

Coventry to Participate in Certificate Pilot Program

The program will create certificates to provide students with additional opportunities and skills towards their post-secondary goals.

By [Lauren Costa](#) | June 20, 2012



At Tuesday night's School Committee meeting, Director of Special Services, Susan Lyons presented a certificate pilot program that Coventry will participate in during the upcoming school year.

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) organized an 11-member work group that included special education directors, rehabilitation service specialists, labor and training department members, transitional educators and several others to create a program that will give certificate options to students who may not reach high school diploma requirements. The pilot program will primarily address students who take the RI Alternate Assessment (RIAA), but if successful, will eventually be introduced to all high school students.

Lyons explained that due to changing policies, in 2014 it will be impossible for RIAA students to receive a diploma - a fact that made the certificate pilot program all the more important. There are over 700 RIAA



students across Rhode Island and more than 3,000 additional students who are currently not partially proficient on state assessments.

"The certificates will be something to give these students in their post-secondary lives that will be useful," she said.

The work group conducted research on both local and national levels in addition to RIAA guidelines to produce a set of three certificates that showcase a range of skills, both academic and practical. During the pilot program, students will be able to earn one or all of the certificates and in the future may be able to earn them in addition to a diploma if the program is added to the individual learning plans of all students.

The Certificate of Work Readiness will require students to meet standards in specific work-related skills to be entry level workers, as well as life skills with strong work focus, such as work safety, habits, conduct and team work.

The Certificate of Self Determination will require students to understand their disability and abilities along with rights and responsibilities. It will also require self advocacy skills on the part of the student.

The Certificate of Community and Citizenship will be earned by students who inform and involve individuals in building community based on citizenship and community standards.

"The certificates will be a marketable assessment of how far they have progressed," said Lyons. "They will be giving students really valuable, usable records."

Each certificate will contain nine standards with varying benchmarks and aligns with a student's transcripts in order to determine the level of support a student may require to achieve the standard. The physical certificate will resemble a standard high school diploma.

Lyons and fellow work group members will be hosting trainings next year for parents to show them what the certificates can provide for their young adults. [Coventry High School](#) Life Skills teacher Laurie Masterson and several other educators have already started conversations with local business providers to explain what the certificates should mean to them in regards to hiring employees. Lyons also explained that once the program is launched statewide in its entirety in 2014, there will be a strong push to educate the business community about the program.

"This is a way for employers to be educated about their potential employees and once this is launched we are hoping that we can give the business community a very secure document," said Lyons. "Our challenge as educators is to provide Rhode Island students with the skills they will need to be contributing members in the community. This work is simply the beginning."