Information Works!

Measuring Rhode Island Schools for Change

1999

April 1999

Dear Fellow Rhode Islanders:

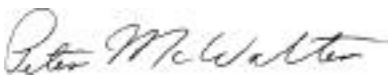
During the last few years there has been a noticeable shift in activity on the state's educational landscape. Schools and school districts are focusing on student results in the context of state expectations of performance, they are using a wealth of data to plan for progress, and conversations about improving schools are increasingly well informed. This focus has been deliberate, and it is in the spirit of nourishing the dialogue that we present the second edition of Information Works! Measuring Rhode Island Schools for Change.

Information Works! spotlights state priorities. We do this to provide schools and their communities with guideposts as they map out their plans for school improvement. For example, like last year's document, the 1999 report shares results from the state assessments, or tests, with a particular emphasis on literacy and numeracy. We share these results in the context of the school, by illustrating the characteristics of a student population, indicators of a school's climate, such as graduation and suspension rates, and in light of a district's financial resources. This year we also report select information from the SALT surveys that students, teachers, parents and administrators took for the first time in spring 1998, as well as school targets for improvement. Each graphic summary paints a unique picture of each public school and school district in Rhode Island.

We share all of this data as part of a much larger strategy aimed at building an education system that is focused on and accountable for student learning. Achieving this goal requires that schools and their communities, as well as policy makers at all levels, use the information to understand a school, to assess its strengths and challenges, and to guide decisions for improvement. We have broad policy agreement on this agenda; it began as a national call, and has become real in our state through the combined leadership of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Board of Regents, and with the full partnership of the state's education community.

I extend gratitude to the many hands that joined to create this tool. This document, both its contents and its actual production, would not be possible were it not for the fortuitous partnership the Rhode Island Department of Education and the University of Rhode Island's National Center on Public Education have forged. Furthermore, every element of data in this book relies on the cooperation, good will and commitment of people in schools throughout the state.

Sincerely,



Peter McWalters
Commissioner
Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Information Works!

Measuring Rhode Island Schools for Change 1999

Rhode Island Learns to Interpret and Use Data

Until recently, most of us thought of the Information Age as the advent of e-mail and surfing the Internet. While last year schools and districts learned to collect large amounts of new information — principally through the SALT (School Accountability for Learning and Teaching) survey — this year RI's school communities have been confronted with learning how to read new charts and reports and to make sense of results from large, unfamiliar databases. Suddenly we are making direct contact with technology's ability to collect and analyze vast quantities of information. The experience has been daunting, exciting, humbling, fascinating, frustrating, enlightening and liberating.

Information Works! Has Changed since Last Year

- While districts and schools are still in alphabetical order, a "batch" numbering system has made it possible to have a **table of contents** and provide easier access to desired charts and information.
- **Career and Technical** schools are included in their own section after the state schools.
- The 1999 school charts have **key SALT survey findings**.
- Each school reports its **achievement targets.**
- **Additional information will be available on the web versions** of the reports. (See below)

For More Information, Questions and Suggestions, See: infoworks.ride.uri.edu

The two-page, school-level charts published on the web will include information for which there was not room in the hard cover copy of Information Works! The charts on the web will include:

- Disaggregations of student achievement by students with certain characteristics that continue below the proficiency line. Non-proficient students will be disaggregated by characteristics into the three non-proficient categories.
- School goals
- Teacher grievances by type
- Student suspensions by type

The 1999 Information Works! home page also gives access to a technical paper explaining the statistical modeling which generated the graphs in Field #2, to Commissioner McWalters' State of Education speech before the General Assembly, to Information Works for Community Stewardship, a state-level report on education in RI, and to last year's Information Works! data and related materials.

Information Works! Draws From a Variety of Resources

A number of key accountability measures were first identified by the Governor's Comprehensive Education Strategy and then written into legislation. That legislation, Article 31, charged the Department of Education (RIDE) with measuring certain specific outcomes, scores and indicators and publicly reporting the results. However, test scores and accountability outcomes are limited in their ability to promote school improvement. For schools to become successful in their efforts to make progress, they also need sophisticated, detailed information about their own internal functioning.

RIDE strongly emphasizes that no single element of information, not even test scores, has much meaning standing by itself. Only when taken together can a full array of important indicators and details begin to paint a picture comprehensive enough to approximate the complexity and uniqueness of a school.

Therefore, the principal sources of the data for Information Works! are:

The State Assessments

Standardized student achievement tests

The SALT Survey

School-level data about classroom practice, school climate, expectations, and much more

Basic School-level Statistics

School enrollment, demographic make up, socio-economic status, absenteeism, suspensions, etc. are collected throughout the year through various data collection efforts by RIDE.

Tax and Income Statistics

From the State Department of Administration's Division of Taxation

Form 31 Financial Information

Expenditures and revenue information submitted to RIDE. (More detailed information from the new statewide fiscal accountability system, In$ite, will be reported next year at both the school and district level. This year, data from selected schools and districts will be available under separate cover.)

Most Data Are Descriptive, not Prescriptive

One of the biggest frustrations is that most of our data are just data, just a description that does not imply obvious solutions or easily identifiable standards of success. Only the assessment results have clear, absolute goals of students meeting standards and schools achieving 100% proficiency. In the SALT survey data, for example, no rubric or rule exists that indicates exactly how much of anything is the right amount. Each school, with its district, must look at the whole array of information and decide what is important and what is good evidence to drive school improvement.

All of us will become more proficient in this process over time.

Focus on Literacy and Numeracy

Last year the press often referred to the SALT survey results and Information Works! as a "mountain" of data. Indeed, we now have a lot of information. The challenge to all of us is to make informed, but admittedly human choices from among the different realms of data. RIDE's strategic plan as well as the state's Comprehensive Education Strategy outline specific targets related to mathematics and literacy. The state-level SALT survey revealed that the classroom practices and structures to support literacy and numeracy across the curriculum could be improved in most RI schools. Improvements in achievement scores will be limited unless this support improves.

Therefore, both the RI statistical model and the reporting of the targets concentrate on two elements, each from the New Standards Reference Math and English Language Arts exams, indicators of literacy and numeracy. Similarly, literacy and numeracy drove the selection of which SALT survey data elements to display.

The goal remains the same: 100% proficiency for all kids.

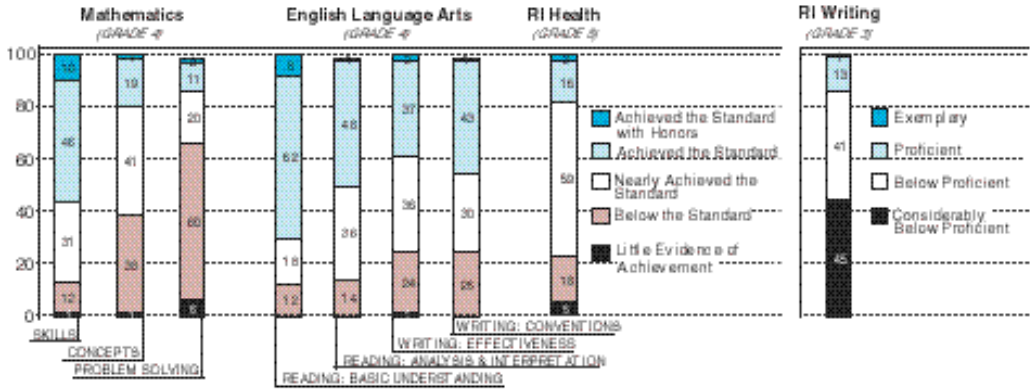
Also see: bellatlanticeducationexchange.uri.com

This year the interactive capabilities of the Information Works! home page will take the user to the discussion page of a new RI school community web site at: bellatlanticeducationexchange.uri.com. There, the user can either submit questions related directly to the data in Information Works! or engage in a discussion on school reform and education-related topics. This site will be monitored at least once a week and questions will be answered within two weeks. This Education Exchange site is an ever-growing collection of resources and opportunities that has been assembled to support school communities in Rhode Island. It is made possible through a partnership of Bell Atlantic, URI's National Center on Public Education and Social Policy and the RI Department of Education.

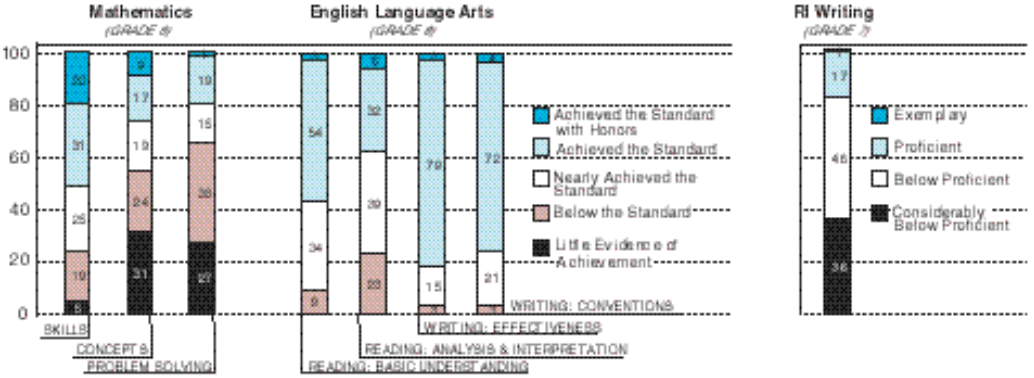
Rhode Island

Peter McWalters, Commissioner
153,342 Students
10,656 Teachers
37 School Districts
320 Schools

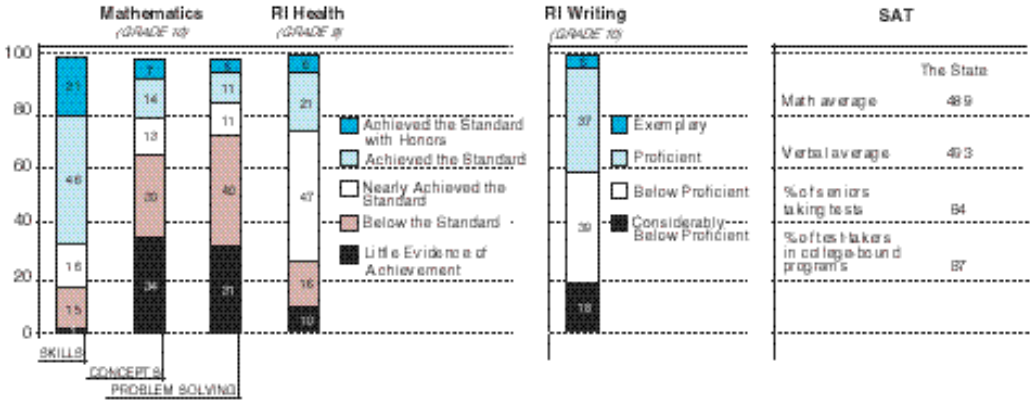
Percentage of students at each performance level on the elementary school assessments



Percentage of students at each performance level on the middle school assessments



Percentage of students at each performance level on the high school assessments



Please note: see front sections for an explanation of each field and its features.

The 1999 User's Guide

A Word About the Data

The quality of the data this year (school year 1997-98) was much improved over last year's. The work involved in "cleaning" the data, which is to say tracking down inconsistencies and inaccuracies, was significantly reduced. It was by no means perfect, however, and the process of verifying the data was still lengthy. Still, last year's publication of the information did inspire greater accuracy.

RIDE is further refining its procedures to ease the work of data-collection.

When Data is Statistically Unreliable

When the number of test-takers drops below 10, the results are considered statistically unreliable and are not reported. Also, very small numbers make it 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 **not** about individual children. Therefore, in Field #4, which shows "gaps" with disaggregated data, any group with certain characteristics consisting of less than 10 children — scoring high, low or indifferent — was dropped. This year symbols indicate when there were too few test-takers in that category to report or if no test-takers achieved proficiency. Very small classes of test-takers such as those in New Shoreham and the RI School for the Deaf also require leaving a number of fields empty.

FIELD 1 Assessment Elements

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 two bands **above** the white are the percentage of students who have achieved or exceeded the Regents standards.

What You Are Looking For

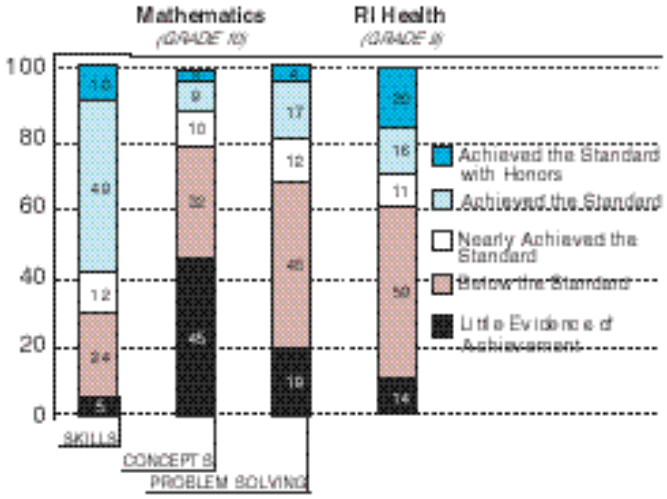
You are hoping to see that all children have achieved the standard and are represented only in the top two blocks.

Performance Assessments

Rhode Island's state assessment program has completed its transition to the exclusive use of performance assessments. These new tests emphasize applied knowledge, i.e., testing what a child knows and **is able to do**. The old tests, such as the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT), did not measure proficiency in applied knowledge and were "norm-referenced," which is to say that the test had no absolute standards of proficiency, but ranked students against one another with reference to a national sample group of students, or "the norm."

New Standards Reference Exams

The New Standards Reference Examinations (NSRE), along with the Performance Standards on which they are based, were developed in partnership with school districts and states including Rhode Island, by the Learning Research and Development Center of the University of Pittsburgh and the National Center on Education and the Economy. Rhode Island joined as a partner state in the final three years of the project. By partnering with New Standards, Rhode Island's state assessment program could be sure that these challenging exams would be aligned directly to the content in both the Rhode Island Curriculum Frameworks and the New Standards Performance Standards in the tested subjects.



The tests emphasize the application of knowledge and skills and not just the rote memorization of facts or the computation of math examples without context. Score reports are generated for the individual students as well as aggregations at the school, district and state levels. The detailed score reports are designed to foster local and state discussions about curriculum changes, to point to potentially necessary professional development, to raise instructional and assessment issues with students and parents, and to identify the need for resources to support reaching performance goals. New Standards tests are primarily performance assessments, but also have short fill-in-the-bubble sections to cross check certain skill competencies (like reading comprehension).

Test Subscales

The NSRE in mathematics contains three subscales which are: Skills, Concepts and Problem-Solving. The NSRE in English Language Arts contains four subscales which are: Reading: Basic Understanding, Reading: Analysis and Interpretation, Writing: Effectiveness and Writing: Conventions. Particular items from the entire test, which is taken over the course of several days, are grouped in various ways to form the subscale scores. Some items are used in more than one subscale.

New Standards Descriptors

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 are detailed descriptions of what a child needs to know in order to reach each level.

Next Year's 10th Grade English Language Arts

The inclusion of the New Standards ELA exam at the 10th grade will complete RI's state assessment program.

The state's assessment program emphasizes student knowledge and mastery of the foundation skills of literacy and numeracy. Students need those skills to do well in other subjects such as science and social studies. Therefore, all content areas need to orient their efforts toward supporting and strengthening literacy and numeracy.

Resetting the Rhode Island Health Education Performance Assessment Standards

In order to relieve the amount of testing concentrated in grades 4, 8 and 10, the Rhode Island-developed Health Education and the Writing assessments were moved to different grades. The Health Assessment is now given at grades 5 and 9. Based on feedback from the school communities — from both parents and practitioners — Regents reset the standards for the Health Assessment to accommodate the new grade levels by adopting the same number of performance levels and descriptors as the New Standards exams. This adoption standardizes the performance level language between the tests and eliminates some unnecessary confusion among the people trying to make sense of the different exams.

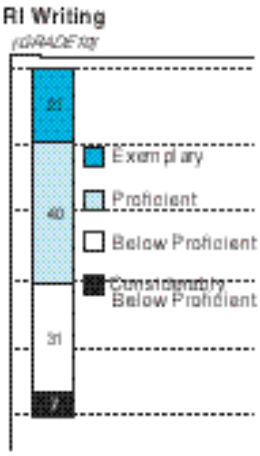
Rhode Island Health Education Performance Assessment

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 necessary to make good decisions about health and well-being.

The Rhode Island Writing Assessment and the Regents Standards

The Writing Assessment given at grade 4 has moved to grade 3, while grade 8 has moved to grade 7. The 10th grade assessment stayed where it was.

The Rhode Island-developed Writing Assessment is the oldest of the performance exams given in the state. The Regents — in a fairly involved and careful standards-setting exercise — set standards at four performance levels. The Regents will review a proposal to re-set the Writing Assessment standards to bring all the assessments into alignment with the New Standards performance levels and descriptors. Until the standards-setting exercise is completed, the Regents' standards are described 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

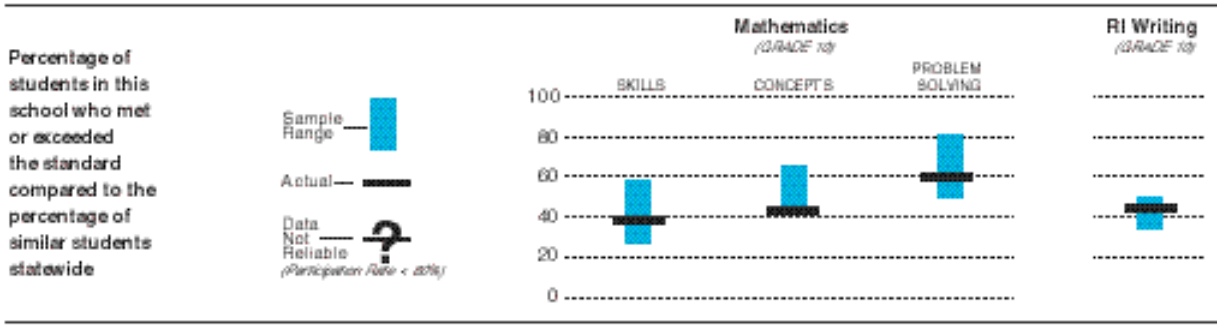
At this level, students are not able to demonstrate skills in applying concepts and processes. Students have difficulty communicating ideas.

The Scholastic Assessment 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. Participation in these courses indicates that the student was taking courses that colleges consider to be foundational to college academic success.



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. (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. When a school's participation rate falls 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 eligible students who did not take the test.

What You Are Looking For

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 and some will need more time, specialists, resources or any number of things to help all of their children reach proficiency. Schools which are under-performing 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 uniform 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, with the exception of prior achievement)
- Non-English speaking background
- Educational background of the parents
- 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 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, the availability of flexible grouping and different types of instruction, inadequate funding and support to the schools these children attend, and the quality of social services offered to students.

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 153,000 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 themselves are not sorted for comparisons. The computer-generated ranges will change depending on the test because, for example, a writing assessment is more strongly affected by language minority status.

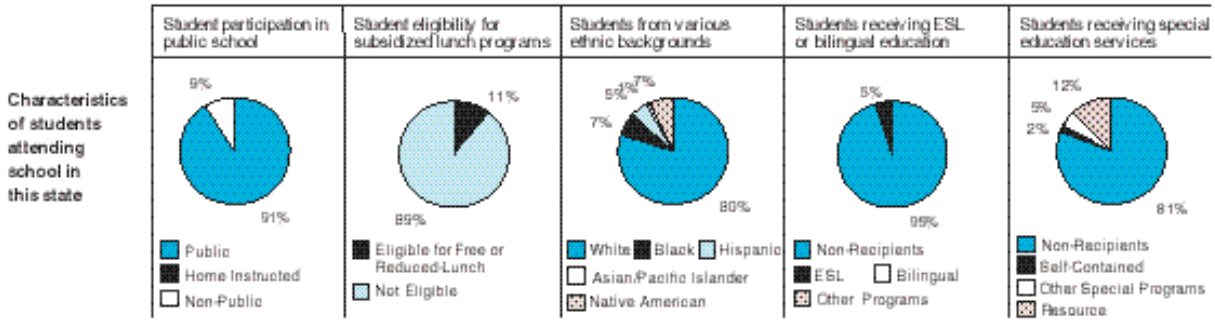
This year's model uses two years' worth of assessment data — for those tests that have been given for two years — in order to double the number of students in the sample. Therefore, this year's statistically generated performance band is smaller than last year's because as the number of students in the study increases, the errors in measurement decrease.

Over time, the model will continue to evolve to become more precise, but the above characteristics will always be its 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 or through our web site: infoworks.ride.uri.edu.

Special to the District and State Templates

The district and state pages include tables that show the total number of schools whose students met or exceeded the standard compared with similar students statewide on selected subscales of the New Standards tests.



FIELD 3 Demographic Profile

What You Are Looking At

You are looking at a demographic 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 1997.

Not Eligible
: Students whose family income falls outside the low-income guidelines as of November 1997.

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 the 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.

Parents' or Mother's Education

While the data for the other pie charts are collected by the school and apply to the school as a whole, the highest level of the parents' or mother's education is reported by individual test-takers on the test materials. Thus, the pie chart for parents' education applies only to the children in the one grade who took the test. For elementary schools we used mother's education level, as reported by students on the state assessments administered in the fifth grade, because it was both more complete and more reliable than the data from grade four.

Special to the District and State Templates

Public enrollment

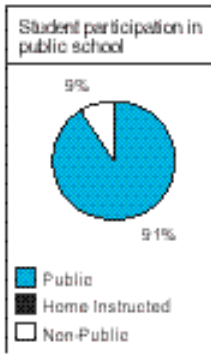
The number (and percentage) of Rhode Island's students who are enrolled in public schools, governed by a district, as of October 1997.

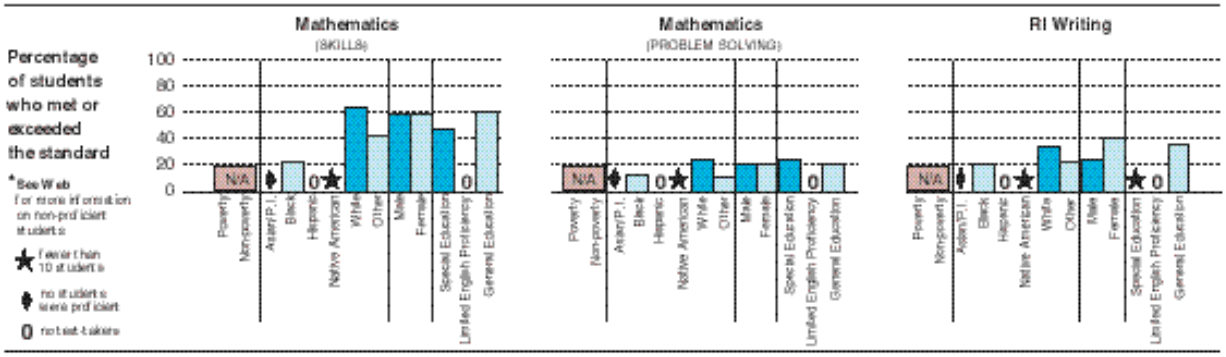
Non-public enrollment

The number (and percentage) of students who attend private or parochial schools, as of October 1997.

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 1997.





FIELD 4 Performance by Characteristics

What You Are Looking At

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

What You Are Looking For

You are looking for the 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 the 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 into one of the other racial categories. The school's enrollment data collection process does not include "other" as an option.

*SEE WEB

The web version of this field includes the achievement data for students who did not reach the standard. This data is also be broken out by students with certain characteristics and divided into the three performance levels below "achieving the standard."

"In their own words."

Highlights from the school

"After-School Enrichment Program – More than 100 students attended this six week program in the spring. There were nine choices of activities that were taught by parents and staff on a voluntary basis."

"Parent/Teacher/Student Compact – This compact is an agreement of partnership that is signed by parents, students and teachers which states that we will work together to ensure that each child achieves success."

"Bradford PRIDE Plan – Taking pride in our school by showing good behavior and respect. This school-wide plan was developed to promote positive self-image and to encourage students to take pride in our school community."

FIELD 5 School Highlights

What You Are Looking At

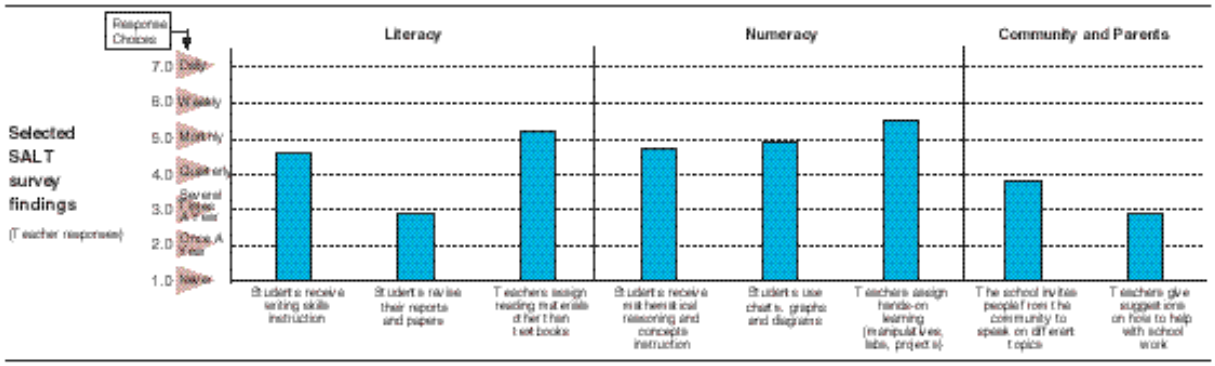
Without prescribing a set criteria, RIDE data-gatherers asked schools to express, in their own words, what they considered to be three highlights of their school last year (1997-1998).

What You Are Looking For

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

***SEE WEB**

The web version of this field also includes the school's most recent set of goals.



FIELD 6 Selected Salt Survey Findings

(Teacher Responses)

What You Are Looking At

This graph shows eight individual, item- or single question-level responses from the teachers' SALT surveys, using only the 'core' teachers. ('Core' teachers are those who teach math, science, language arts and social studies.) These eight responses were chosen from among hundreds of teacher, student and parent responses because they are indicative of the ways and degrees to which schools support literacy, numeracy and efforts to reach out to parents and community as partners to help improve student achievement.

What You Are Looking For

Unlike the assessments, the SALT survey data have no absolute standards nor will such standards ever be set. You are looking for clues as to what school and classroom practices might be altered to improve student achievement in this school. A school might compare these responses to their school improvement plan to see if there is a gap between the school goals and the realities of the teacher responses. If the frequencies indicated in these responses already meet your approval, you will have to look elsewhere in the SALT data for information that would support the school's efforts to move students closer to the 100% proficiency goal.

Choosing Indicators from among the Vast Amount of Salt Survey Data

Isolating a relatively tiny sample of SALT data for a public report is not something this data was originally designed to do. On the contrary, the survey instruments were specifically intended to give schools a very comprehensive picture of their functioning – their expectations, practices, climate, and etc. Still, the statewide SALT data seemed to indicate that some of the state's major objectives — literacy, numeracy and strong partnerships with family and community — were under-supported in practice at many schools. Much discussion went into identifying the most effective indicators for evaluating how well schools were structured to meet the state's goals. The indicators chosen are by no means the only survey responses that could apply to the goals, but at the state level, these responses seem to illustrate the school's functioning in the selected areas most effectively.

Complicating the presentation of SALT survey indicators is that the SALT data are expressed on different kinds of scales — as percentages in tables, as straight numbers and as bar graphs that rise according to different scales. To make the most of the tiny space allotted on each school template, a single scale, in this case a frequency scale of teacher responses, seemed least confusing and most evocative of a school's functioning at a basic, practical level.

Selected SALT survey findings

(Student and teacher responses)

	Poverty	Non-Poverty	All Seniors
% of seniors who took Algebra II	52	75	65
	Elementary	**Middle**	**High**
Span of teacher responsibility	26	80	125
% of teachers who report that time is a "moderate" or "major" obstacle to planning and implementing school improvement	60	70	80
% of students unsupervised outside of school more than 3 hours per day, 3 days a week or more	60	70	80

Special to the District

Of the four indicators on the district and state report, two are responses from the student survey and two are from the teacher survey. The percentage of seniors who took Algebra II and the percentage of students who are unsupervised after school are reported by students about themselves and are not observations of teachers or parents. If the percentage of seniors who took Algebra II is marked "NA," fewer than 3 students were in this category. The data on Algebra II are less reliable in districts where the percentage of students who responded to the SALT Survey was small.

Selected school indicators

*See Web for more information

	This School	This District	The State
1. SALT Survey Teacher Response Rate (%)	98.59	99.59	85.98
2. SALT Survey Student Response Rate (%)	45.41	73.75	74.47
3. Student Attendance (%)	94.75	95.21	92.74
4. Average Class Size (Elementary)	NA	NA	NA
5. Span of Responsibility (Middle & High)	85	85	95
6. Stability (%)	86.59	93.21	84.78
7. Mobility (%)	5.28	4.53	19.71
8. Teacher Attendance (%)	98.03	97.31	96.31
9. Teacher Grievances Filed / Total # of Teachers*	0/64	0/208	472/10028
10. Suspensions / Total # of Students*	223/805	277/3028	3548 1/153342
11. Drop-out Rate (%)	4.12	4.12	17.95
12. Graduation Rate (%)	95.88	95.88	82.00

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 selected indicators were assembled in compliance with 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 and revised in 1998 (Title 16, section 7.1)
3. Rhode Island's Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education and Board of Regents.

Some elements, like high school drop out rates, are 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. SALT Survey Teacher Response Rate:

The percentage of the total number of eligible teachers in this school who responded to the SALT survey.

2. SALT Survey Student Response Rate

The percentage of the total number of students in this school who responded to the SALT survey.

3. 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.

4. Average Class Size:

The average class size is the average of the figures reported by the core academic teachers on the SALT survey. The survey asks, "What is the average class size in the primary content classes that you teach at this school?" "Core" academics are math, science, language arts and social studies, the subjects on which students spend more than 50% of their learning time. Other teaching staff are not included because the number of students they can teach effectively vary widely by subject — for example, physical education classes are generally quite large. This indicator reflects the opportunity that core academic teachers have to provide individualized attention to students.

5. Span of Responsibility

The average span of responsibility refers to the number of students whom core academic teachers are responsible for teaching on a regular basis. "Core" academics are math, science, language arts and social studies. The number reported for 'span of responsibility' is the average of the figures reported by the core teachers on the SALT survey. At the elementary level, average class size is often the same as the span of responsibility, while in secondary schools the number will be the total number of students who receive instruction in the course of a teacher's day.

6. Stability

This indicator shows the proportion of the total student enrollment who entered the school at the beginning of the year and stayed through the end.

7. Mobility

This indicator shows the rate of student turnover. The number is the percentage of students who moved into or out of the school during the school year as compared to Fall enrollments.

PLEASE NOTE The stability and mobility indicators measure different phenomena and are not inverses of one another. The mobility index measures, if you will, the rate of flow through the non-stable portion of the student body. Together, the two indicators describe the degree of turnover in the school and its potential effect on the classroom environment.

Special to the State Template

Student, teacher and administrator mobility are graphically visualized, by district, in the state-level report, the first report in Information Works!

8. 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.

9. Teacher grievances

This is the number of grievances filed by teachers in the building in 1997-98 and the number of full-time teachers.

***SEE WEB**

On the web teacher grievances are broken out by type –

1. Insufficient Materials
2. Too Many Students
3. Physical Environment
4. Administrative Decisions
5. Other Grievances

10. Suspensions

The number of students who have been temporarily dismissed from school or sent to an alternative placement. The number of suspensions is followed by the total number of students in the building.

***SEE WEB**

On the web student suspensions are broken out by type –

1. Assault
2. Fighting
3. Weapons
4. Sale of controlled substance
5. Possession of controlled substance with intent to sell
6. Under the influence of a controlled substance
7. Disorderly conduct
8. Threat/Intimidation
9. Tobacco possession or use
10. Vandalism
11. Larceny/theft
12. Other

11. Drop-Out Rate

The drop-out rate is derived by subtracting the cumulative completion (see #12) 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 Rate

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

Financial information

Financial information will appear at the individual school level in next year's INFORMATION WORKS! This year, data collected from a sample of Rhode Island districts and schools will be available under separate cover.

FIELD 8 School Expenditures

What You Are Looking At and For

You are looking at a promise to have school level financial data by next year.

Fiscal Accountability

All of Rhode Island's school districts are in the process of implementing a financial reporting software system called In$ite. The state needs sound financial information to support good programming with informed resource allocation. All 36 school districts in Rhode Island use their own accounting systems and will continue to do so, but the different systems obscure a clear understanding of the state's education finances as a whole. Over the last two years, district business managers have been hammering out detailed agreements about definitions for where each dollar is posted. This work is progressing, and districts have been sorting their expenditures according to the agreed-on definitions.

Some systems are further along in the implementation process than others. Initial images of cross-district comparisons are beginning to appear, but the potential for misunderstanding this data is also becoming apparent. Therefore, under separate cover, RIDE is publishing a guide or teaching tool for this new realm of accountability, using real data from selected schools and districts.

	District Average	State Average
Median Family Income ($)	59,483	39,172
Per Capita Income ($)	24,965	14,961
Property Value Per Student ($)	565,523	309,319
Relative Local Tax Capacity	219.41	100
Relative Local Tax Effort	62.62	100
Local Tax Rate Per $1,000 of Assessed Value	20.00	20.70

This Year's District and State Templates

Even without the accuracy of the In$ite system, financial information is still critical to understanding student achievement and will be reported again this year with the information provided at the district level on Form 31. Form 31 is the RIDE's financial reporting instrument that is submitted annually by each district.

District Expenditures Per Pupil

(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 community and state is adequately supporting its schools, in general, and certain programs or populations of students, in particular.

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.

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 in the regionalized school districts, the tax capacities of the cities and towns have been translated into district capacities.

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 capacity will have a number larger than 100.

Relative tax effort

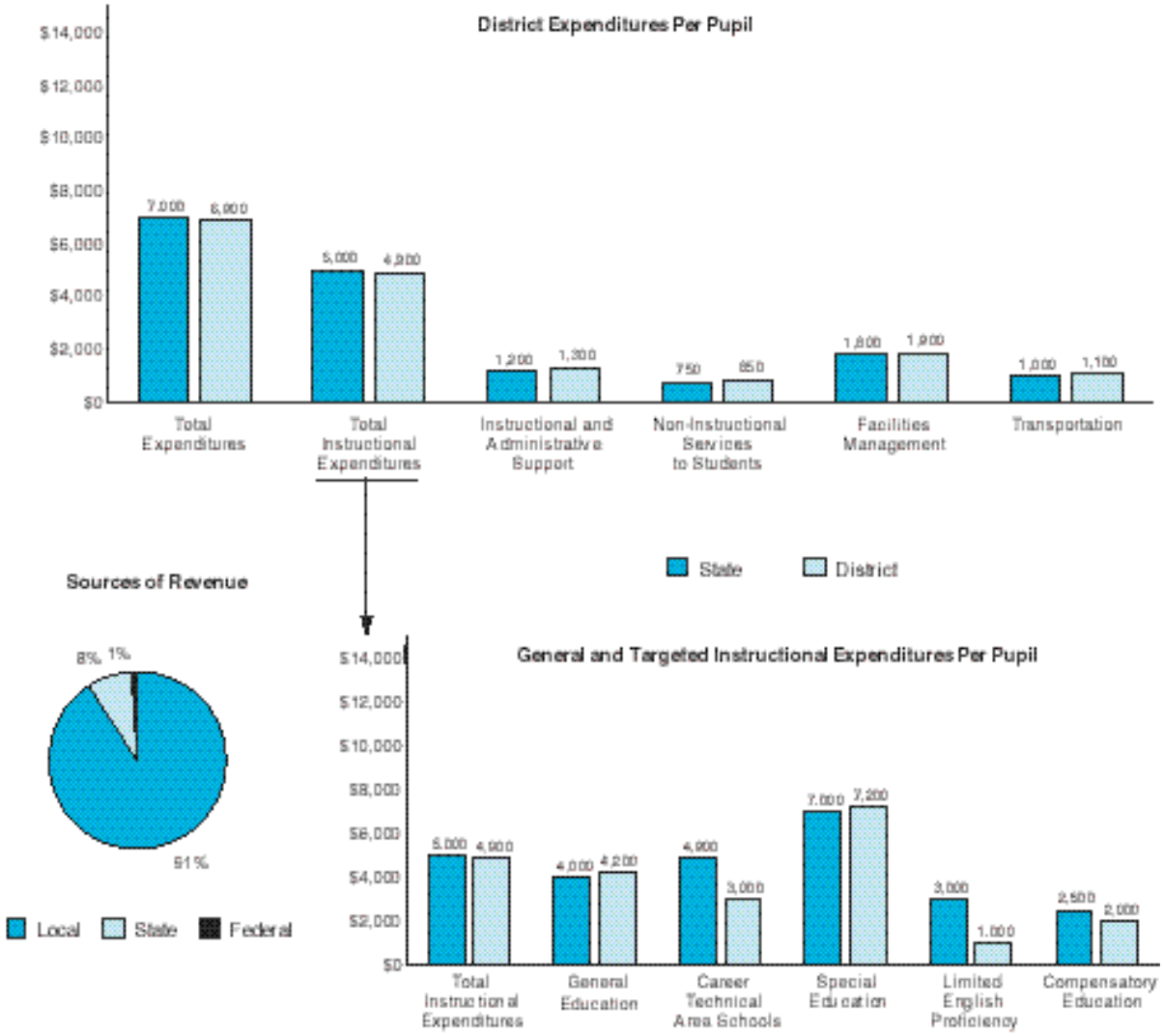
This indicator shows how heavily or lightly a district is taxed in relation to the rest of the state. The property tax of the municipality is divided by the statewide property tax rate for all municipalities and multiplied by 100. Thus, if a municipality taxes its property wealth at a rate lower than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

Special to the State Template

Relative tax effort and capacity are graphical5visualized, by district, in the state-level report, the first report in Information Works!

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.



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.

Instructional Expenditures Per Pupil

General and Targeted Instructional Expenditures
(also known as Total Instructional Expenditures)

This includes general instruction for all students and expenditures for the instruction of students in programs designed to provide specialized instruction. Students may be educated for all or part of the day; these expenditures are for the portion of the day the student receives instruction.

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.

Area Career and Technical Centers

This includes expenditures for the programs offered at the area career-technical schools.

Special Education

This includes all expenditures for special education programs.

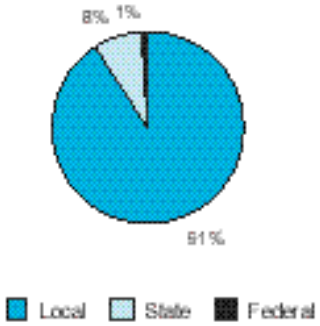
Limited-English Proficient

This is all expenditures for programs for students who require help with learning because their English proficiency is limited.

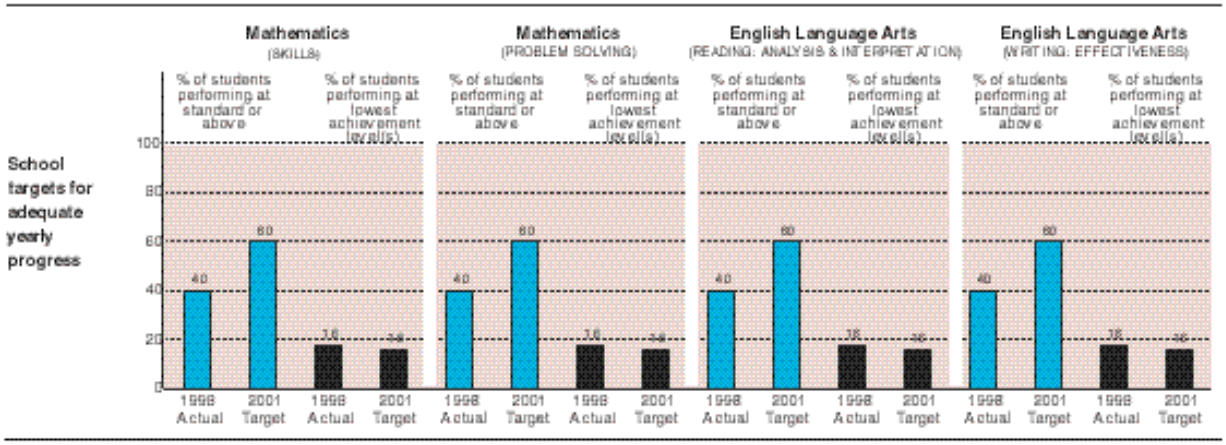
Compensatory Education

This is all expenditures for programs for low-income students who require help with attaining basic skills (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 Budget for fiscal year 1997-98. 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) and 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). These monies are not accounted for in this pie chart.



FIELD 9 Negotiated Achievement Targets or Adequate Yearly Progress

(Towards All Students Reaching State Standards)

What You Are Looking At

The first two bars in each of the four tests represent the school's actual level of proficiency against the school's target for increased proficiency in three years. The second two bars represent the actual percentage of students achieving at the lowest levels of non-proficiency against the school's target for decreasing the percentage of these students in three years.

What You Are Looking For

Until there is enough achievement data to show a trend (see below for explanation), the only thing to look for is the level of challenge a school has set for itself.

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.

Rhode Island's educational policies proceed from a commitment that all students will reach high standards in essential areas. According to this criterion, state assessment results demonstrate that every school in Rhode Island needs improvement. No school has every student reaching every standard. Consequently, all schools need to focus their efforts on improving teaching and learning. Setting achievement targets is a way of tracking a school's focus and efforts. In time, targets will show parents and the community how to assess the success of a school's improvement efforts.

Creating the First Data Points for Achievement Trends

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 movement a school is making towards 100% proficiency. 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, for most tests the 1998 achievement data is only the first of the three years that will be counted towards a three-year rolling average. Three years of achievement data averaged together will create a point, a specific level of achievement that can be followed each year henceforth with three-year averaged points that will show trend lines, or the progress schools are making towards achieving higher proficiency rates among their students. At that point the trend lines can be measured against the targets schools have set for themselves.

Setting Negotiated Targets

A second, very important lesson from national experiences is that other states have set standardized progress targets for all schools at, say, 2% or 3%, without taking into account either the schools' challenges nor the adequacy of resources to meet the challenges. Other states have found themselves accidently setting their schools up for failure by establishing unrealistic and undeliverable goals.

For this reason, RIDE issued guidelines to the schools to set their own targets for improved student performance on state assessments in mathematics, English-language arts and writing. These targets were then to be negotiated with the state via the RIDE Field Service system by November 1998. Because the target-setting exercise was new to everyone this year, not all targets were actually set by the school and negotiated with the state. Indeed, some targets were set by the districts for across-the-board application to the individual schools. Other targets were set outside the guidelines of 3 to 5% per year for a three year accumulated gain of 9 to 15%. Information Works! reports these targets because target-setting is an important part of the accountability agenda, but as these first targets are truly negotiated over the course of this year, some may change.

Two Kinds of Targets

Target 1 Increasing the Percentage of Students at or Above Standard

Schools were asked to consider the proportion of their students who are currently proficient in the selected test areas and commit to increasing that proportion within the guidelines of 3 to 5% a year. That number was multiplied by three to obtain a three-year target for the year 2001, a number that should fall within 9 to 15%. Again, the three-year target-setting exercise will give schools a chance to accommodate the especially high or low-performing individual class.

Target 2 Reducing the Percentage of Students at the Lowest Performance Level

Schools used the same 3 to 5% guidelines to set targets to reduce the proportion of their lowest achieving students. Some schools have a large number of students performing at the lowest level, or 'Little Evidence of Achievement.' Those schools merely applied the guide numbers to that group. If there were less than 10% at this level, the school added the percentage of students at the next lowest level, or 'Below the Standard'. Those schools applied the guide numbers to the combined lowest two achievement levels. In rare cases, schools had less than 10% of their student population in the two lowest categories combined. Some of these schools used all three groups of students performing below the standard to set a target, and in these few cases the two target numbers are merely inverses of one another.

The Chart of the Future

When the three years are over and we have data points for the averaged actual achievement, the chart will change to a trend chart that show achievement against the negotiated targets. These two lines will illustrate whether or not the schools are actually hitting their targets — using the three-year rolling averages. Ultimately the charts will be able to show the progress that schools, and the state, are making towards the goal of all children achieving 100% proficiency.

Progressive Support and Intervention

After three years, the data will begin to show research-based evidence as to whether schools are making adequate yearly progress. In the event they have not, they will be subject to a process of progressive support and intervention. The policy for this process has been drafted, but not finalized. However, the state does not intend to wait a full three years to begin to support and intervene in schools which are already known to be under-performing or dramatically under-resourced, on the basis of other information. RIDE has either begun to engage with these schools already or will soon.

State-operated Schools

The section for State-operated Schools follows the other schools in this report. State-operated schools fall under the auspices of the Board of Regents and are almost exclusively funded by state funds.

Area Career and Technical Centers

The data for the Career and Technical Centers (RI Education Law 16-45) are being reported for the first time this year. The information in Field #3, the pie charts describing the students' characteristics, is reported in a slightly different manner from the other schools because it is gathered from different sources. In years to come, we hope to make the information on the Career and Technical Centers more comparable with the other schools.