

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, September 11, 2015

Notes from Commissioner Wagner

1. *Save the Date*: All are invited to [celebration of educator excellence](#) at **September 26** WaterFire
2. U.S. Department of Education approves Rhode Island [Equity Plan](#) to provide excellent teachers for all students
3. RIDE awards [grants](#) to charter public schools for partnerships with other schools in their communities
4. Lauren McCarthy begins new assignment as Commissioner's Office [Executive Staff Assistant](#)
5. Highlander Institute Director of [Blended Learning](#) nominated for regional award

From the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE)

Innovation Powered by Technology:

6. [Registration](#) open for Innovation Powered by Technology conference

Educator Evaluations:

7. RIDE to hold [webinars](#) on educator-evaluation resources and systems
8. *Reminder:* Workshop for [new evaluators](#) scheduled for **October 1 and 2**

Legal:

9. RIDE issues [Commissioner's decisions](#) on residency, adequacy of education

Assessments:

10. ***Action Item:*** RIDE surveys LEAs on [PARCC test-window](#) and testing-mode options for 2016
11. RIDE updates [PARCC toolkits](#)

Educator Certification:

12. [Certification Office](#) to close to the public for three Thursdays to process applications received over the summer

Early Learning:

13. Child-care centers, preschool programs invited to participate in study of [BrightStars](#) quality-rating system

School Construction:

14. *Repeating from 9-10-15 Field Memo Alert:*
Deadline for application to [School Building Authority](#) for repair, renovation projects extended to **September 25**

Health and Safety:

15. *Corrected from 9-4-15 Field Memo: New law requires opioid antagonist [Naloxon \(Narcan\)](#) to be available in all secondary schools*

Data Collection and Reporting:

16. *Reminder:* LEAs asked to keep [School Profile](#) data up to date
17. *Reminder:* [Renaissance](#) data-sharing agreement must be renewed at start of new school year
18. *Reminder:* [Pearson](#) announces changes in testing technology for PARCC

19. *Reminder:* LEAs asked to submit 2015-16 [TCS](#) data as soon as possible

20. *Reminder:* Several [data collections](#) are open or due by the end of the month

From Federal Agencies

21. Justice Department issues technical assistance on testing [accommodations](#) for individuals with disabilities

From other organizations

22. Entertainment Industry Foundation launches [crowdfunding initiative](#) for education projects

Action Item Calendar

September 18: [RITEAF](#) forms due
September 30: [Personnel data](#) collection due
September 30: [Special Ed](#) evaluations due
October 9: PARCC test-options survey response (see
[below](#))

Notes from Commissioner Wagner

1. *Save the Date*: All are invited to celebration of educator excellence at September 26 WaterFire

This year RIDE will honor Rhode Island educators for their outstanding service and dedication to the education profession and to Rhode Island students at “WaterFire: A Salute to Rhode Island Educators.” This event will be held on Saturday, **September 26**, from 5 - 9 p.m., in downtown Providence.

At 5 p.m., an awards ceremony will be held at Memorial Park (at the corner of South Main and College Streets). Please join us as we recognize the following educators:

- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certified educators

- 2014 Rhode Island Milken Family Foundation Educator Award winner
- Presidential Award winners and finalists for mathematics and science teaching
- 2015 Rhode Island Certified School Nurse Teacher of the Year
- 2015 School Business Official of the Year
- 2015 Adult Education Teacher of the Year
- Rhode Island Superintendent of the Year
- Rhode Island Principals of the Year
- Rhode Island Support Professionals of the Year
- 2015-16 District Teachers of the Year
- 2016 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year

All are welcome to attend the celebration to support our Rhode Island educators. In addition to the awards ceremony, this family-oriented event will include a procession featuring the honored educators, culminating with a “Ring of Fire” at the basin in downtown Providence. A private reception for honored educators and their guests will follow.

Please share this message with your principals and with other educators.

If you have questions about this event, please contact Mary Keenan, at mary.keenan@ride.ri.gov.

2. U.S. Department of Education approves Rhode Island Equity Plan to provide excellent teachers for all students

Yesterday the U.S. Department of Education approved the Rhode Island Equity Plan, which is designed to ensure that all students have equal access to high-quality education. The plan, “Ensuring Equitable Access to Excellent Educators,” sets forth a number of steps that Rhode Island will take to recruit, prepare, support, and retain excellent teachers and school leaders in high-poverty and high-minority schools. The U.S. Department of Education required all states to prepare and submit equity plans, and Rhode Island is one of the first 16 states to receive plan approval.

As the plan states:

Rhode Island is committed to ensuring that all students in Rhode Island have equitable access to excellent educators. This equity plan, supported by both our Basic Education Program and strategic plan, prioritizes increasing access to excellent educators. Through the implementation of this plan and other current efforts, Rhode Island will improve talent-management practices and reduce equity gaps, ultimately bringing us closer to our goal of education: to ensure that all of our graduates are ready for success in college and in challenging careers.

As we work to improve teaching and learning in every school and classroom, we recognize from data we have collected that our highest-poverty school districts face special challenges in recruiting and retaining excellent educators. The Rhode Island Equity Plan aims to take on this issue directly by improving data collection on teacher quality, developing statewide strategies for sharing best practices, and providing targeted support for teachers working in our highest-poverty schools.

RIDE worked in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders to prepare the plan. In preparing the plan, RIDE reviewed data that show that the highest poverty and highest minority schools in Rhode Island tend to employ educators with less experience than those in other schools. As part of the plan, RIDE will collect and report on additional data on equity, including use of long-term substitutes, teacher turnover, and teacher attendance.

The equity plan sets forth a number of priorities for action, including:

- researching best practices on student teaching and internships and proposing policy changes if needed;
- establishing a robust induction model for new educators;
- working with school districts to improve the cultural competency of educators;

- providing support to school districts in reviewing equity data and determining hiring needs and in determining whether financial incentives would be effective in recruiting candidates; and
- assembling a task force to improve the perception of the teaching profession.

Some elements of the plan are in progress, including a task force on teacher attendance, a working group on educator equity that Governor Raimondo convened last month, and recently adopted standards for the approval educator-preparation programs that emphasize cultural competency, diversity, and hands-on internship experiences.

3. RIDE awards grants to charter public schools for partnerships with other schools in their communities

On Tuesday we announced that RIDE has awarded \$300,868 in grants to four charter public schools to create and support partnerships with school districts and with other public schools to improve teaching and learning for all students. The grants come from federal funds that RIDE received from the U.S. Department of Education Charter Schools Program.

Schools applying for these grants proposed projects that met three criteria:

- included a partnership with a public school classified as either Focus or Priority, our two lowest school classifications;
- increased the effect of successful instruction and leadership on students with disabilities and English learners; and
- established or strengthened a partnership between a charter and a traditional public school (or schools) that uses the expertise and resources of all participating schools so as to benefit all participants.

We awarded the grants to Blackstone Academy (for a partnership with the Central Falls schools), the Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy Middle School (for a partnership with Calcutt Middle School, in Central Falls), the International Charter School (for a partnership with schools in Pawtucket and South Kingstown), and the Paul Cuffee School (for a partnership with Providence schools, particularly Central High School).

RIDE worked in partnership with the Rhode Island Foundation, whose education grant-making has supported several partnerships between public charter schools and traditional district schools, in publicizing this grant opportunity.

As educators, we do some of our best work when we come together in a spirit of partnership to share ideas and best practices. We were very pleased to receive several

excellent proposals that will form new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships between charters and traditional public schools. We at RIDE want to commend teachers and school leaders from across the public-school spectrum for their commitment to collaboration, innovation, and excellent instruction.

4. Lauren McCarthy begins new assignment as Commissioner's Office Executive Staff Assistant

I am pleased to let you know that this week Lauren McCarthy began a new assignment as the Executive Staff Assistant in the Commissioner's Office. Lauren has been on the RIDE team for many years, beginning here as a clerk-typist in 1988. For the past 10 years, she has been a clerk-secretary in what is now our Division of Accelerating School Performance. In addition to her organizational skills and her skills at communication and office management, Lauren has a lot of expertise in managing travel arrangements, conference planning, and website posting and coordination. Part of Lauren's responsibility will be managing my calendar and my schedule. You can contact Lauren at Lauren.McCarthy@ride.ri.gov or at 222-8705.

5. Highlander Institute Director of Blended Learning nominated for regional award

Shawn Rubin, the Highlander Institute Director of Blended Learning, is the Rhode Island nominee for the Students at

the Center Larry O'Toole Award, which is given annually to an individual, school, organization, or district "exhibiting great leadership through innovation or course in moving student-centered approaches to learning forward in New England." The winner receives a \$100,000 grant from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation for his or her school, district, or organization. If Shawn receives this award, the Highlander Institute would use its grant to further tech-enabled, student-centered learning in Rhode Island classrooms. Congratulations, Shawn, on this nomination. To read about the award and to cast a vote for the Rhode Island nominee, see:

<http://studentsatthecenterhub.org/award-nominees/shawn-rubin/>

From RIDE

Innovation Powered by Technology:

6. Registration open for Innovation Powered by Technology conference

Registration is open for the Rhode Island Technology Conference, to be held on **October 17** at the Rhode Island Convention Center.

Register soon to participate with and learn from your colleagues across Rhode Island and from other states. The

presentations, keynote speakers, conferences sessions, vendors, and more will provide a rich environment for you to:

- connect with fellow educators and school leaders in systemic planning around the effective use of technology and digital learning;
- collaborate with and be inspired by educators and students across the state;
- immerse yourself in ideas, strategies, and resources;
- contribute to the lessons learned; and
- meet face to face with well-respected professionals in your field.

Registration for the conference is available [here](#), click on Registration OPEN NOW and you will be guided through the registration process. If you have questions about the conference, please contact Holly Walsh, at holly.walsh@ride.ri.gov.

Educator Evaluations:

7. RIDE to hold webinars on educator-evaluation resources and systems

On Monday, **September 28**, from 4 – 5 p.m., RIDE will host a webinar for district leaders, school leaders, and preparation programs focusing on the ETS video library. During this webinar, RIDE will provide an overview of how

to access, search, and use the ETS video library, which is now available to all LEAs and preparation programs. The webinar will also share ways that LEAs and preparation programs might use the ETS video library for training and professional learning. Register here [for the webinar](#).

On Wednesday, **September 30**, from 4 – 5 p.m., RIDE will host an Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS) refresher webinar for evaluators and LEA leaders. During this webinar, RIDE staff members will review how to access, enter, and use forms and data on EPSS. This webinar is a great opportunity for new and returning evaluators and LEA staff to re-familiarize themselves with EPSS and to ask questions about using the system. Register here [for the webinar](#).

8. *Reminder: Workshop for new evaluators scheduled for October 1 and 2*

RIDE is offering a two-day version of the workshop for new evaluators on **October 1 and 2** at the Shepard Building (80 Washington St./255 Westminster St, Providence). All evaluators new to the Rhode Island Model who have not yet attended the workshop for new evaluators should plan on attending this workshop. The workshop will focus on preparing evaluators to accurately observe and score practice, provide high-quality feedback, set and approve Student Learning/Outcome Objectives, and use the Educator Performance and Support System. Register for

the workshop on [eRIDE](#). If you have questions about the workshop, please contact Lauren Matlach, at lauren.matlach@ride.ri.gov.

Legal:

9. RIDE issues Commissioner's decisions on residency, adequacy of education

The Appellant has not alleged a particularized injury to her daughter; the allegation of “inadequate instructional resources” does not present the type of claim upon which the requested relief can be granted. Accordingly, the Appellant's request that she be permitted to enroll her daughter in North Kingstown High School, at the expense of the Town of Narragansett, is denied.

http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2015/007_15_N.M._vs._Narragansett_S.C._082715.pdf

LEA's denial of enrollment based on a determination of non-residency is reversed and an interim order of enrollment is entered by the Commissioner of Education because the student is living with grandparents for a substantial reason other than for school purposes.

[http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2015/009-15 Residency of L. Doe-Cumberland 083115.pdf](http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2015/009-15%20Residency%20of%20L.%20Doe-Cumberland%20083115.pdf)

Assessments:

10. Action Item: RIDE surveys LEAs on PARCC test-window and testing-mode options for 2016

In order to document the PARCC testing window and mode of testing (i.e., computer or paper) for each LEA, we created a short survey for you or your designee to respond to. Please use the following link to access the survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PARCC_2016

We ask that only one person from each LEA respond to this survey.

Please respond no later than Friday, **October 9**.

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley, at kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov or 222-8494.

11. RIDE updates PARCC toolkits

After reviewing comments from the recent “Preparing for PARCC Results” workshops, we have updated a few of the

resources in the PARCC toolkits and added a few as well. All documents have been uploaded to the District Exchange Public Folder in [RIDEmap](#).

The following documents have been updated:

- Teaching and Learning and the Role of State Assessments PowerPoint presentation
- Administrator FAQs

The following *new* documents have been uploaded:

- Student score report demos (one for ELA and one for Algebra)
- Spanish versions of Parent Toolkit docs:
 - PARCC Assessment Supports: Accommodations and Accessibility Features
 - PARCC Parent FAQs
 - Safe and Secure with PARCC

Note: Remaining Parent Toolkit Word documents are being translated and will be uploaded on September 18.

If you have any questions about these toolkits, contact Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley, at 222-8494 or PARCC@ride.ri.gov.

Educator Certification:

12. Certification Office to close to the public for three Thursdays to process applications received over the summer

To better be able to serve Rhode Island educators and meet your needs in LEAs, our Certification Office will be closed to the public on the following

Thursdays: September 17 and 24 and October 1. During these times, staff members will be processing applications received throughout the summer. Our Certification Office will be open to the public from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on all other work days during those weeks. Thank you for all your support during the busy summer months.

If you have any questions about our Certification Office, please contact Lisa Foehr, at lisa.foehr@ride.ri.gov.

Early Learning:

13. Child-care centers, preschool programs invited to participate in study of BrightStars quality-rating system

The Department of Human Services (DHS) has contracted with Child Trends to conduct a statewide study of BrightStars. This study is part of the Rhode Island Early Learning Challenge grant, and it will help DHS continue to strengthen BrightStars. Child Trends will randomly select 100 BrightStars child-care centers and public preschool

programs from each star level to invite to be part of this study. Child Trends staff will gather data on program characteristics, quality, and children's skills. The study is completely voluntary; Child Trends will reach out to administrators via mail, e-mail, and phone to share information about the study so directors can decide whether their centers will participate. Programs will be visited three times throughout the current school year for data collection.

No one outside of the Child Trends team (i.e., no one from DHS, RIDE, or BrightStars) will know who is participating in the study, and the researchers will not share information about any specific program or individual. At the end of the study, the Child Trends staff will write a report describing the results at an overall level. BrightStars and DHS leaders hope that programs at all star ratings will participate so that they will have a broad picture of the system.

Please do not hesitate to contact Deb Anthes at DHS, at deborah.anthes@dhs.ri.gov or 462-6842, or Amy Blasberg, the Child Trends study coordinator, at (240) 223-9240 or ablasberg@childtrends.org, with any questions about the study.

School Construction:

**14. Repeating from 9-10-15 Field Memo Alert:
Deadline for application to School Building Authority
for repair, renovation projects extended to
September 25**

In response to a request from the RISSA, RIASC, and RIASBO organizations and in an effort to provide districts with additional support and assistance, *RIDE is extending the deadline for Capital Fund applications until noon on September 25.*

Approximately \$20 million is available to expedite state aid to LEAs with monthly progress payments. In contrast with the Housing Aid program, projects funded under the School Building Authority Capital Fund do not need to wait until project completion to receive state aid. Repair and renovation projects can range from \$10,000 to \$1 million in cost and must be completed by September 2016.

LEAs that need technical assistance in completing the application should contact Joseph da Silva, at 222-4294 or joseph.dasilva@ride.ri.gov.

In addition, the School Building Authority has prepared a short technical-assistance [webinar](#) on the [new application process](#) and on School Building Authority Capital Funding. Please visit www.ride.ri.gov/sba for more information.

Health and Safety:

15. Corrected from 9-4-15 Field Memo: New law requires opioid antagonist Naloxone (Narcan) to be available in all secondary schools

According to RIGL §16-21-35 ([2015-S 0154A](#), [2015-H 5047A](#)) *all public middle schools, junior high schools, and high schools are required to maintain opioid antagonists on school premises or at school-sponsored events or activities to treat an opioid overdose.* The new law also provides certified nurse teachers with immunity from liability arising from ordinary negligence.

The Department of Health has developed [School District Naloxone Model Policy Guidelines](#) to establish guidelines and procedures governing the utilization of Naloxone administered by staff, as well as, [Naloxone FAQs](#) to share.

The Department of Health, in collaboration with the Rhode Island Certified School Nurse Teacher Association, will be conducting an educational training for school nurse teachers on **October 22**.

For more Naloxone resources and training materials, see the following links:

- <http://www.health.ri.gov/healthrisks/drugoverdose/>
- <http://www.bhddh.ri.gov/misc/Narcan.php>

- <http://prescribetoprevent.org/patient-education/videos/>
- [http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA14-4742/Overdose Toolkit.pdf](http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA14-4742/Overdose_Toolkit.pdf)

Data Collection and Reporting:

16. *Reminder:* LEAs asked to keep School Profile data up to date

The School Profile module within eRIDE is used to collect detailed information on districts and schools. It is important that this information is kept up to date throughout the year, as the Master Directory and other system are reliant on this data. If you have any questions about the School Profile data, please submit a helpdesk ticket, at: <https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

17. *Reminder:* Renaissance data-sharing agreement must be renewed at start of new school year

Your data extraction information is valid only for one year. Each year, the information you have extracted will be cleared on July 31. At the beginning of each school year (any time after August 1), you will need to accept the data-sharing agreement again and make your current data-sharing selections.

We have discovered a glitch with the Renaissance data transfer process, and we believe that the data managers have remediated the issue. If you have signed the data-sharing agreement and do not see your data in the Instructional Support System within a week, please submit a help desk ticket, at:

<https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

18. *Reminder: Pearson announces changes in testing technology for PARCC*

Pearson has started to publish technical documentation for the next iteration of the PARCC assessment. Please review the latest [technology bulletins](#) to become familiar with technical changes since last year. For more detailed information regarding the technology, the [Pearson technology setup page](#) has information for each aspect of the testing technology.

There are two major changes that may affect LEAs, the first being that the Google Chrome Web browser is not supported. Chromebooks are unaffected by this. This was the most-used browser in the state for PARCC testing in the previous school year. The second major change is that Pearson has released a [PARCC TestNav desktop application](#). This application eliminates the dependency on Java and allows for a more secure testing environment. This also allows you to migrate from the Chrome browser

to the desktop application for Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux.

19. *Reminder:* LEAs asked to submit 2015-16 TCS data as soon as possible

Please submit your 2015-16 Teacher, Course, Student (TCS) data as soon as possible. The TCS collection is a daily collection; therefore, we continually update the data and the data do not need to be perfect or complete on the initial upload. The TCS data are important as these data form the foundation for many data verifications and technology systems, including the Instructional Support System.

If you have any questions about the TCS data, please submit a help desk ticket, at:

<https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

20. *Reminder:* Several data collections are open or due by the end of the month

The following are some data-collection deadlines for September:

- September 1: [Graduate and Dropout Reporting via Enrollment Census](#) - Open
- September 1: [Monthly Reimbursements for Nutrition Programs](#) – Currently Open

- September 1: [Summer Exits Through Enrollment Census](#) –Open
- September 30: [Personnel Data Collection \(PDC\)](#) – Due
- September 30: [Special Ed Evaluations](#) - Due

Information about upcoming data collections can be found on the [data collection calendar](#). Weekly collection [webinars](#) provide details regarding upcoming collections, along with a question-and-answer period.

From Federal Agencies

21. Justice Department issues technical assistance on testing accommodations for individuals with disabilities

Please see this message from the U.S. Department of Justice:

The U.S. Department of Justice issued technical assistance today on the obligation of testing entities, both private and public, to ensure that the test scores of individuals with disabilities accurately reflect the individual's aptitude, achievement, or the skill that the exam purports to measure, rather than his or her disability. The document discusses who is entitled to testing accommodations, what types of testing accommodations must be provided, and what documentation may be required of the person

requesting testing accommodations. The document also discusses prohibited flagging policies and how test scores for test-takers receiving disability-related accommodations should be reported.

For a copy of the guidance, see:

Document<

From other organizations

22. Entertainment Industry Foundation launches crowdfunding initiative for education projects

Please see this message from the Entertainment Industry Foundation:

The Entertainment Industry Foundation (EIF) – which has brought Hollywood together for powerful initiatives including Stand Up To Cancer – is now

leading a major high-profile Hollywood/media effort for our schools that will help create a culture of excitement about learning everywhere in America.

Our new movement is called *Think It Up: Student Powered, Teacher Led, Crowd Funded*.

This evening (September 11) at 8 p.m., ABC, CBS, FOX, and NBC will all broadcast a special *Think It Up* one-hour telecast live. Celebrities including Kristen Bell, Stephen Colbert, Scarlett Johansson, Matthew McConaughey, Gwyneth Paltrow, Jeremy Renner, Ryan Seacrest, Jessica Williams and many more will participate.

During the telecast, EIF will announce a first-of-its-kind platform to fund student-powered, teacher-led learning projects in partnership with DonorsChoose.org, the popular teacher crowdfunding charity. We want to invite as many students and teachers as possible to post their dream projects and to encourage people nationwide to help make them a reality.

Here is a link to a [press release](#) that EIF issued.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/FieldMemos.aspx>