



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Elliot Krieger, Communications - (401) 222-8471
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Statewide Graduation Rate Improves by 3.5 Percent

PROVIDENCE – The statewide four-year graduation rate for the Class of 2008 was 74%, an improvement of 3.5 percentage points over the 2007 rate, according to information released today (March 20, 2009) by Governor Donald L. Carcieri.

The graduation rate in the urban school districts improved by 5 points, to 61%. The urban-ring districts also improved by 5 points, to 78%. The suburban schools declined by 3 points, to 80%.

Governor Carcieri released the graduation rates at Times2 Academy, one of three schools in the state with a 100% four-year graduation rate. (The others are the Block Island School and the **Textron Chamber of Commerce Academy**, in Providence.)

“I want to congratulate the students and teachers at Times2 and at the other schools across the state that have improved their graduation rates this year,” Governor Carcieri said. “Although the graduation rates in our urban districts are still too low, I am pleased to see the overall improvement and significant accomplishments in the urban graduation rates, particularly at Times2 and Textron, two of our urban charter high schools. We have set high standards, and we are meeting the challenge of bringing all of our students to proficiency.”

“The Class of 2008 was the first graduating class that had to meet the requirements of the Regents’ high-school regulations and the new Diploma System,” said Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Esq., Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. “The improvements in the graduation rate for the Class of 2008 show me that students will rise to the occasion to meet a challenge such as the new performance-based graduation requirements. We have a long way to go to bring our graduation rate to an acceptable level, but these results show that we are on the right path.”

“The improvement in the four-year graduation rate is further evidence that our high-school reform efforts, including the emphasis on student advisories and personalized learning environments, are working,” said Peter McWalters, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “More students are staying in school, meeting tough standards, and graduating on time. Though the graduation rates are still too low, particularly among students in poverty, students with disabilities, and English-language learners, we are beginning to close some of these gaps.”

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To determine the four-year graduation rate, the school districts and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) track and account for each student from the time he or she enters 9th grade in the public-school system. The 2008 four-year rate, therefore, shows the percentage of students in the 2004-05 9th-grade “cohort” who graduated in or by 2008. (Transfers in and out of the system are also accounted for in this calculation.)

These are the statewide numbers for the Class of 2007 (2003-04 cohort) and the Class of 2008 (2004-05 cohort):

	Class of 2007	Class of 2008
4-year Graduation Rate	70.4 percent	73.9 percent
GED completers	4.8 percent	3.2 percent
Still in system (after 4 years)	3.8 percent	7.3 percent
Dropout rate	18.4 percent	15.5 percent
Graduated after 5 years	2.6 percent	--
Five-year Graduation Rate	73 percent	--

This year, for the first time, RIDE has released graduation rate for various student groups. The four-year 2008 graduation rates by student group are:

Student Group	2008 4-Year Graduation Rate
All students:	74 percent
Asian:	64 percent
African-American:	74 percent
Hispanic:	62 percent
Native American:	63 percent
White:	79 percent
Students in poverty:	61 percent
Students with disabilities:	56 percent
English-language learners:	59 percent
Male:	69 percent
Female:	79 percent

The graduation rates by school and district are posted on the Information Works Web site and the RIDE Web site, along with a set of Frequently Asked Questions about how RIDE calculates graduation rates.

