

**STANDARDS OF THE RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF REGENTS  
FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards**

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The Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards (RIPTS) are content standards that outline what every teacher should know and be able to do. The RIPS are ambitious and visionary, while at the same time presenting a portrait of quality teaching that every competent professional can achieve. They are designed to be a resource for promoting agreement among state policymakers, teacher preparation faculty, school and district administrators, members of professional associations and organizations, the public, and most importantly, among teachers themselves about the attributes of quality teaching in Rhode Island.

Each Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standard is presented as a statement of the individual standard accompanied by a series of elaborated descriptors. The descriptors further define the meaning and intent of each standard. The order of the descriptors does not imply a hierarchy of importance or a desired chronology of acquisition over a teacher's career. Some standards have more descriptors than others. The number of descriptors does not communicate the relative importance of the standards. Some standards simply required more elaboration than others to clarify their meaning for multiple audiences.

These standards refer repeatedly to "all students." These references really do mean *all* students and the multiple strengths, challenges and backgrounds that each student brings to the classroom. All students includes, but is by no means limited to English Language Learners, students with special learning needs, and students of all races, ethnicities, cultures and socio-economic circumstances.

The RIPS are rooted in highly respected state and national teaching standards. They are an outgrowth of the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards (RIBTS) that were promulgated in 1994. The beginning teacher standards, in turn, were designed to align with the Five Core Propositions of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, as well as the standards developed by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium – both highly regarded statements of quality teaching practice.

The RIPS are the foundation for the continuous improvement of the teaching profession in Rhode Island. They define practices in which educators should develop increasing competence throughout their careers and as such are the embodiment of the Regents' expectation that every educator will be a life-long learner.

The RIPS are not performance standards. They do not describe acceptable levels of performance of the skills outlined in the standards for any stage of educators' careers. The decisions about how well educators must perform on the standards, as well as decisions about the design of the assessment instruments needed to assess performance, are left to others. Stakeholders have done significant work in these areas already, based on the RIBTS. They will be able to refine and expand on this work using the RIPS. Examples of work that has and will be done include:

Since 1997, teacher education programs in Rhode Island have used the RIBTS to align their teacher preparation curriculum and designed accompanying assessments to ensure that program graduates have the knowledge and skill required of beginning educators. The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) approves teacher preparation programs at Rhode Island universities and colleges, in part, by how well their graduates are able to demonstrate competence on these standards. In this instance, the faculty and administrators of preparation programs have determined the performance standards that preparing teachers must meet and they have designed the assessments used to judge performance. They have made these decisions in accordance with state program approval and teacher certification requirements. The faculty and administration of Rhode Island teacher preparation institutions can now reexamine and refine their work based on the RIPS and their implications for the skills and knowledge needed by beginning teachers.

At the request of Rhode Island educators, RIDE revised the certification process to align the requirements for recertification with staff development experiences that were meaningful to educators and met the needs of schools and district initiatives. The new recertification process asks educators to identify and engage in professional development that will improve their teaching as defined by the RIBTS, as well as the needs of their students and schools. RIDE will now be asking educators to use the RIPS as they identify areas for professional growth.

Teachers, their unions, school districts, and administrators have also used the RIBTS to improve the practice of new and continuing teachers at the local level. Rhode Island districts use the RIBTS when developing their mentoring programs designed to support beginning teachers. In some Rhode Island school districts, teachers' unions and school districts have agreed to revise their teacher evaluation systems to base them on the RIBTS. With the introduction of the RIPS, local stakeholders have the opportunity to look at teaching practice along a continuum and to use the RIPS to inform induction, mentoring, professional development and evaluation and to create a coherent system of expectations and supports for improving teacher practice.

One measure of the strength of any set of standards is their ability to promote common agreement around a vision of quality – agreement that informs the building of systems that will support competence in the standards as the norm, rather than the exception. If the R IPTS are to achieve their promise, they must lead to the creation of systems in which teaching that encompasses them is commonplace, rather than remarkable.

Creating such systems will require providing educators with opportunities and resources as they are held accountable for the competent performance of these standards. It is easier for teachers to “work collaboratively with colleagues to examine teacher practice, student work and student assessment results . . .” if they are provided with the time, skills, and leadership to do so. For educators to teach in ways that address the needs of English Language Learners, they must have had opportunities to learn what those needs are and how they can be addressed in the classroom. If state, higher education and local systems want to hold educators accountable for meeting these standards, then they have the responsibility to provide the supports and opportunities educators need to demonstrate competence in the standards. At the same time, educators and their professional associations are also responsible for promoting these standards and helping members to develop sufficient competence and skill. The intent of the R IPTS is to encourage all sides to step forward and contribute to their realization. Making the R IPTS a reality in Rhode Island classrooms will require systemic support, as well as initiative on the part of each individual teacher.

A potential liability for any set of standards is that they can be abused and used in unintended ways that are not supported by their design. The R IPTS present a holistic portrait of high quality teaching. This portrait of high quality teaching must be honored if stakeholders decide to use the standards for developing performance standards and assessments. If observing performances of these standards is reduced to filling out simplistic checklists based on limited and insufficient evidence, this will be an abuse of their purpose and will negate their promise of improving teacher practice.

Instead, these standards should be used to inform discussions that create a common vision of quality teaching and of what will be needed from all stakeholders to help teachers achieve the shared vision and to galvanize the actions needed to create these conditions. The conditions that stakeholders must create include:

- Common agreement on the attributes of good teaching and the conditions needed to support it;
- Well-developed performance standards and assessments and training in how to use them well;
- Professional preparation and professional development that equips teachers to meet the standards;
- Professional responsibility to seek out additional information and participate in learning opportunities;
- Systematic observation, evaluation and adjustment as these systems are being built so that they can be improved over time.

It is the Regents' intent that the teaching profession and all Rhode Island stakeholders embrace the RIPS and use them to reach agreement about what constitutes quality teaching in Rhode Island.

## **THE RHODE ISLAND PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS (RIPTS)**

### **1. Teachers create learning experiences using a broad base of general knowledge that reflects an understanding of the nature of the communities and world in which we live.**

*Teachers...*

reflect a variety of academic, social, and cultural experiences in their teaching

use a broad content knowledge base sufficient to create interdisciplinary learning experiences designed to ensure that all students achieve state standards for content and achievement

exhibit a commitment to learning about the changes in their disciplines and in our world that models a commitment to lifelong learning for students

facilitate student involvement in the school and wider communities

### **2. Teachers have a deep content knowledge base sufficient to create learning experiences that reflect an understanding of central concepts, vocabulary, structures, and tools of inquiry of the disciplines/content areas they teach.**

*Teachers...*

know their discipline/content areas and understand how knowledge in their discipline/content area is created, organized, linked to other disciplines, and applied beyond the school setting

design instruction that addresses the core skills, concepts, and ideas of the disciplines/content areas to help all students meet Rhode Island's learning standards

select appropriate instructional materials and resources (including technological resources) based on their comprehensiveness, accuracy, and usefulness for representing particular ideas and concepts in the discipline/content areas

engage students in a variety of explanations and multiple representations of concepts, including analogies, metaphors, experiments, demonstrations, and illustrations, that help all students develop conceptual understanding

represent and use differing viewpoints, theories, and methods of inquiry when teaching concepts and encourage all students to see, question, and interpret concepts from a variety of perspectives

**3. Teachers create instructional opportunities that reflect an understanding of how children learn and develop.**

*Teachers...*

understand how students use their prior knowledge to construct knowledge, acquire skills, develop habits of mind, and acquire positive dispositions toward learning

design instruction that meets the current cognitive, social and personal needs of their students

create age-appropriate lessons and activities that meet the variety of developmental levels of students within a class

**4. Teachers create instructional opportunities that reflect a respect for the diversity of students.**

**5. Teachers create instructional opportunities to encourage all students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, performance skills, and literacy across content areas.**

*Teachers...*

design lessons that extend beyond factual recall and challenge students to develop higher level cognitive skills

pose questions that encourage students to view, analyze, and interpret ideas from multiple perspectives

make instructional decisions about when to provide information, when to clarify, when to pose a question, and when to let a student struggle to try to solve a problem

engage students in generating knowledge, testing hypotheses, and exploring methods of inquiry and standards of evidence

use tasks that engage students in exploration, discovery, and hands-on activities

**6. Teachers create a supportive learning environment that encourages appropriate standards of behavior, positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.**

*Teachers...*

use principles of effective classroom management to establish classrooms in which clear rules and standards of behavior are maintained

establish a safe, secure and nurturing learning environment that supports the active engagement of all students

provide and structure the time necessary to explore important concepts and ideas

help students establish a classroom environment characterized by mutual respect and intellectual risk-taking

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systematically collect, synthesize, and interpret assessment results from multiple assessments to monitor, improve, and report individual and group achievement

provide students with opportunities and guidance to evaluate their own work and behavior against defined criteria and use the results of self-assessment to establish individual goals for learning

use assessment results to provide students with timely, helpful, and accurate feedback on their progress toward achievement goals

maintain records of student learning and communicate student progress to students, parents/guardians, and other colleagues

use information from their assessment of students to reflect on their own teaching, to modify their instruction and to help establish professional development goals

**10. Teachers reflect on their practice and assume responsibility for their own professional development by actively seeking and participating in opportunities to learn and grow as professionals.**

*Teachers...*

solicit feedback from students, families, and colleagues to reflect on and improve their own teaching

explore and evaluate the application of current research, instructional approaches and strategies, including technologies to improve student learning

take responsibility for their own professional development and improvement of their students' learning by participating in workshops, courses, or other individual and collaborative professional development activities that support their plans for continued development as teachers

take responsibility for learning about and implementing federal, state, district and school initiatives to improve teaching and learning



**11. Teachers maintain professional standards guided by legal and ethical principles.**

*Teachers...*

maintain standards that require them to act in the best interests and needs of students.