

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, February 12, 2016**

**Notes from Commissioner Wagner**

1. Conference on [blended, personalized learning](#) scheduled for **April 2**
2. RIDE to release 2016 accountability results, updated list of [Commended Schools](#)
3. *Reminder:* Registrations due **today** (February 12) for conference February 27 on [African-American history](#) in R.I.
4. *Reminder:* RIDE seeking brief accounts of [amazing work](#) under way in R.I. schools
5. *Reminder:* Schools encouraged to consider using [open educational resources](#)

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

***Educators:***

6. RIDE releases new [hiring, retention statistics](#); seeks comment on updated Educator Preparation Indices

***Instruction:***

7. Assurances from [Advanced Coursework Network](#) Members are due **March 1**
8. Rhode Island prepares for [Digital Learning Day](#), continues with Future Ready initiative

**From other state agencies**

9. Training seminar to be held **March 10** on [school safety](#)

## From the U.S. Department of Education

10. President Obama submits budget, including increased [education funding](#)
11. President Obama proposes [Computer Science](#) for All initiative

## From other organizations

12. [Science Teachers](#) Association conference scheduled for **March 12**
13. Teachers encouraged to apply for awards for [civic education](#)

## Action Item Calendar

**Today** (February 12): [Facilities-assessment](#) contact designated  
March 7: [School Health](#) Profiles due  
March 25: [Distinguished Educator](#) recommendations  
March 31: [Textbook Data Collection](#) due

## Notes from Commissioner Wagner

### 1. Conference on blended, personalized learning scheduled for April 2

On April 2, the Highlander Institute and the Christensen Institute are showcasing the best blended-learning implementers from across the nation, in Providence, at the 5th Annual [Blended & Personalized Learning Conference](#).

The Highlander Institute notes that this will be a chance for leaders and educators to discuss blended learning as it exists today on the ground – both in terms of the day-to-day in blended classrooms and the strategies that systems have successfully used to implement blended learning across numerous schools and classrooms.

This conference will feature a mix of expert presenters answering questions in small, intimate fireside chats along with tactical and hands-on workshops showcasing the step-by-step practices that have led to these successful implementations across the country.

Several educators and experts in blended learning will speak at the conference, including:

- Richard Culatta, Chief Innovation Officer at the R.I. Office of Innovation
- Beth Rabbitt, Partner at The Learning Accelerator
- Alex Hernandez, Partner at the Charter School Growth Fund (CSGF)
- Julia Freeland Fisher, Director, Education at Clayton-Christensen Institute
- Phyllis Lockett, CEO at LEAP Innovations

Help spread the word to Rhode Island educators so that we can fill the Rhode Island Convention Center with school-committee members, district leaders, building principals, and teachers all working together to bring a more personalized learning experience to students through the use of blended learning.

## **2. RIDE to release 2016 accountability results, updated list of Commended Schools**

On **Tuesday** (February 16) we are planning to release the 2016 accountability results, based on 2014-15 data. As you know, because the previous school year was our year of transition to PARCC assessments, accountability information such as your LEA Composite Index Score will be a baseline only. For 2016, we have identified some new Commended Schools, and some schools previously recognized as Commended are no longer in this classification – largely because of PARCC participation rates that fell below the target of 95 percent. We identified no new schools as Focus or Priority Schools; all schools previously in those classifications remain in the same classification. All other schools have no

classification for 2016. For our accountability system and for school classifications going forward, we are reviewing opportunities available to us through the newly enacted Every Student Succeeds Act. We will seek your input and feedback as we consider the redesign of our accountability system over the course of the year.

**3. *Reminder: Registrations due today (February 12) for conference February 27 on African-American history in R.I.***

In June 2014, the State of Rhode Island General Assembly established the [1696 Historical Commission](#) to develop an African-American History curriculum, encompassing the historical period from 1696 to 2015, for use in all Rhode Island public schools. The commission's name recognizes the first documented group of enslaved Africans who landed aboard the brig *Seaflower* in Newport in 1696. The charge of the commission was, according to Representative Joseph S. Almeida (D-Dist. 12, Providence), to ensure "teachers have the tools and resources they need to teach a well-rounded, inclusive view of the people and events – both the honorable ones and the shameful chapters – that brought our nation and our state to where it is today." To ensure the youth of Rhode Island recognize and appreciate the contributions made by African-Americans and the integral role they played in the history of the Ocean State, the work of the commission will continue under the guidance of a task force headed by the Rhode Island Historical Society.

In honor of the work of the 1696 Historical Commission, Rhode Island's Delta Kappa Gamma Society for Key Women Educators Epsilon Chapter and Rhode Island College's Feinstein School of Education and Human Development invite you and all teachers to attend:

*First Steps: An Exploration of African-American History in Rhode Island*

Saturday, **February 27**, from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Rhode Island College, Alger Hall 110

Through a series of interactive workshops, First Steps will provide teachers with resources and strategies they can use to integrate African-American History into their instruction. The schedule for the day includes:

8 - 8:30 a.m.: Registration

8:30 - 9 a.m.: Welcome

9 – 10 a.m.: Workshop I: *Using Online Sources Integrating African American Topics in the Study of US and Rhode Island History*, by Keith Stokes

10:05 - 11:05 a.m.: Workshop II: *Using Drama and Storytelling in Teaching Youth History*, by Valerie Tutson and Sylvia Soares

11:10 a.m. - 12:10 p.m.: Workshop III: *Introducing an App to Engage Youth in an Interactive Study of African American History*, by Theresa Moore

12:15 - 1:30 p.m.: Luncheon and Keynote Speaker, Commissioner Ken Wagner

Participants will have the opportunity to attend all three workshops. Each workshop will consist of a presentation followed by time for group and team discussions. We encourage you and a team of your teachers to join teachers from throughout the state as together we take these “First Steps.” Please use the Registration Form found [here](#) to register each team member.

#### **4. *Reminder:* RIDE seeking brief accounts of amazing work under way in R.I. schools**

We at RIDE are always interested in hearing about great work under way in your schools, and all of us often mention programs and initiatives that are innovative and effective when we speak with community groups, business leaders, elected officials, and people in the education field. Don’t be left out of the picture! We are asking each Rhode Island school and school community to send us one or two brief accounts of amazing things happening in your school – preferably, initiatives involving teamwork. Send for each an email of no more than 100 words or a one-minute video clip, using the subject line “Amazing,” to [info@ride.ri.gov](mailto:info@ride.ri.gov). We’ll be sure to spread the word.

#### **5. *Reminder:* Schools encouraged to consider using open educational resources**

Teaching and learning improve only when teachers have time to collaborate, analyze the learning standards, develop curriculum and lessons, review student

work, observe one another, get feedback, and reflect on their practice. As part of our commitment to invest in leadership development for educators, we are encouraging schools to use high-quality open educational resources – free curriculum and instructional materials that can be adopted for local purposes and free up money, to be used for ongoing professional development, that you would otherwise spend on traditional commercial products.

Here are some of the open educational resources that the U.S. Department of Education has identified as part of its “Go Open” initiative and that #GoOpen districts are currently using:

- <https://www.engageny.org/resource/grades-9-12-mathematics-curriculum-map-and-course-overviews>
- <https://cnx.org/search?q=subject:%22Mathematics%20and%20Statistics%22%20pubYear:%222015%22>
- <http://linear.ups.edu/curriculum.html>
- <http://danaernst.com/resources/free-and-open-source-textbooks/>
- <http://www.opentextbookstore.com/catalog.php>
- <http://www.openculture.com/free-math-textbooks>
- <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/SearchResults.aspx?subjectAreaId=7>
- <http://matheducators.stackexchange.com/questions/1816/open-source-high-school-textbooks>
- <http://www.uen.org/oer/>
- <http://classroom-aid.com/open-educational-resources/curriculum/>
- <http://opensource-text.org/>

### From RIDE

#### ***Educators:***

#### **6. RIDE releases new hiring, retention statistics; seeks comment on updated Educator Preparation Indices**

Are you curious about how many educators are being trained, certified, and employed in Rhode Island? Are you looking to hire newly trained educators to support your students and families? The [RI Educator Preparation Indices](#) offer live

data on these topics. The indices include data on almost 3,000 recent in-state program completers and offer districts, future educators, and providers valuable information to inform their work and collaboration. Each index includes expandable sections with info ranging from completer background to effectiveness.

After reviewing, please provide feedback on the accessibility and usefulness of the data through the [online survey](#). Your feedback will support improvements for future iterations and RIDE follow-up. Questions regarding the Indices should be directed to Sarah Whiting, at [Sarah.Whiting@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Sarah.Whiting@ride.ri.gov).

***Instruction:***

**7. Assurances from Advanced Coursework Network Members are due March 1**

The Advanced Coursework Network is designed to support districts and schools in creating opportunities for Rhode Island students to access advanced coursework and conceive of their individualized graduation pathway at no cost to the school or district. As Network Members, schools and districts will enable students and their families to choose to enroll in formerly unavailable high-value academic- and career-focused courses while they remain enrolled at their public school. In order to take part in the Advanced Coursework Network in the coming school year (2016-17), you must complete and submit your Network Member Assurances by **March 1**.

Send your Network Member Assurances by email. To review the Network Member Assurances and additional resources for potential Network Members, please visit: [www.ride.ri.gov/advancedcoursework](http://www.ride.ri.gov/advancedcoursework).

Inquiries regarding the Advanced Coursework Network can be directed to Steve Osborn, Chief, Division of Accelerating School Performance, at [Stephen.Osborn@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Stephen.Osborn@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8485.

**8. Rhode Island prepares for Digital Learning Day, continues with Future Ready initiative**

Digital Learning Day is Wednesday (February 17), but Rhode Island will be celebrating all month long! As part of our statewide celebration, RIDE is continuing the Future Ready statewide initiative that supports district and school leaders working to transform teaching and personalize student learning. An undertaking as complex as reimagining education requires LEA leaders to mobilize numerous stakeholders and an array of resources under a common vision of student-centered, or “personalized,” learning. As we strive to create the most favorable conditions, the focus must be on the learning, not the latest tech tool on the market.

The majority of Rhode Island LEAs have already taken the Future Ready Pledge. Many are using the [The Future Ready Dashboard](#), a *free* planning tool that helps LEA leadership teams assess readiness, identify gaps, choose research-based strategies, and create customized digital-learning action plans.

Mario Andrade and his leadership team in Bristol Warren are taking advantage of the free tools in the Future Ready Dashboard. They are rolling out its use district-wide with the goal of creating a [Future Ready Digital Learning Plan](#) that maximizes digital learning opportunities and prepares students for success in postsecondary education, a career, and digital citizenship. Join the online events on February 17, when Bristol Warren will be highlighted nationally on [Digital Learning Day](#).

Add your activity to the map! Not sure how to get started with the dashboard or where to go next? Make sure to reference the [5 Step Process](#) that was developed to help Future Ready Leadership Teams work together to complete a Future Ready Action Plan. Questions or feeling stuck? [Watch this 20 minute tutorial](#). Still stuck? Check out the [Future Ready FAQs](#).

Further information and support on digital learning is available on the [RIDE web site](#) or by contacting [Holly Walsh](#).

### **From other state agencies**

#### **9. Training seminar to be held March 10 on school safety**

The Rhode Island State Fusion Center, in partnership with the R.I. State Police and the FBI, is announcing a School Safety and Active Shooter training seminar. This *free* training will be held at Dennis J. Roberts Hall, located at Rhode Island College, 600 Mount Pleasant Ave., Providence, on Thursday, **March 10**, from 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

For information about registration, please call or email:

John Soccia  
Intelligence Analyst  
R.I. State Police  
R.I. state Fusion Center  
[John.soccia@risp.gov](mailto:John.soccia@risp.gov)  
444-1172

### **From the U.S. Department of Education**

#### **10. President Obama submits budget, including increased education funding**

The U.S. Department of Education has posted materials on the proposed education spending in President Obama's Fiscal Year 2017 budget:

General information

[http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/president-obamas-2017-budget-seeks-expand-educational-opportunity-all-students?utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name=&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term=](http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/president-obamas-2017-budget-seeks-expand-educational-opportunity-all-students?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=)

and, on college affordability:

[http://blog.ed.gov/2016/02/the-fy-2017-budget-request-for-education-aims-to-increase-college-access-affordability-and-completion-4/?utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name=&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term=](http://blog.ed.gov/2016/02/the-fy-2017-budget-request-for-education-aims-to-increase-college-access-affordability-and-completion-4/?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=)

and, on equity:

<http://blog.ed.gov/2016/02/equity-and-excellence-in-the-presidents-budget-for-education->

[2/?utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name=&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term=](http://blog.ed.gov/2016/02/the-presidents-fiscal-year-2017-budget-request-supporting-teachers-and-school-leaders-for-student-success-3/?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=)

and, on teachers and school leaders:

[http://blog.ed.gov/2016/02/the-presidents-fiscal-year-2017-budget-request-supporting-teachers-and-school-leaders-for-student-success-3/?utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name=&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term=](http://blog.ed.gov/2016/02/the-presidents-fiscal-year-2017-budget-request-supporting-teachers-and-school-leaders-for-student-success-3/?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=)

and, on use of data:

[http://blog.ed.gov/2016/02/the-fiscal-year-2017-budget-promoting-greater-use-of-evidence-and-data-as-a-lever-for-advancing-equity-2/?utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name=&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term=](http://blog.ed.gov/2016/02/the-fiscal-year-2017-budget-promoting-greater-use-of-evidence-and-data-as-a-lever-for-advancing-equity-2/?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=)

## **11. President Obama proposes Computer Science for All initiative**

In his January 30 [weekly address](#), President Obama discussed his plan to give all students across the nation the chance to learn computer science in school. Under the new [Computer Science for All initiative](#), the President is requesting \$4 billion for states and \$100 million directly for school districts to increase access to computer science in P-12 schools by training teachers, expanding access to high-quality instructional materials, and building effective regional partnerships; investing more than \$135 million by the National Science Foundation and the Corporation for National and Community Service to support and train computer science teachers; and calling on more governors, mayors, education leaders, business CEOs, philanthropists, creative media, and technology professionals to get involved in the efforts ([fact sheet](#)).

Also last week, the White House welcomed “[Champions of Change](#)” in computer science for discussions on increasing access to computer science and improving upon existing standards ([blog post](#)).

### **From other organizations**

## **12. Science Teachers Association conference scheduled for March 12**

The Rhode Island Science Teachers Association (RISTA) invites educators of all levels to the 2016 RISTA Conference “Moving Toward an NGSS Classroom,” to be held on Saturday, **March 12**, at LaSalle Academy, in Providence. The conference runs from 7:45 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Page Keeley, nationally known speaker and author, will present the keynote address, “Uncovering Student Thinking – What Does it Really Mean to Teach for Conceptual Understanding?” The conference will feature three sessions with numerous workshops for teachers of all grade levels on a variety of topics that relate to the implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards. Vendors of science resources as well as nonprofit organizations that offer opportunities for teachers and students will be on hand. Breakfast, lunch, and time for networking are included. For more information and online registration, visit [www.rista.us](http://www.rista.us). We hope to see you on March 12!

### **13. Teachers encouraged to apply for awards for civic education**

The Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Awards Committee of the League of Women Voters of South Kingstown/Narragansett is accepting nominations to honor Rhode Island’s innovative teachers and their exceptional work in civic education. Applying is conveniently fast and simple. Get details and apply online, at

<http://www.lwvri.org/wilson-awards.htm>

A Grand Prize of \$1,000; a Jury Prize of \$500; and an Honorable Mention Prize of \$250 will be awarded to three individual teachers or teams of teachers for work that has already been accomplished and whose impact has already been assessed.

Deadline for applications is **April 30**.

Nominate a worthy teacher currently teaching in a Rhode Island school (Pre-K through grade 12).

***RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:***

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