







Rhode Island

Law Analyzed	Basic Education Program, Educator Evaluation System Standards, Code of Educator Professional Responsibility
Date Passed	2010-2012
Overall Rating	6.75





Unlike most states included in this analysis, Rhode Island has not passed legislation related to teacher evaluation. Rather, Rhode Island has worked to address teacher effectiveness through its Board of Regents' regulatory authority, which in Rhode Island carries the force of law. Rhode Island's Basic Education Program (BEP) is an overarching set of regulations, designed to ensure a high-quality education for all Rhode Island children. The BEP was most recently revised in 2009. In December 2009, Rhode Island adopted Educator Evaluation System Standards, which set requirements for local evaluation systems. The Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards and Rhode Island Educator Code of Professional Responsibility further fill out the state's regulatory framework for teacher and principal effectiveness.

Rhode Island's Evaluation System Standards require annual evaluation for all teachers that incorporate professional practice and responsibilities with student learning, which is measured by both customized student learning objectives and, for teachers in tested grades and subjects, the Rhode Island Growth Model. The Educator Evaluation System Standards also require districts to use evaluation results to inform key personnel decisions, including tenure and dismissal of ineffective teachers. The BEP requires that school district management establish strong human capital systems and that hiring, retention, placement, and other key personnel decisions be made by school district management based on the best interests of students. The state has made clear to districts that these requirements preclude layoffs, excessing decisions, and teacher assignments based solely on seniority. Rhode Island does not have state level policies to prohibit forced teacher placement or encourage performance-based teacher compensation—both areas for potential future improvement. The state is also still developing its systems to publicly report on aggregate measures of teacher effectiveness and to hold teacher preparation programs accountable for the performance of their graduates, both of which would likely have resulted in a higher score had they been complete.



Rhode Island

Criteria	Explanation	Score
Are teachers evaluated at least annually?	Yes.	
Are principals, as well as teachers, evaluated?	Yes. The Educator Evaluation System Standards cover administrator, teachers, and support professionals.	
Is evidence of student learning a factor in teacher evaluations?	Yes, teacher evaluations incorporate three components: Teacher Professional Practice, Educator Professional Responsibilities, and Measures of Student Learning. Measures of Student Learning include customized student learning objectives for all teachers. Starting in 2012-13, Measures of Student Learning also include student growth as measured by the Rhode Island Growth Model for teachers of math and English language arts in grades 3-7. Teachers cannot receive a highly effective rating unless they have “Exceptional” or “Full” attainment of student learning objectives. Teachers with “Minimal or No” attainment of student learning objectives cannot be rated effective. Teachers with “Partial” attainment of objectives can be rated effective but such a rating triggers an automatic review.	
Do evaluations differentiate between multiple levels of educator performance?	Yes. Four-level rating system: highly-effective, effective, developing, ineffective.	
Are parents and the public provided clear information about teacher effectiveness?	Rhode Island is currently developing its policies and approach for reporting aggregate data on teacher effectiveness. Individual teacher evaluation data is not public under current law, and it is the state’s position that such data should not be made public for individual teachers.	
Are educator preparation programs accountable for graduates’ effectiveness?	RIDE’s Strategic Plan commits Rhode Island to revising program approval standards for teacher preparation to include measures of effectiveness for program completers, and the Race to the Top application commits to linking data on teachers’ impact on student achievement to the in-state programs where they were prepared for credentialing. In 2011 the Commissioner temporarily suspended the previously existing program approval process for three years so it can be revised based on these commitments, but this revision is not yet complete. The state has withdrawn approval from two programs that failed to produce effective graduates.	

Rhode Island

Criteria	Explanation	Score
Is tenure linked to effectiveness?	The Educator Evaluator System Standards state that, “evaluation systems are designed to provide objective information to support meaningful renewal and tenure decisions,” but do not set a specific standard of effectiveness to earn tenure, although districts’ evaluation systems may do so. Under existing state statute, tenure is automatic after three years of employment, and cannot be revoked once awarded. Pursuant to the Educator Evaluation System Standards, districts are expected to discharge ineffective probationary teachers from employment before they earn tenure.	
Does state provide clear authority to dismiss ineffective teachers and a reasonable process for doing so?	The Educator Evaluation System Standards state that, “The district dismisses educators who do not meet expectations for educator quality and who are unwilling or unable to improve as a result of feedback and outcomes identified in an improvement plan in a timely manner,” but does not explicitly define a level or duration of ineffective or minimally effective performance that constitutes just cause for dismissal or a process for dismissals based on ineffectiveness. Under Rhode Island’s existing process for teacher dismissal, a teacher may request a hearing before the full local board of education. A teacher aggrieved by a board’s decision to dismiss may appeal the decision to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Teachers may seek appeal to the Supreme Court, but the standard for review is “arbitrary and capricious.”	
Is effectiveness, rather than seniority, the primary consideration in reductions in force?	Rhode Island statute requires that reductions in force based on a decline in pupil population must be based on seniority, but this statute does not apply to reductions in force due to funding or programmatic changes. According to the BEP, interests of students shall be the primary factor in all staffing decisions. District policies that base teacher assignments or reductions in force solely on seniority are not in accordance with BEP. BEP does not dictate the precise degree to which seniority may be taken into account, but it must be secondary to other performance criteria.	
In cases of teacher excessing, is there a process for teachers to secure new positions through mutual consent, and for those who cannot do so to eventually be discharged from employment?	According to the BEP, interests of students shall be the primary factor in all staffing decisions, and may not be subject to the collective bargaining process. Law/regulations do not specify what happens in cases of excessing decisions, the process through which excessed teachers are to find new positions, or provide a process for discharge of teachers who fail to find new positions through mutual consent.	

Rhode Island

Criteria	Explanation	Score
Do principals have authority to decide who teaches in their schools?	Under the BEP, staffing decisions are a management responsibility statutorily limited to the superintendent—law does not require principal consent for teacher assignments. Staffing decisions must be made by management with the best interests of students as the primary factor, and may not be subject to the collective bargaining process.	
Does the law protect students from being consecutively assigned to ineffective teachers?	Under the Basic Education Plan, students in Rhode Island have a right to be taught by effective teachers. Preventing students from being consecutively taught by ineffective teachers is one of the commitments in district Scopes of Work for Race to the Top, which all districts in the state have signed.	
Are effective teachers rewarded with increased compensation?	Rhode Island neither mandates nor prohibits performance-based teacher compensation, and some Rhode Island school districts have established performance-based teacher compensation. The Educator Evaluation Standards state that, “The district identifies ways to recognize and capitalize on their talents through differentiated roles and responsibilities, formal recognition, and/or other incentives.”	