors involved? What were they? How did it work? And how do we know?

### To Succeed in the Information Age, Schools Need Better Information About Themselves

To educate life-long learners, schools must have sophisticated, helpful information about themselves and their performance. With quantified, researched information about themselves, schools can examine their own structures, practices, attitudes and investments. Better information will drive better decision-making which, over time, will produce better student performance.

The RI Department of Education is collecting three main types of information:

- Student achievement – results from the state tests or assessments.
- Financial data – from In\$ite, a common school financial reporting system designed by Coopers & Lybrand, and
- A variety of information under the banner of School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT). SALT includes the SALT survey, other indicators of school environment like demographics, the SALT visit (when an external team evaluates school practices, progress and climate) and school improvement plans.

These sources of information will offer schools, districts and the public a level of analysis that school communities can use when crafting strategic plans and investment initiatives. With a continuous cycle of information-collection, review, analysis and decision-making, the entire education community – from the classroom to the State House – will have more powerful tools with which to transform our schools into high-performance learning centers.

## **We Must All Become Life-Long Learners**

As we become an increasingly data-rich society, we'll need to learn to read and interpret charts, tables and graphs. The visual interpretations of data within these pages pack a fairly high density of information into forms where we can literally see some of the meanings. Comparisons are obvious; gaps are clear. The design for *Information Works* includes as much contextual information as possible to wrap around the assessment results. This larger, richer context makes it possible to gauge a school's accomplishments against its challenges. The charts, tables and graphs require some patience initially, but the summary comments should help ease you into the visuals.

This year's *Information Works* offers snapshots of the schools with two pages per school. Each school is unique, and we acknowledge that two pages of graphs and charts can not possibly convey the distinctive blend of resources and people that occupy a given school building. Thus, *Information Works* includes a careful selection of only the most fundamental, pertinent and uniformly reportable information. Behind the snapshots lies a wealth of additional information about individual schools. In the spring of 1998 and every subsequent year, schools will have much more information which communities can study to inform decisions for the next year.

## **Resist Jumping to Conclusions**

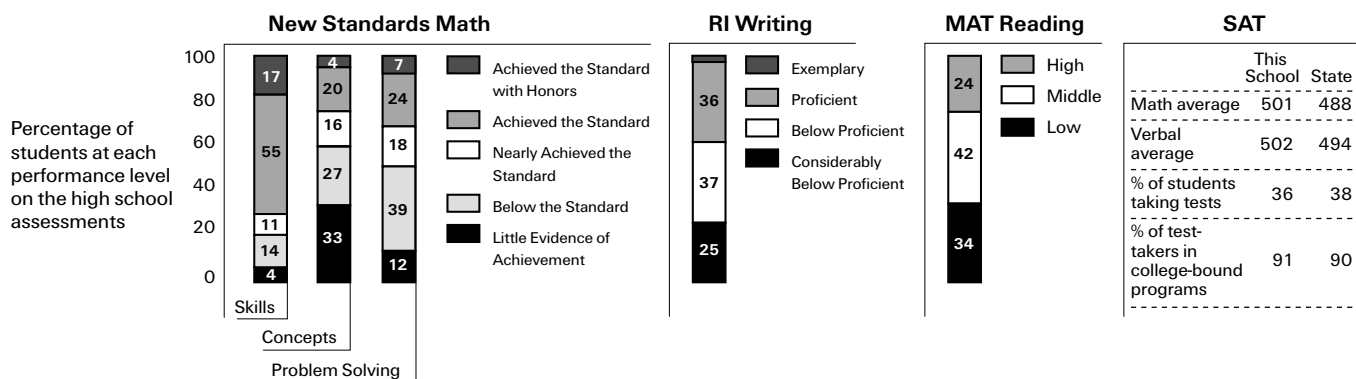
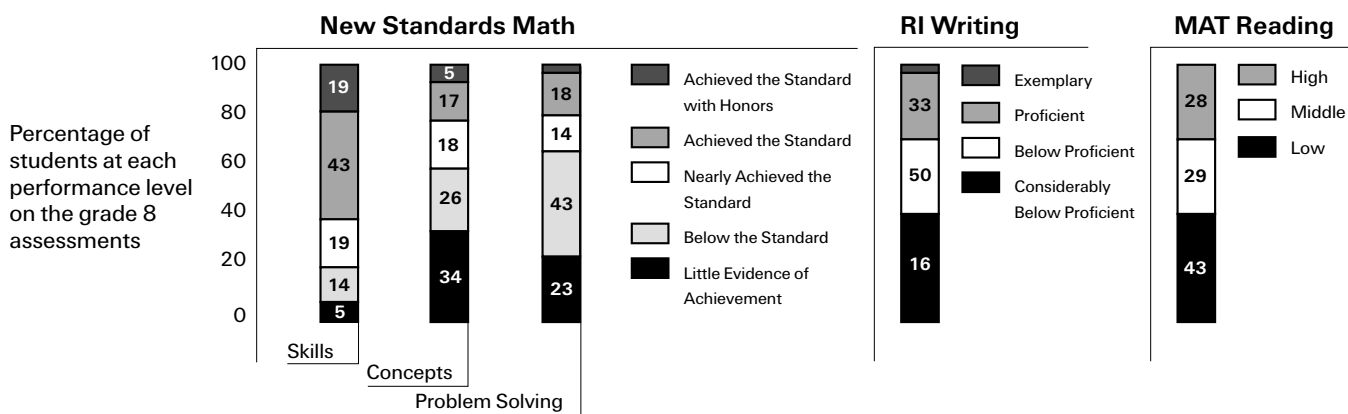
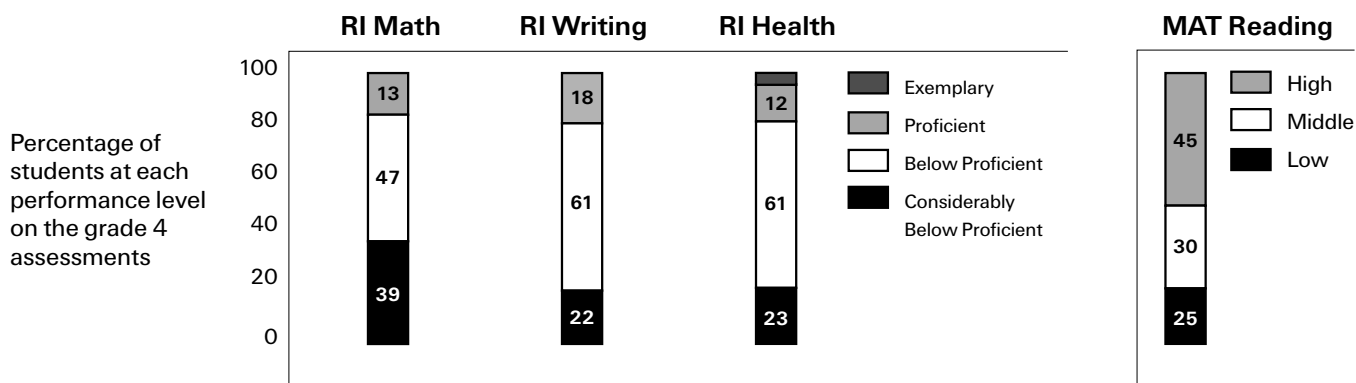
Please remember that this data will only become fully meaningful over time, as trends develop. A school in the throes of improvement is succeeding even if their students' achievement is seemingly low compared to that of other schools or communities. The goal is for 100% of RI's children to reach proficiency. To help all children reach the standards, some schools and some districts will need more support than others. We will know much more about our schools and their challenges as assessment, demographic, financial and effective practice trend data develops.

Also, bear in mind that a single year's worth of data is somewhat suspect because of the vagaries of random groups of children. A certain year's test-takers could be unusually high-performing or, conversely, uninspired.

## **Information Works Begins an Evolutionary Process**

This report was developed quickly, but a variety of stakeholders – parents, teachers, superintendents, principals and union leadership – were invited to review it and comment. While outright errors have been corrected, most of the refinements suggested during the review process will be considered in the course of the coming year as *Information Works* continues its development for the 1999 report.

Rhode Island's information agenda is ambitious and pioneering. We will work together in the coming months and years to hone and perfect this craft.



	This School	State
Math average	501	488
Verbal average	502	494
% of students taking tests	36	38
% of test-takers in college-bound programs	91	90

## The 1998 User's Guide

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### A Word About the Data

Given the demands of this year's project, every reasonable effort was made to verify data with individual schools. No amount of waiting would have perfected the quality of data any further; only by using and publishing it will the collection process and the data itself improve.

### When is Data Statistically Unreliable?

When a group of test-takers drops below 10, the results are considered statistically unreliable and are not reported. Also, when the numbers are small enough, it becomes possible to identify or to invite guessing as to the achievement results of individual children. *Information Works* is about the functioning of schools and districts; it is *not* about individual children. Therefore, in Field #4 that shows "gaps" with disaggregated data, groups with certain characteristics consisting of less than 10 children were dropped altogether and their results are reported as 0. Similarly, New Shoreham's very small classes of test-takers required leaving a number of blank fields.

## FIELD 1 Assessment Elements

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### What You Are Looking At

You are looking at a graphic representation of the assessment scores on the state tests. The 100 point scale indicates 100% of the children who were assessed at this grade level. The dark band at the top of the bar represents the percentage of the highest scoring students. The black at the bottom represents the percentage of the lowest scorers. The grey and the black bands above the white are the percentage of students who have achieved the Regents standard. (The MATs have no set standards.) Since the different tests are scored differently, see below for more explanation about the different descriptors beside the assessment bars.

### What You Are Looking For

You are hoping to see that all children have achieved the standard and are represented only above the white band.

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### The Advent of Performance Assessments

Nationally, state testing is undergoing significant transformation. With the new emphasis on assessing applied knowledge, i.e., testing what a child knows and *is able to do*, states have developed a new breed of tests called performance assessments. The RI testing program has been a program in transition, increasing the use of performance assessments, but keeping some of the more traditional, fill-in-the-bubble multiple choice tests, like the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT).

This year the MAT reading test will substitute for a performance assessment in reading. The MAT is an example of an exclusively fill-in-the-bubble, norm-referenced test. Fill-in-the-bubble is useful for testing what a child knows, not how well a student applies knowledge to solve a problem. “Norm-referenced” means that the test has no absolute standards of proficiency, but ranks students against one another with reference to a national sample group of students, or “the norm.”

Next year, in the core skills of mathematics and English language arts, RI will assess student performance using *New Standards* tests which are primarily performance assessments, but have short fill-in-the-bubble sections to cross check certain skill competencies (like reading comprehension). One of the appeals of the *New Standards* tests is that its high standards for proficiency are comparable to the standards that the Regents have set for the RI performance assessments, which were developed “in-house” by teams of stakeholders, principally teachers, here in the state. Also, the *New Standards* tests will offer comparisons between RI students and students in other cities and states nationally.

### **Why does Rhode Island state law require the Health Education Performance Assessment?**

Research shows that children who are healthy learn more effectively, and that good health is a necessary precondition for optimal academic success. High quality health education increases the likelihood that young people will develop healthier lifestyle practices and resist engaging in risky health behaviors. RI’s Health Assessment tells us if our health education initiative is giving our students the knowledge and skills necessary to improve and maintain their own well-being. Rhode Island is in the vanguard of assessing state health initiatives.

*Information Works* reports only the 4th grade Health Assessment results this year because the Regents hadn’t yet set standards for the grade 8 assessment. By the 1999 report, standards for both health assessments will be set.

### **Some tests are moving**

To reduce the number of tests given at grades 4, 8 and 10, two writing assessments and the health assessments will move to other grades in 1998. Writing will be tested at 3 (instead of 4), 7 (instead of 8) and 10. Health will move to grades 5 and 9, from 4 and 8, respectively.

### **The Grade 4 Math Assessment will change**

The 1997 grade 4 math performance assessment was developed here in the state by groups of teachers working with RIDE staff and consultants. The 1998 grade 4 math will be assessed with the New Standards math assessment, already used in grades 8 and 10.

### **The Regents’ Standards**

The Regents’ standards apply to those tests which were developed in Rhode Island. Those tests include the writing and health assessments, and this year’s Grade 4 math assessment.

**The Regents describe the performance levels as follows:**

**Exemplary Performance**

At this level, students consistently demonstrate exceptional ability to apply, analyze and interpret concepts and processes. Students communicate concrete and abstract ideas in highly organized, thoughtful and responsive ways

**Proficient Performance**

At this level, students demonstrate the ability to apply concepts and processes effectively and accurately. Students communicate ideas in clear and effective ways.

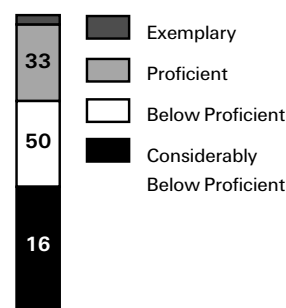
**Below Proficient Performance**

At this level, students demonstrate some skills in applying concepts and processes. Students communicate some ideas effectively.

**Considerably Below Proficient Performance**

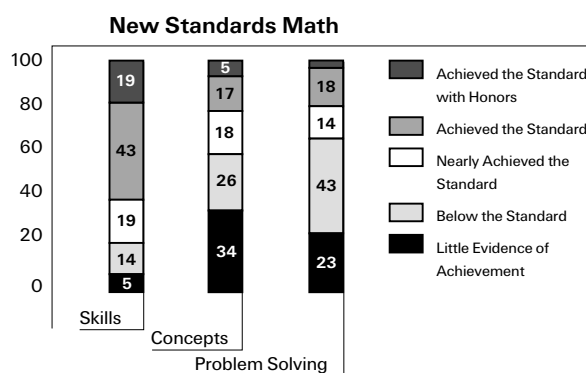
At this level, students are not able to demonstrate skills in applying concepts and processes. Students have difficulty communicating ideas.

**RI Writing**



**The “New Standards” Standards**

New Standards considers its descriptors for the various performance levels to be sufficient unto themselves. Written on the report sheets of each subject area test, each level has detailed descriptions of what a child needs to reach that level.



**The MAT Percentiles**

Unlike the New Standards tests, the MATs set no standards of their own, nor have the Regents imposed any. Years ago, for the purposes of publically reporting MAT scores, RIDE set an “at risk” benchmark at 40th percentile or below. Here we define high as the 77th-99th percentile, middle as 40th-76th percentile and low as the 39th percentile.

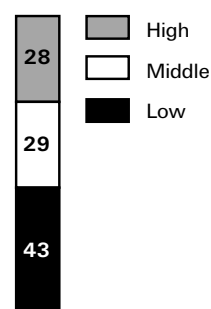
**The Scholastic Aptitude Test**

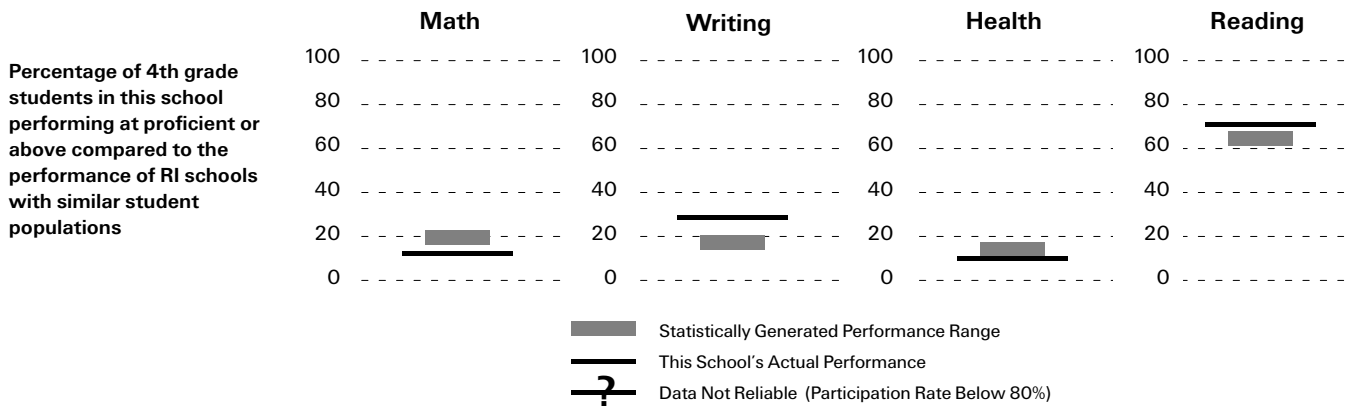
The SAT is not part of the RI assessment program. Students who so choose pay to take the tests to fulfill college admissions requirements.

**Percent of test-takers in college-bound programs**

To be considered to be in a college-bound program, students must report on their SAT test forms that they took both chemistry and geometry. These two courses were selected by RIDE because they reflect what most colleges consider to be representative college-bound courses. The SAT does, however, include mathematics up through calculus, so a student who has not progressed beyond geometry will find portions of the qualitative section of the SAT impossible to complete.

**MAT Reading**





## FIELD 2 Statistically Generated Performance Range/Actual Performance

### What You Are Looking At

This chart shows the relationship between the actual performance of students in this school – expressed as the percentage of students who met the standard on the state tests – and the performance range of similar students statewide given particular characteristics. *(See below for an explanation of this research tool.)*

The question mark: Participation in the assessments is expected to be 100% unless a child is specifically exempted by an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or another valid, clearly defined reason such as prolonged illness. This year when a school's participation rate fell below 80% of the eligible students, a question mark appears on the bar indicating that the data might be unreliable because of the large number of students who did not take the test.

### What You Are Looking For

In this first year of using the statistical model, you are hoping to see the school's students performing at or above the performance range of similar students statewide. **CRITICAL NOTE** *Rhode Island's goal is for all students to become proficient in all subjects.* This computer generated model is not a standard and performing as well or even better than similar students across the state is only the beginning of a journey towards full proficiency. Over time, as the schools themselves improve, the computer-generated ranges will themselves rise. This model helps us understand that schools do not start on a level playing field; some will need more time, specialists, resources or any number of things to help all of their children reach proficiency. Schools which are underperforming according to the model over multiple years are signaling the need for intervention of some kind.

## Statistically Generated Performance Models

In recent years, educational researchers have begun building statistically generated models which can calculate what results schools are likely to achieve when taking into consideration the characteristics of their student body. The point of these models is to establish an achievement benchmark that acknowledges the challenges that can affect children's readiness to learn. The public tends to compare high performing schools with low performing schools without considering differences in student characteristics. In fact, student composition impacts heavily on the performance of the school itself. These statistical models provide equitable and practical benchmarks against which to measure actual achievement. For over 30 years, researchers have known that the achievement results of different sets of students, such as those from different schools, vary in association with several specific key factors, including:

- Poverty (by far the strongest predictor of student achievement)
- Non-English speaking background
- Educational background of the child's mother
- Having special learning needs, and
- Having a minority/racial group identity

While individuals with one or more of these characteristics can and do perform well on state assessments, the overwhelming majority tend to perform less well than children who do not have these characteristics. There are many reasons for these historic patterns of achievement. They include such things as school expectations, inadequate funding and support to the schools these children attend, the quality of social services offered to students, the availability of flexible grouping and instruction geared to multiple learning styles and others.

## The Rhode Island Model

Rhode Island researchers have created a model which considers the above characteristics. Because RI is such a small state, the entire student body of over 150,000 students served as a context from which the test and grade specific ranges were derived. Thus, groups of students within a school were compared with similar groups of students statewide; schools are not themselves sorted for comparisons. Because computer-generated ranges change by test – the writing assessment is more strongly affected by language minority status, for example – the set of predictions changes from test to test.

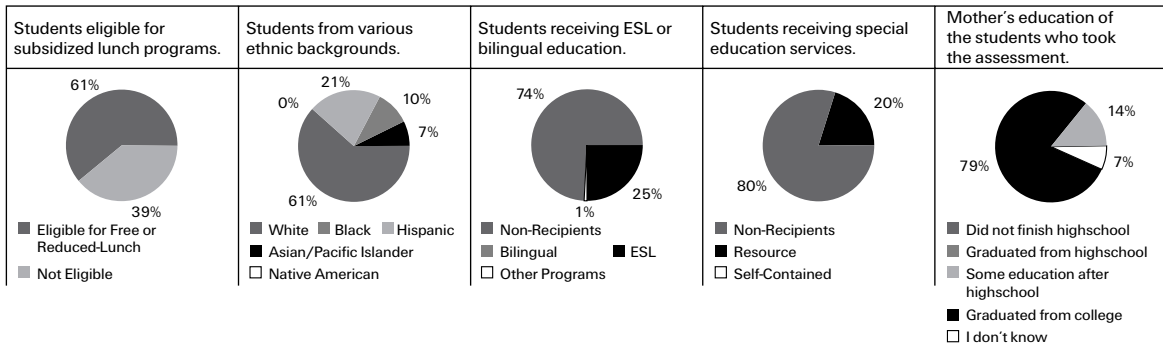
Over time, the model will evolve and become more precise, but the above characteristics will always be the foundation since, for example, poverty alone accounts for at least one-third of the variation in student achievement scores across groups of students. These models predict only for groups of students with similar characteristics; they can not predict any individual student's achievement.

*NOTE A technical description of this model is available upon request from the RIDE Public Information Office.*

## Special to the District and State Templates

At the district and state levels, tables are laid out by test indicating the total number of schools whose proportions of students meeting the standards are smaller, comparable and larger than the statistically generated range.

**Characteristics of students attending this school**



**FIELD 3 Demographic Profile**

**What You Are Looking At**

You are looking at a description of who is in the school. The pie charts show the percentages of the total school population who are identified with the characteristics which are described in detail below.

**What You Are Looking For**

You are looking to get a sense of the school's composition and diversity.

**The Definitions**

**Eligible for subsidized lunch**

*Eligible for free or reduced (price) lunch*

Students whose family incomes fall below certain income (poverty or near-poverty) guidelines. This measure indicates the percent of students who were eligible for free or reduced price lunches in November 1996.

*Not Eligible*

Students whose family income falls outside the low-income guidelines as of November 1996.

**Ethnic background**

*Asian/Pacific Islander*

A student having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Pacific Islands. Examples include: China, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands and Samoa.

*Black*

A student having origins in any of the African-American racial groups. This does not include people of Hispanic origins.

*Hispanic*

A student of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

*Native American*

A student having origins in any of the original peoples of North America. This category includes American Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts.

*White*

A student having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, the Middle East or the Indian Sub-Continent.

**Limited English Proficient (LEP)**

*(LEP) Bilingual model*

A student who receives instruction in English and another language to support content area learning while learning English as a second language.

*(LEP) English as a Second Language model*

A student who receives content area instruction solely in English while learning English as a second language.

*(LEP) Other model*

A student who receives other program options developed by a particular district.

**Special Education**

*Part-time regular/resource program*

A student whose Individual Educational Plan (IEP) services are provided in alternate or regular education settings for less than 50% of the school day or week.

*Self-contained program*

A student whose Individual Educational Plan (IEP) services are provided outside of the regular education classroom for more than 50% of the school day or week.

**Mother's Education**

While the data for the other pie charts are collected by the school and apply to the school as a whole, mother's education is reported by individual test-takers on the state's test materials. Thus, the pie chart for mother's education applies only to the children in the one grade who took the test.

**Special to the District and State Templates**

**Public enrollment**

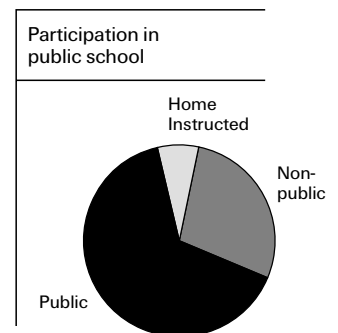
The number (and percentage) of Rhode Island's students who are enrolled in public schools, governed by a district, as of October 1996.

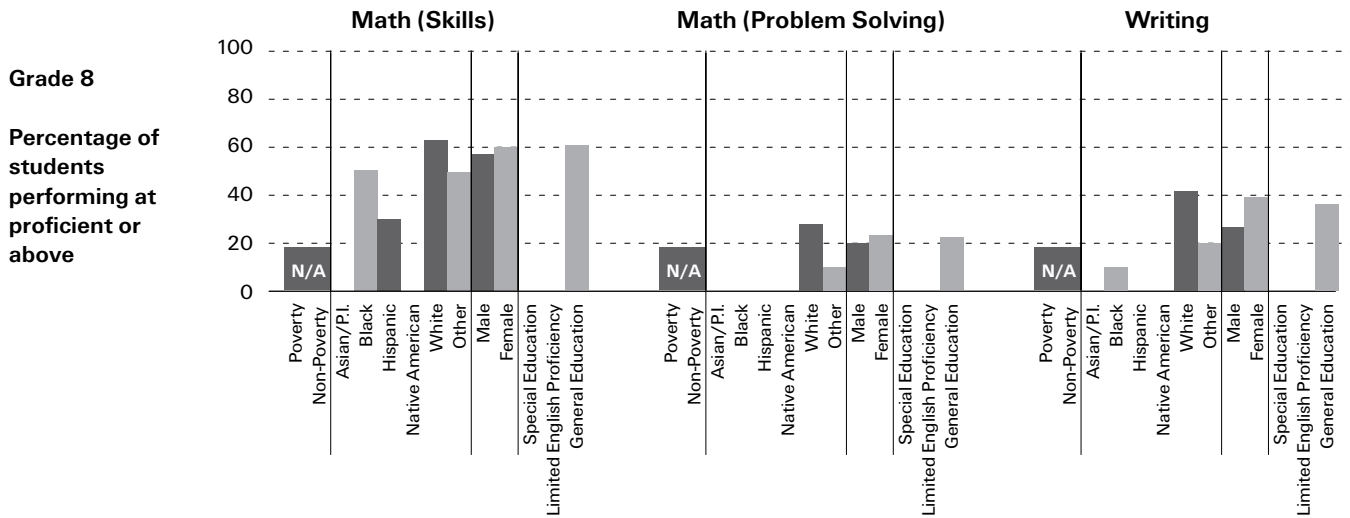
**Non-public enrollment**

The number (and percentage) of students who attend private or parochial schools, as of October 1996.

**At-home instructed**

The number (and percentage) of students who have received permission from the school committee of their local district to be instructed at home according to the provisions of Section 16-19-2 of the general laws of Rhode Island. The figures are for October 1996.





## FIELD 4 Performance by Characteristics

### What You Are Looking At

This graph shows the achievement data broken out by groups of students with similar characteristics. The bar represents the percentage of children who attained or exceeded the level of proficiency.

### What You Are Looking For

You are looking for the relative shortfalls between the 100% goal and the actual attained proficiency of children with certain comparable characteristics. You are also looking for gaps between the achievement of groups of students with different characteristics. Again, the Regents goal is for all children to become fully proficient in all tested subjects. Equipped with the knowledge of its shortfalls, a school can begin to target strategies and resources to close the gaps.

### Note Extra Field “Other”

On the assessments students are asked to complete their own demographic information which includes “other” among the racial category options for students who do not feel they fit easily in other racial categories. The school’s enrollment data collection process does not include “other” as an option.

"In their own words."

Highlights from  
the school

"Leadership Council – a strategic model site-based team was developed with teachers, parents, community members, support staff and principal."

"Feinstein Award Winners – Ashaway Elementary School was one of the \$1,000 Feinstein Award winners for 'Good Deeds' and community services."

"Medieval Fair Integrated Arts Project – we received funding through an Arts Council grant for an integrated art, P.E., library and music program, which included Reading Week, Parent Medieval Feast, classroom activities and related writing lessons."

## FIELD 5 School Highlights

### What You Are Looking At

Without prescribing a set criteria, RIDE data-gatherers asked schools to express, in their own words, what they considered to be three highlights of their school last year (1996-1997).

### What You Are Looking For

These highlights give schools a modest opportunity to share their personalities, assets and successes.

Effective practice  
indicators

SALT Survey results will be available for the 1999 *Information Works* report. The results will help school communities see the extent to which their schools are using practices which research shows improve student achievement. Please see the *User Guide* for a description of elements that RIDE is considering including in future reports.

## FIELD 6 Defining Features of High-Performing Schools

### What You Will Be Looking At

In winter 1998, students, teachers, parents and administrators in every school in Rhode Island participated in surveys aimed at gathering information about effective school practices. In the 1999 report, certain elements of the SALT survey will be aggregated and represented to show the extent to which schools are engaging in research-endorsed effective practices known to improve student achievement.

## **Informing a State-Level Conversation About What Works to Improve Student Achievement**

The point of school reform is to create a high-capacity learning environment that meets the needs of all students. Changing a school's structure – both its internal organization and its external relationships – can help children come to class better prepared to learn. These structural changes develop opportunities for literally everyone in the school community to engage in the continuous learning that teachers and students need to flourish. Schools need to become flexible and responsive to individual students and their changing needs.

Increasingly, research helps us understand what makes a healthy school community healthy. Widely different projects have arrived at similar conclusions about the school practices which best improve student achievement. The nine Common Principles of the Essential Schools correspond rather closely to the eight over-arching recommendations of Carnegie Corporation's middle school report, *Turning Points*. The Texas Mentor Network, the National Association of Secondary School Principals' *Breaking Ranks* and the Carnegie Corporation's *Years of Promise* also identify the same eight or nine basic ideas essential to healthy school reform.

We offer, therefore, a draft of what might become the publicly reported elements for subsequent reports. We consider this effort to be only the beginning of a dialogue about what school indicators might be most useful to report from the SALT surveys. The following elements represent large scale, structural aspects of a school. Such information would be garnered by combining the answers from related questions from the surveys. The SALT survey results will be too voluminous to report at a state level, but will be available on the Internet and at the school. The elements for state-level reporting may describe the extent to which the following practices have been implemented:

### **1. Small, personalized learning communities**

This element would include practices such as breaking large schools into "houses" or schools-within-schools; teachers that are teamed; teachers or teacher teams given common planning time; and advisory systems that ensure that every child is known well by at least one adult.

### **2. Integrated instruction**

This element assesses the practices that emphasize deep, integrated instruction in a core academic program. It would include techniques that promote problem-solving skills, conceptual understanding, life-long learning and effective leadership.

### **3. High expectations for all students**

This element would examine the different ways that the educational program promotes success for each individual student and every kind of learner.

### **4. Promoting foundation skills throughout the curriculum**

This element would measure the extent to which math, reading and writing are woven into all or most projects, because students need to practice and reinforce these skills often.

### **5. School-based decision-making**

This element would evaluate whether or not the decisions directly affecting students have been moved closest to the student, teachers and school community, which would include the principal, the parents and the larger community around the school.

### **6. Well-prepared teachers**

This element will look at how many teachers with certified expertise are teaching to the developmental level of their students, how much experience the teaching staff has and the extent to which teachers are provided with on-going, appropriate, coherent professional development opportunities.

### **7. Health and safety**

This element will assess the school and classroom practices which promote health, safety and fitness. Research shows that health, safety and fitness improve academic performance

### **8. Engaged families**

This element includes techniques which encourage family involvement such as parent/teacher conferences, Open Houses and phone calls or notes between school and home.

### **9. Community linkages**

This element looks at practices which stimulate support and advocacy from the immediate community, such as adopt-a-school programs, school-to-work internships, shadowing opportunities or special events sponsors.

Various School Indicators	This School	This School	This District	This State
1. Student Attendance (%)		92.75	95.09	92.57
2. Kindergarten Average Class Size		NA	22.43	19.93
3. Faculty/Student Ratio		NA	NA	NA
4. Yearly Enrollment Change(%)		3.36	0.61	1.06
5. Mobility (%)		7.95	15.63	17.29
6. Teacher Attendance (%)		99.47	97.33	95.94
7. Teacher Grievances Filed/ Total # of Teachers		4/118	5/363	541/10496
8. Suspensions for Drugs/Total # of Students		1/1323	1/4779	82/150556
9. Suspensions for Weapons/Total # of Students		3/1323	8/4779	325/150556
10. Suspensions for Other Reasons/Total # of Students		301/1323	372/4779	34563/150556
11. High School Drop-out Rate (%)		9.18	9.18	17.86
12. High School Graduation Rate (%)		90.82	90.82	82.14

## FIELD **7** Various School Indicators

### What You Are Looking At

You see the frequency or percentage for this indicator at the school (or district) level, and you see the state average next to it. These other indicators were assembled from three sets of requests:

1. Legislation passed in February 1996 and incorporated into Title 16, section 60-4(21)(22)
2. Article 31 – the State Student Investment Initiative, passed in July 1997
3. Rhode Island's Commissioner of Education and Board of Regents

Some elements, like kindergarten class size and high school drop out rates, will be marked “NA” because they are not applicable to all buildings.

### What You Are Looking For

You are looking to get a sense of what the school feels like to its inhabitants – its tensions, its stability, its experience, its safety, etc.

## Indicator Measures and Definitions

### 1. Student Attendance

Law requires all Rhode Island districts to conduct 180 instructional days per year. The student attendance rate reflects the percentage of time the average student is present within that 180 day period.

### 2. Kindergarten Class Size

The average kindergarten class size is computed by dividing the total number of kindergarten students by the total number of sessions taught by classroom teachers. (Half-day kindergarten teachers teach two sessions a day.) This indicator may reflect the opportunity that teachers have to provide individualized attention to students.

### 3. Faculty/Student Ratio

Schools do not yet have uniform definitions that would allow this number to be reliably computed. This year it says NA (not available), but it will be computed in the future.

### 4. Yearly Enrollment Change

This is the percentage, plus or minus, that the school or district grew or declined when compared to the previous school year.

### 5. Mobility

The percentage of students who were in the school less than the full year.

### 6. Teacher Attendance

The teacher attendance rate reflects the percentage of time the average full-time teacher is present within the 180 day instructional period. This number was calculated using the number of “sick days” which accounted for teacher absences.

### 7. Teacher grievances

This is the number of grievances filed in the building in 1996-97 compared with the number of full-time teachers.

### 8. Suspensions for Weapons

The number of students who have been temporarily dismissed from school or sent to an alternative placement for the possession of any destructive device (grenade, missile, pipebomb, etc.), firearm, weapon, including a starter gun or any instrument or object intended to inflict harm on another person (knife, brass knuckles, Chinese stars, etc.). The number of incidents is followed by the total number of students in the building. **CAUTION A single student may account for multiple suspensions.**

### 9. Suspensions for Drugs

The number of students who were temporarily dismissed from school or sent to an alternative placement by duly authorized school personnel for the sale of, or possession with the intent to sell, or possession of any controlled drug, narcotic substance or equipment and devices used for preparing or taking drugs or narcotics. This category includes over-the-counter and prescription medications abused by students. The number of incidents is followed by the total number of students in the building.

### **10. Suspensions for Other Reasons**

The number of students who have been temporarily dismissed from school or sent to an alternative placement for any infraction not listed above including those reported in the “other” category, and assault of a teacher/student school staff by student. The number of incidents is followed by the total number of students in the building.

### **11. Drop Out**

The drop out rate is derived by subtracting the cumulative completion (see #12 below) rate from 100. This manner of figuring rates uses a four-year picture which takes into account key factors such as annual differences in class size and the different grades at which students drop out. The statistic reported here is based on the number of drop outs reported annually by grade level for students who drop out between October 2 of the previous school year to October 1 of the current year.

### **12. Graduation**

The high school graduation rate represents the percent of the current ninth grade class that will graduate from high school based on aggregate current dropout rates at the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade.

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School level  
financial data

In July 1997, school districts began installing a uniform statewide financial reporting system to track school and district spending. *Information Works* will report this fiscal information in the future.

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## **FIELD 8 School Expenditures**

### **What You Are Looking At and For**

You are looking at a promise to have school level financial data in the future.

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## **Fiscal Accountability**

InSite, a financial reporting software system developed by Coopers & Lybrand, is being put in place to track spending at the building level in significant detail that can be reliably compared across districts. All 36 school districts in Rhode Island have always used their own accounting systems and will continue to do so. However, these different accounting systems have little or no consistency across districts, which make comparisons impossible. Together, district business managers are reaching detailed agreements about definitions for where each dollar is posted, so that district-to-district and building-to-building valid comparisons will become feasible. When this new system's data are fully reliable, the following expenditures will be reported for each school:

### **1. Instruction**

Teaching (Instructional teachers, substitutes and instructional paraprofessionals) and Classroom Materials (pupil technology and instructional materials).

### **2. Instructional Support**

Pupil Support (guidance counselors, library/media services, extracurricular and student health), Teacher Support (curriculum development, staff development, sabbaticals) and Program Support (program development, therapists, et al.)

### **3. Operations**

Pupil Services (transportation, food service and safety), Facilities (building upkeep) and Business Services (data processing and business operations).

Most districts have only just begun to put their first year's worth of numbers (1995-96) into the InSite program. The first reliable sets of information from InSite will appear in the 1999 report.

## **Special to the District and State Templates**

At the district level, two other InSite fields will be added to the three above for a total of five measurements.

### **1. Other Commitments**

Contingencies, Capital (debt service and capital projects), Out of District (pass-throughs, retiree benefits and enterprise opportunities) and Legal Obligations (claims and settlements).

### **2. Leadership**

School Management (principals and school office), Program and Operations Management (curriculum directors, et al.) and District Management (superintendent, school committee and legal).

## **This Year's District and State Templates**

Since the Coopers & Lybrand data is not yet usable and financial information is critical to understanding student achievement, the following information is provided at the district level for this year by using Form 31. Form 31 is the Department of Education's financial reporting instrument which is submitted annually by each district.

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	<b>The District Average</b>	<b>The State Average</b>
Median Family Income (\$)	41,883	39,172
Per Capita Income (\$)	14,566	14,981
Property Value Per Student (\$)	262,398	309,319
Relative Local Tax Capacity	96.98	100
Relative Local Tax Effort	84.89	100
Local Tax Rate Per \$1,000 of Assessed Value (1997) (\$)	18.14	20.7

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## **FIELD 8 District Expenditures Per Pupil**

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(Against a State Average)

### **What You Are Looking At**

These numbers should help you see how districts spend their money, where their money comes from and how much money they have to spend.

### **What You Are Looking For**

You are looking to make a determination as to whether the district is adequately supporting its schools, in general, and certain programs or populations of students, in particular.

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## Definitions for the Top Table

### Median family income

This indicator shows the family income level at which half of the community families had more income and half had less, as measured in the 1990 federal census. Single person households are not counted as families.

### Per capita income

This measure of the economic status of persons in the community is a 1989 estimate made by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. It represents average income per person in the community, counting persons of all ages.

### Property value per student

This is a measure of community wealth. Equalized, weighted, assessed property valuation is divided by resident average daily membership. Figures are based on 1996-97 data.

### Relative property tax capacity

This indicator shows the amount of taxable property wealth available to a municipality per capita. Thus, if a municipality has a large amount of property wealth and a small population, it would have a higher tax capacity than a municipality with the same amount of property wealth but a larger population. For educational purposes, the tax capacities of the cities and towns have been translated into district capacities in the regionalized school districts.

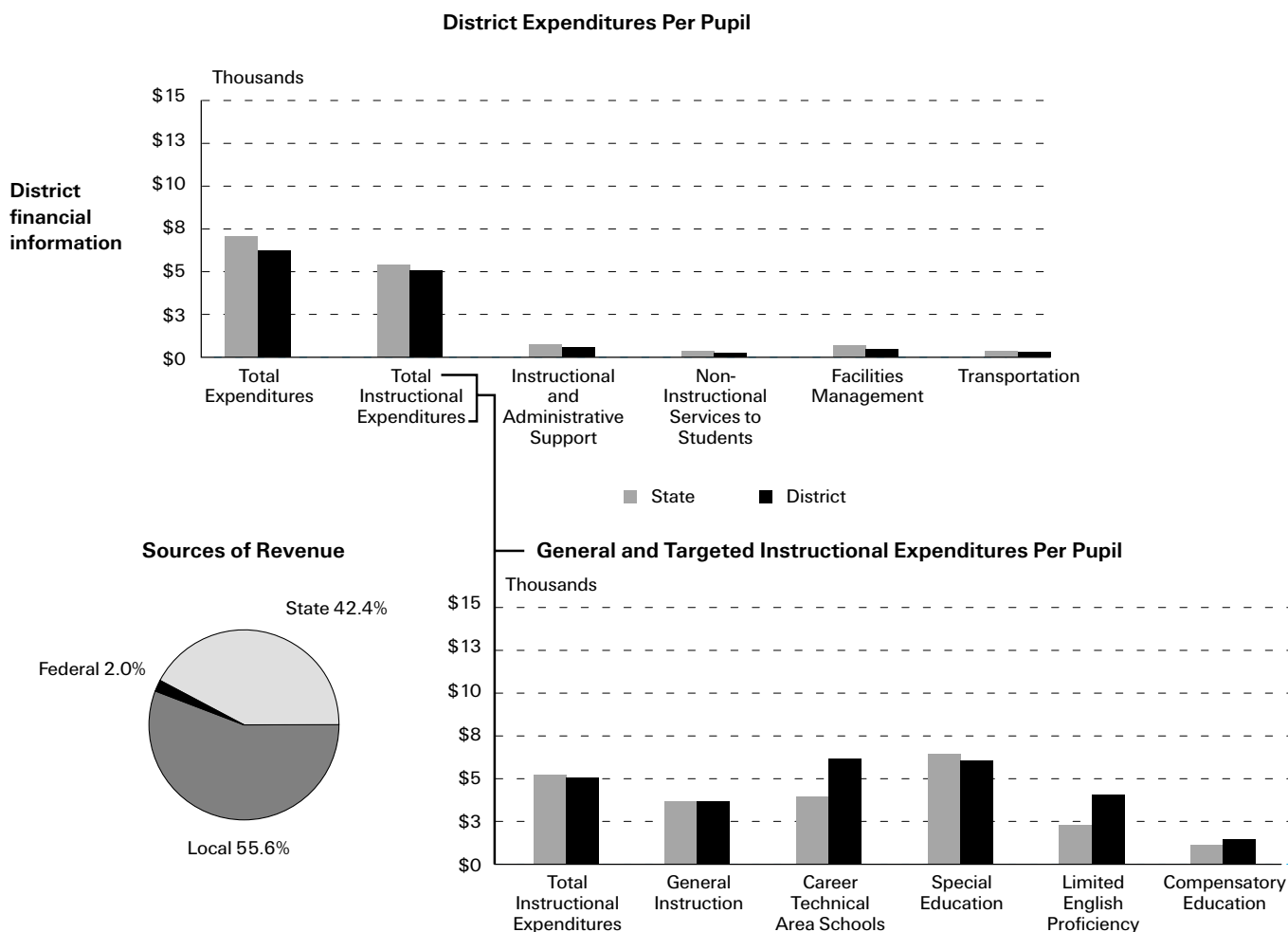
The tax capacity of each district is divided by the statewide capacity and then multiplied by 100. Districts that have smaller tax capacities than the statewide average have a number below 100. Districts with a tax capacity larger than the statewide average capacity will have a number larger than 100.

### Relative tax effort

This indicator shows how heavily or lightly a district is taxed in relation to the rest of the state. The property tax of the municipality is divided by the statewide property tax rate for all municipalities and multiplied by 100. Thus, if a municipality taxes its property wealth at a rate lower than the statewide rate, the number will be smaller than 100.

### Property tax rate per \$1,000

The tax rate specifies the amount that is paid by a property owner for every \$1,000 of assessed value.



## FIELD 8 K-12 Expenditures for All Students

### What You Are Looking At

This graph separates the total per pupil expenditures for the public school program – kindergarten through grade 12 – into the larger categories of necessary expenditures.

#### Total Expenditures

This is the total per pupil expenditure against which the other expenditures can be measured.

#### Total Instructional Expenditures

This includes all expenditures for general instruction, career and technical instruction, special education, limited English proficient and compensatory instruction (Title I).

**Instructional and Administrative Support**

This includes expenditures for staff training, curriculum development and supervision, research and administrative activities.

**Non-Instructional Services to Students**

This includes expenditures for health services, food services, athletics, recreation, other student activities and safety.

**Facilities Management**

This includes expenditures for operating and maintaining buildings and grounds. While acquisition and construction of facilities could be included, this occurs only occasionally.

**Transportation**

This includes expenditures for transporting students.

**FIELD 8 Instructional Expenditures Per Pupil**

(Against a State Average)

**General and Targeted Instructional Expenditures** *(aka Total Instructional Expenditures)*

This includes general instruction for all students and expenditures for the instruction of students in programs designed to provide specialized instruction. This expenditure includes all the instructional expenditures described below.

**General Instruction**

This includes expenditures for the kindergarten through 12th grade instructional program, career and technical programs offered at the comprehensive high schools, instructional media, school libraries and guidance.

**Career Technical Area Centers**

This includes expenditures for the programs offered at the regional career-technical centers.

**Special Education**

This includes all expenditures for special education programs.

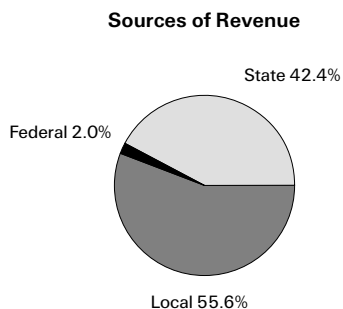
**Limited-English Proficient**

This is all expenditures for programs for students who require help in basic skills because their English proficiency is limited.

**Compensatory Education**

This is all expenditures for programs for low-income students who require help in basic skills, principally in reading and math (Title I).

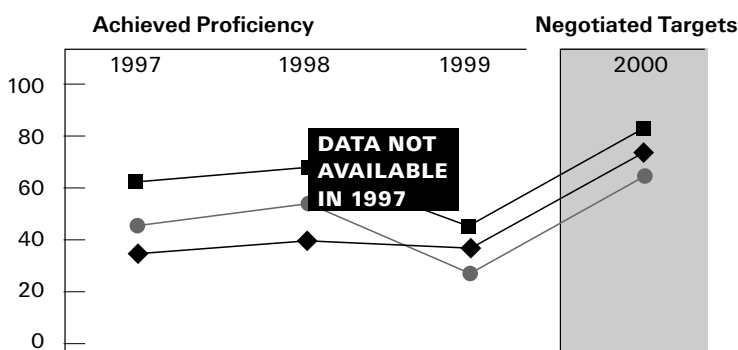
## Sources of Revenue



This pie chart shows a break-out of where the overwhelming majority of the money for this district's schools comes from. The state contribution, known as state aid, is calculated by a formula which was signed into law as Article 31, the education portion of the State's 1998 Budget. The local revenue is the support raised by the city or town through property taxes. Federal support might be money from the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) from individual grants. Working Wonders grants, for example, are competitively awarded by the state department of education, but the grants are funded by federal Goals 2000 money. Some districts may have additional monies from corporations or foundations (e.g. RI Foundation, Champlin grants, etc.). These monies are not accounted for in this pie chart.

Percentage of students performing at proficient or above over time

Negotiated targets for adequate yearly progress



## FIELD 9 Longitudinal Achievement Data and Adequate Yearly Progress

(Towards All Students Reaching State Standards)

### What You Are Looking At

You are looking at an empty field that will track, over the years, each school's efforts to set (in consultation with RIDE) and to meet goals for improved student achievement. This field will compare achievement data from year to year. The only tests from 1996 that can be used to build longitudinal data are the 8th and the 10th grade math and the 10th grade writing assessment. Only results from tests which are reliable for study over time will be reported here. The Regents will set standards for each test so that all public reporting can be expressed in terms of the percentage of students that are performing at a level which the Regents have determined is proficient.

### What You Are Looking For

Over the course of years you will be looking to see that the achievement results trend upward towards the 100% line, and that schools are meeting their student achievement targets.

### **Defining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)**

AYP is the measure of the progress a school or a district is making towards moving all children to meet the Regents standard of proficiency.

We are fortunate to be able to study other states' experience with setting progress targets and handling rewards and sanctions that go with them. Perhaps the first lesson is that a single year of data can woefully misrepresent the trend of a school. A particularly exemplary or challenged class can skew the results and either inflate or deflate the real achievements of the school as a whole. Therefore, RIDE currently proposes using three to five-year rolling averages to determine the basis from which to derive a target for adequate yearly progress. A rolling average means that in each new year the most recent set of achievement scores are averaged with the appropriate number of prior years.

Second, where other states have set standardized progress targets for all schools at, say, 2% or 3%, those percentages take into account neither the challenges nor the adequacy of resources to meet the challenges. Therefore, RIDE will negotiate adequate yearly progress targets with each individual school using the current and predicted achievement levels of the school, prior years of assessment results, the challenges of the children in the building, and the resources that the district allocates to the school. Other states have found themselves accidentally setting some schools up for failure by establishing unrealistic and undeliverable goals and setting targets that were not challenging enough for other schools.

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## **FIELD 10 Summative Statement**

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### **What You Are Looking At**

This field summarizes some key features within the data presented on the two pages. The comments note when high degrees of certain demographic characteristics were noted. Low participation in the state assessments receive comment. When a school experienced extenuating circumstances that may have affected their data – switching from an elementary to a middle school, a population surge, a damaging fire – such circumstances are noted here. RIDE recognizes that it may have inadvertently missed some special circumstances.

### **What You Are Looking For**

These comments try to help with the interpretation of the charts and tables.

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## **When Demographic Comments Were Noted**

### **Free and reduced lunch was noted**

When 40% or more of the students were eligible

### **Special education was noted**

When 20% or more of the students were receiving services

### **English as a second language was noted**

When 5% or more of the students were receiving services

### **Racial diversity was noted**

When 20% or more identified themselves as a member of a minority group

## **Mobility**

### **Mobility was noted**

When it is 5% above the state average of 17%

## **Wish List for the Future**

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Already, the Commissioner of Education and others have voiced interests in data that is not yet being collected. Such data might include information about what happens to RI students after they leave their district school systems. Suggestions for new fields include measurements for student success one year into college and employer information about RI student workforce readiness.

**A public accountability exercise tends to raise questions almost as quickly as it can answer them. This report is part of a larger information initiative intended to nourish RI's conversation about student achievement.**



