

Rhode Island



A Union of Professionals

For more than 50 years, the United States has claimed to provide equal public education to all students, regardless of background or identity. But in fact, as income and wealth inequality have become more brutal and entrenched, low-income students, students of color, and students with disabilities have systematically and continuously been deprived of the resources that more privileged students take for granted.

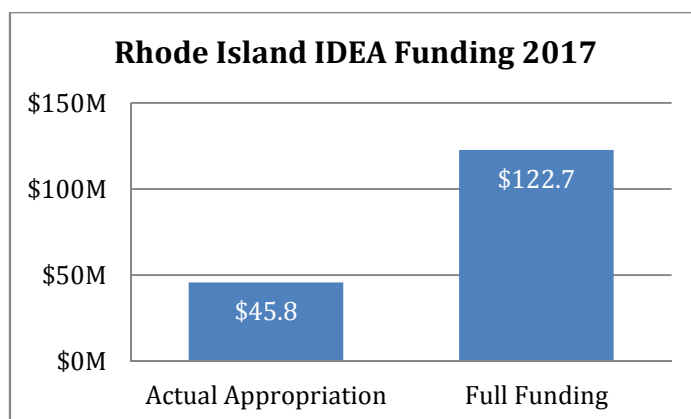
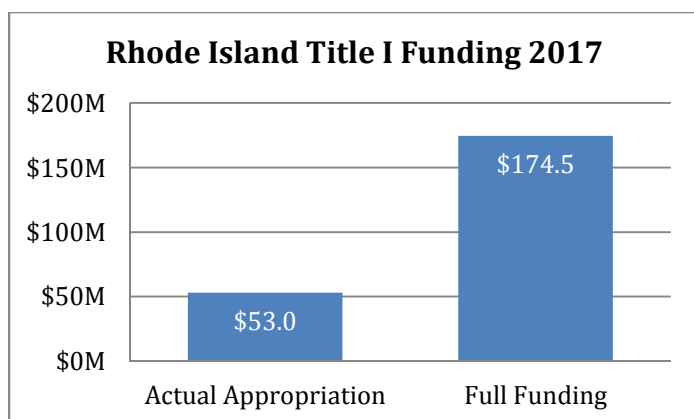
Federal Underfunding of Public Schools

In 1965, the federal government passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which sought to address the need for additional resources for schools in economically deprived communities. The legislation recommended that the federal government provide additional funding for low-income students, at a level up to 40 percent on top of average per-pupil state spending. That commitment, known as Title I, has been underfunded every year.

If the federal Title I commitment had been met, Rhode Island would have had an additional \$122 million to spend on low-income children in 2017 alone. Over the past 13 years — since this year's high school graduates entered kindergarten — Rhode Island schools have been shortchanged \$1.3 billion in federal Title I funds.¹

In 1975, Congress passed the law now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, which requires schools to provide students with disabilities with the supports they need in school. IDEA assumes that on average, the cost of educating a child with disabilities is *twice* the cost of educating a non-disabled student, and Congress pledged that the federal government would pay up to 40 percent of this cost. That commitment has also never been met.

If the federal IDEA commitment had been met, in 2017 alone, Rhode Island would have had an additional \$77 million to spend on students with disabilities. Over the past 13 years — since this year's high school graduates entered kindergarten — Rhode Island schools have been shortchanged \$1 billion in federal IDEA funds.²



¹ US Department of Education Budget Service, US Census Bureau, and the National Education Association.

² Ibid