



128 DORRANCE STREET, SUITE 220
PROVIDENCE, RI 02903
401.831.7171 (t)
401.831.7175 (f)
www.riaclu.org

NEWS RELEASE

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2014

GROUPS CHALLENGE RI DEPT. OF EDUCATION'S "ROSY" VIEW OF NECAP RESULTS FOR SENIORS

Community groups working with at-risk student populations took strong issue today with the RI Department of Education's "rosy view" of NECAP high stakes testing requirement results released earlier this week for high school seniors.

Although RIDE touted the number of students whose scores progressed sufficiently to qualify them for a diploma, the groups claim that officials downplayed the fact that the students who were always most at risk of not graduating due to the test remain severely impacted, and are being left as "collateral damage" by the high stakes testing mandate. The groups speaking out today were the R.I. Teachers of English Language Learners, the RI Disability Law Center, the NAACP Providence Branch, R.I. Legal Services, and the ACLU of Rhode Island.

The recently released statistics show that, with just a few months to go before graduation: 61% of seniors with Limited English Proficiency remain at risk of not getting a diploma; 37% of black and Hispanic seniors remain at risk of not getting a diploma; 56% of seniors with special education needs remain at risk of not getting a diploma; and 34% of seniors who qualify for the free and reduced lunch program remain at risk of not getting a diploma. Brief statements from the five organizations follow:

Nancy Cloud, on behalf of Rhode Island Teachers of English Language Learners: "Over 60% of seniors who are in the process of learning English are in danger of not graduating. As ELL specialists, we believe the only thing it convincingly shows is that the students could not read and understand the test items because our state persists on testing them in a language it knows they have not mastered. This testing practice is indefensible and runs contrary to the guidance of all of our professional measurement associations. We are not learning what English Language Learners know or don't know; all we are learning is that they don't know English, something we already knew when we identified them as ELL. We believe it's time to take a hard look at the damage this testing requirement is inflicting on our students."

Anne Mulready, supervising attorney with RI Disability Law Center: "With only four months left before graduation, 56% percent of students with disabilities in the Class of 2014 remain at risk of not getting a diploma. Tests like NECAP were supposed to help schools focus on at-risk groups like students with disabilities, and close achievement gaps between these students and their peers. Instead, students with disabilities remain unacceptably and disproportionately impacted by the use of this high-stakes testing graduation requirement."

(more)

Jim Vincent of the NAACP: “The NAACP Providence Branch does not support using the NECAP exam as a graduation requirement and is extremely concerned that a whopping 37% of Black and Hispanic seniors may be denied diplomas this year!”

Veronika Kot, Rhode Island Legal Services Education Law Attorney: “The low-income youth who continue to be at risk of not graduating this late in the year are not expendable. They are not acceptable ‘collateral damage.’ They are real young people whose futures are now in serious jeopardy, and from the groups that are most at-risk and yet most likely to be shortchanged throughout their educational experience. They are now being penalized for systemic inequities, despite having persevered and fulfilled every other graduation requirement.”

Steven Brown, executive director of the ACLU of Rhode Island: “When it comes to the most vulnerable students in Rhode Island, there is little to show for all the time, energy and money wasted on preparing students for the test, instead of truly teaching them. These statistics demonstrate yet again both the folly and the harm of RIDE’S testing mania, and belies the agency’s rosy view of things.”

In the next week, the organizations plan on preparing an analysis of the additional data that has been released today on the NECAP test results for all students other than seniors.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Nancy Cloud: 456-8789
Anne Mulready: 831-3150
Veronika Kot: 274-2652
Steven Brown: 831-7171
Jim Vincent: 261-0174