



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
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255 Westminister Street  
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Enclosure 9d  
October 14, 2014

Deborah A. Gist  
Commissioner

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**TO:** Members of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education

**FROM:** Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner 

**RE:** **Approval of FY 2016 and FY 2015 Revised Budget Submittals**

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FY 2015 Revised Budget

The FY 2015 revised budget submission contains an overall \$.5M increase in general revenue when compared with the FY 2015 enacted budget. This is due to an increase of \$.5M in housing aid and an increase of \$45k in group home aid.

FY 2016 Current Service Level Budget Submission

The Department's FY 2016 current service level (CSL) budget submission requests a total of \$1.3 billion, including \$1.05 billion in General Revenue expenditures. It includes a \$50.8M increase (5%) in General Revenue expenditures from the FY 2015 enacted level. The largest increase is \$40.6M (80% of the proposed increase) to fund Year 5 of the funding formula and its attendant categorical funds for early learning, career and technical education, transportation, and high cost special education. An increase of \$3.3M in teacher retirement is the second largest increase.

Within the overall increase, the FY 2016 CSL budget also contains approximately \$4M to continue strengthening our schools and the teaching profession. We are seeking \$2.5M to restore Progressive Support and Intervention funds to their previous funding level in order to support the schools and districts in need of improvement. These funds were eliminated from the Department's budget when it was awarded the Race to the Top funds in 2010. The remaining \$1.5M of the \$4M request will provide LEAs continued access to the statewide systems that support knowledge/data management and lesson/curriculum-sharing. This request of an additional \$4M includes grant opportunities to the field; software licenses and maintenance fees; increased bandwidth for statewide instructional technology; and funding for three positions focusing on performance management and educator quality that were not included in the 2015 enacted budget.

The requested increases are partially offset by \$1M in savings from the original group home aid targets due to data adjustments and \$0.2M each from the continued phase out of Project Vision and the elimination of the Channel 36 pass-through grant.

### FY 2016 Constrained Budget Submission

The Department has also prepared a FY 2016 constrained budget that achieves \$. 9M in savings from across the Department. This reduction represents approximately half the 7.5% reduction target received from the State Budget Office. The Department strongly believes these are the only reductions available that will not seriously compromise the work or stymie the momentum of the Department and LEAs. The additional requests found in the CSL budget are all included in the constrained budget with the exception of the reinstatement of Progressive Support and Intervention and E-rate expansion. The Constrained Budget reductions include the final phase-out of the state funds for Project Vision (\$.2M); the phase-out of Channel 36 funding (\$.3M); savings in fees for a legal settlement (\$.1M), and RI School for the Deaf vacancy savings (\$.3M). Previous Constrained Budget submissions have included the elimination of the school breakfast administrative support aid (\$0.3M) and the elimination of the reimbursement to LEA's for the purchase of non-public textbooks (\$0.2M). These recommendations have never been approved by the General Assembly and are not included in 2016 Constrained Budget.

The Department's FY16 CSL budget does not include additional staff to support early learning in Rhode Island. Early learning is a priority and at its current staffing level of .75 FTE, is insufficient for long-term sustainability. The Rhode Island Department of Education, along with community and district partners, is applying for a federal grant that would accelerate pre-kindergarten expansion throughout the state. Should this grant be funded, RIDE will need to supplement the current .75 FTE with 3 additional early learning staff members.

**RECOMMENDATION: That, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves and transmits the FY 2016 current service level, FY 2016 constrained, and FY 2015 revised budget proposals to the Rhode Island State Budget Office. We further approve its transmission to the R.I. Board Education for final approval.**