

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, February 26, 2016

Notes from Commissioner Wagner

1. Commissioner's message to families, educators on [PARCC assessments](#)
2. Rhode Island joins initiative committed [openly licensed educational resources](#)
3. Providence selected for two [educational initiatives](#)
4. 6 R.I. districts honored by [College Board](#)
5. Schools encouraged to participate in Census Bureau survey on [crime and safety](#)
6. [National Assessment Governing Board](#) appointment announced

From the Governor's Office

7. Governor Raimondo celebrates Women's History Month with [Governor for a Day](#) Essay Contest

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

Legal:

8. RIDE issues [Commissioner's decisions](#) on payment for alternate learning plans services, homeless students, residency

Assessments:

9. [NECAP Science](#) test-coordinator training workshops scheduled
10. LEAs asked to maintain [student-enrollment, personal-needs profile](#) data in advance of PARCC testing
11. LEAs asked to conduct [infrastructure trials](#) before PARCC testing window opens
12. PARCC assessment [exception reports](#) posted on District Exchange

Early Learning:

13. RIDE requests proposals for new 2016-17 State [Pre-Kindergarten Program](#) classrooms

Instruction:

14. Webinars scheduled for next week on [computer-science opportunities](#) in R.I.

Data Collection and Quality:

15. LEAs required perform monthly [emergency drills](#), submit reports
16. LEAs advised to resolve [duplicate-enrollment](#) issues
17. *Reminder:* Users able to reset [RIDEmap passwords](#)
18. *Reminder:* Several [data collections](#) open, due in the next month

From other organizations

19. [Parent Support Network](#) to offer legislative-policy training; registration closes **today** (February 26)
20. RISPA conference scheduled on [Mindfulness](#)
21. [PPAC](#) offers discounted seating for school groups for *Sound of Music*

Action Item Calendar

- March 7: [School Health](#) Profiles due
March 14: [Funding Formula](#) due
March 25: [Distinguished Educator](#) recommendations
March 31: [Textbook Data Collection](#) due

Notes from Commissioner Wagner

1. Commissioner's message to families, educators on PARCC assessments

As we prepare for the administration of 2016 PARCC assessments, I wanted to reach out to share a few thoughts about why it is important

to use a small amount of our instructional time for the administration of a statewide assessment.

First, a statewide assessment is the only way, using a common measure, to determine whether all students are making progress on our statewide, grade-level learning expectations.

Our learning standards were designed to prepare students for the next grade, culminating in readiness for postsecondary education and meaningful careers in a 21st-century economy. Our statewide assessment provides parents and families with objective information about whether their children are academically on track. The assessment helps educators benchmark the performance of their students against those across the state, and it gives the public a common statewide measure of how schools are doing at improving learning for all students. For these reasons, federal law requires annual statewide assessments, and federal law also holds schools and districts accountable for attaining at least 95-percent student participation.

Second, assessments provide us with just one measure – a snapshot in time – of student achievement. Although we should never make important decisions about students or teachers based on one measure alone, a comprehensive picture of student progress emerges from different kinds of measures over time. So we are taking another look at our diploma system to ensure that our graduation requirements are meaningful but fair and that they support multiple measures and multiple ways for students to express their knowledge and skills, building upon their strengths and interests.

Third, PARCC offers a set of high-quality assessments that align with our expectations for students at each grade level, the work students do in class every day, and the skills students will need for success beyond high school: problem-solving, critical thinking, and analysis of writing

selections. Three recent studies from independent nonprofit organizations have confirmed the high quality of PARCC assessments: [one](#) from the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation:

<http://edexcellence.net/publications/evaluating-the-content-and-quality-of-next-generation-assessments>

and [another](#) from the National Network of State Teachers of the Year:

<http://www.nnstoy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Right-Trajectory-FINAL.pdf>.

and a [third](#) from the American Institutes for Research:

<http://www.air.org/resource/national-benchmarks-state-achievement-standards>

The bottom line: Results on the PARCC test can be useful to students, their families, and teachers by revealing areas of student strength and the knowledge and skills that need additional support.

Finally, we've learned a lot from our first year of PARCC implementation. This year, there will be only one testing period for PARCC, the testing time will be shorter, and we will receive results much sooner – before the start of the next school year. For those who are curious about the contents of PARCC assessments, the PARCC consortium has on its [website](#) a lot of good information on these assessments, including [practice tests](#) and actual [items](#) from previous tests. See:

PARCC website:

<http://www.parcconline.org/>

PARCC practice tests:

<http://www.parcconline.org/assessments/practice-tests>

PARCC released test items:

<https://prc.parcconline.org/assessments/parcc-released-items>

Rhode Island schools administer PARCC assessments either online or on paper – with the vast majority of schools administering the tests online. By next year, we hope to have 100-percent online administration of PARCC assessments, with the exception of students who need individual modifications. Although there has been discussion regarding whether our students and systems are ready for online tests, we believe it is important to continue the transition to the online version. Digital access and readiness will become increasingly important for teaching and learning, student engagement, and success in the 21st century.

While we expect all eligible students to participate in the PARCC assessments, consistent with federal law, we understand that some families may still have concerns about participation. If a family has questions about participation, we should help them understand the benefits, for themselves and their community, of participation in a comparable statewide assessment. Once we have helped them understand the benefits of participation, we should manage the test administration window in an orderly manner for all students.

Working together, we can ensure that test administration this year proceeds smoothly, causes no unnecessary stress or distraction from classroom instruction, and provides all of us with one important measure of student progress to support teaching and learning.

Assessment serves instruction – not the other way around. We thank you for your efforts every day to provide and support amazing teaching and exciting learning for all students in all Rhode Island communities.

2. Rhode Island joins initiative committed to openly licensed educational resources

We announced today that Rhode Island has joined a new multi-state, open-education initiative to put more free educational resources in the hands of students and teachers. Through the #GoOpen initiative, coordinated by the U.S. Department of Education, Rhode Island joins 12 other states that have pledged to work together in the first #GoOpen cohort to support teachers in using high-quality, openly licensed educational resources in their schools.

Openly licensed educational resources are digital learning materials that can be used, modified, and shared without breaking copyright laws or paying licensing fees. As such, openly licensed educational resources have enormous potential to increase equitable access to high-quality education opportunities for all students.

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 members of the #GoOpen cohort, we will continue to encourage schools to use high-quality open educational resources – free curriculum and instructional materials that can be adapted for local purposes – and free up money to be used for ongoing professional development.

In joining the #GoOpen cohort, in partnership with the Office of Innovation, we have agreed to the following commitments:

- Implement a statewide technology strategy that includes the use of openly licensed resources as a central component.
- Create and expand a repository of openly licensed educational resources for teachers, students, and families, building on the resources already collected and made available through the Teacher Resource Library on our Instructional Support System.
- Collaborate with other #GoOpen states to share openly licensed learning resources and professional development strategies.
- Create a website to share our commitment to #GoOpen and to document our progress.

Our news release on this initiative is posted here:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/AdditionalInformation/News/ViewArticle/tabid/408/ArticleId/303/R-I-commits-to-use-of-free-openly-licensed-educational-resources.aspx>

3. Providence selected for two educational initiatives

Over the past week, the Providence Public Schools received two distinctions. The White House and the U.S. Department of Education last week selected Providence as one of ten initial districts to participate in the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Success Mentors Initiative, which aims to reduce chronic student absenteeism by connecting students with caring mentors. Earlier this week, the Harvard University Education Design Lab selected Providence as one of six districts that will join a project to link agencies responsible for children's services into children's cabinets that will coordinate their work. Congratulations to the Providence teachers, school leaders, and administrators for taking on these challenges.

4. 6 R.I. districts honored by College Board

The College Board has announced that the Newport School District is a winner of a Gaston Caperton Opportunity Honor Roll award, which recognizes high schools for improving participation rates and performance by under-represented students on SAT and AP exams and on increasing the number of under-represented students submitting their SAT results to at least four colleges. The College Board has also placed 5 Rhode Island school districts on the AP Honor Roll, recognizing that they have increased student access to Advanced Placement coursework while increasing the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher on AP exams. The districts are: Burrillville, Narragansett, North Smithfield, Scituate, and South Kingstown. Congratulations to the students and teachers in each of these school communities!

5. Schools encouraged to participate in Census Bureau survey on crime and safety

The National Center for Education Statistics, of the U.S. Department of Education, informs us that the U.S. Census Bureau has selected some Rhode Island schools participate in the School Survey on Crime and Safety. The Center assures us that it will not disclose the identity of participating districts, schools, or staff members and that the study may be used for statistical purposes only. Participation is voluntary, but, at the request of the Center, we encourage the selected schools to participate in this survey so as to provide a current picture of the full diversity of crime and safety.

6. National Assessment Governing Board appointment announced

Last week Acting U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King, Jr., announced my appointment to the National Assessment Governing Board. I have been appointed in the category of “chief state school officer,” and I will serve on the Reporting and Dissemination Committee. As a Board member I will help set policy for the National

Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as The Nation's Report Card. The 26-member Governing Board—a group of governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, researchers, business representatives, and members of the general public—determines subjects and content to be tested, sets the achievement levels for reporting, and releases the results to the public.

In accepting the appointment, I said: “It is an honor to be appointed to serve on the National Assessment Governing Board. As a Board member, I will ensure that Rhode Island educators have a voice in determining the future of next-generation assessment practices and the role assessments will play in supporting great teaching and learning.”

From the Governor’s Office

7. Governor Raimondo celebrates Women’s History Month with Governor for a Day Essay Contest

Governor Gina M. Raimondo has announced the start of the second annual Governor for a Day essay contest to encourage young women in leadership.

“One of my favorite parts of being Rhode Island’s first female governor is talking to girls about their dreams,” Raimondo said. “I want to them that they can achieve anything with hard work and dedication. Last year, I had so much fun with Khatima, and I can’t wait to meet this year's Governor for a Day.”

In honor of Women’s History Month in March, the contest is open to girls in 5th through 8th grade throughout the state. The winning essayist will be named “Governor for a Day” and will spend a day during the week of April 18-22 meeting and speaking with other leaders across

state government.

Interested applicants must apply by 5 p.m. on Monday, **March 14**, with an essay of 400 words or less in response to the question, “What would you do if you were Rhode Island's Governor for a Day?” For information on applying, see:

<http://www.ri.gov/press/view/26929>

From RIDE

Legal:

8. RIDE issues Commissioner’s decisions on payment for alternate learning plans services, homeless students, residency

Please see these recent Commissioner’s decisions:

LEAs waiving compulsory attendance and referring students to private providers of alternative learning plans services have no legal right to refuse payment for such services, and since such payment disputes pose questions relating to the meaning of the state’s compulsory education statute, they are within the Commissioner’s jurisdiction under § 16-39-2.

[http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2016/006-16 Newport Community School Vs. Tiverton S. C. and Middletown S.C.022016.pdf](http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2016/006-16%20Newport%20Community%20School%20Vs.%20Tiverton%20S.%20C.%20and%20Middletown%20S.C.022016.pdf)

The West Warwick School District is found to be “school of origin” for homeless student placed by DCYF in temporary shelter program in Providence.

http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2016/007-16_DCYF_v_W_Warwick_Providence%20R._Doe_021916.pdf

Students were determined to be living with their grandmother in Central Falls because of the need for their constant supervision. Both children had disabilities and health issues that required their grandmother to care for them during the week at her home in Central Falls while their mother was at work. Students are school residents of Central Falls where they are living with their grandmother, and not of Cumberland, where their mother currently resides.

<http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2016/008-16%20Residency%20of%20R.%20Doe%20v.%20Central%20Falls.pdf>

Assessments:

9. NECAP Science test-coordinator training workshops scheduled

To help prepare district and school test coordinators for the NECAP Science test (May 4 through May 29), workshops have been scheduled for the following dates and times:

- April 6, at the Providence Marriott Downtown, 1 Orms St., Providence (1 – 3 p.m.)
- April 7, at the Radisson Airport Hotel, 2081 Post Rd., Warwick (9 – 11 a.m.)

(Note: Both cover the same material, so there is no need to attend both workshops.)

Registration for the workshops can be done online by going to <http://iregister.measuredprogress.org>, selecting “New England Common Assessment Program” from the drop-down menu, clicking “Enter” and selecting a workshop, and then following the online directions.

You can also go to <http://iregister.measuredprogress.org/SessionList.aspx#> to access the registration links. Note: On-site, in-person registration will also be available on the day of each workshop 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start time.

Workshop attendance is strongly encouraged, as the latest information on NECAP Science testing policies and procedures as well as information about test security will be provided.

If you have any questions about these workshops, please contact Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley (kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov or 222-8494).

10. LEAs asked to maintain student-enrollment, personal-needs profile data in advance of PARCC testing

LEAs should be maintaining their student-enrollment and personal-needs profile data within Pearson Access Next for the upcoming PARCC test. RIDE will continue providing reports on the RIDEmap district exchange that identify any deviation between PARCC data and eRIDE data to help LEAs with keeping the PARCC data up to date.

11. LEAs asked to conduct infrastructure trials before PARCC testing window opens

LEAs should be conducting infrastructure trials with their staff members to prepare them prior to the actual PARCC test window. Infrastructure trials provide important hands-on experience for teachers and administrators in a controlled environment in order to get them comfortable with the PARCC testing technology and procedures. The trials also provide LEA technology staff with the ability to test the PARCC software and the ability of the school technology infrastructure to handle the extra demand during the testing window.

12. PARCC assessment exception reports posted on District Exchange

Exception reports for PARCC assessments have been posted to the District Exchange on RIDEmap. These reports provide insight into data anomalies within the Pearson Access Next system compared with the data being submitted to eRIDE. The goal of these reports is to keep PARCC data synchronized with what is being submitted to RIDE in order to verify that all students have been tested and that results are returned to the appropriate LEAs. We plan to provide updated reports on a weekly or biweekly basis.

Notes from the exception codes:

- Too Many Test (TMT) code: Students with this code may have the proper number of tests in your LEA; however, they may have tests with other LEAs. If this occurs, the other LEA should have this same student on its list and should remove that student and his or her tests from its PARCC enrollment. Many outplacement enrollments face this issue.
- Out-of-Grade Testing (OGT): It has been clarified that grades 3 through 8 should be taking the test for that grade level. If this is not the case, please update the student's test.

Early Learning:

13. RIDE requests proposals for new 2016-17 State Pre-Kindergarten Program classrooms

RIDE is requesting proposals from qualified vendors to expand the Rhode Island State Pre-Kindergarten Program. Eligible organizations or entities include licensed child-care centers, Head Start programs, public schools, and nonpublic schools able to operate a classroom in the following communities: Central Falls, Cranston, East Providence, Johnston, Newport, North Providence, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick, or Woonsocket. Please click [here](#) to download the RFP.

Questions concerning this solicitation may be emailed to Kristen Greene, at kristen.greene@ride.ri.gov, no later than noon on March 4. Send your questions in Microsoft Word format. Please reference the RFP title in the correspondence. Questions received, if any, will be posted and answered on the RIDE website as an addendum to this solicitation by March 9. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to download this information. Final proposals are due and must be delivered by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, **April 1**. Faxed or emailed responses will not be considered.

Instruction:

14. Webinars scheduled for next week on computer-science opportunities in R.I.

Last month, President Obama released the new Computer Science for All initiative, designed to empower all American students from kindergarten through high school to learn computer science and be equipped with the computational thinking skills they need to be

creators in the digital economy, not just consumers, and to be active citizens in our technology-driven world.

The initiative aims to build on efforts already led by parents, teachers, school districts, states, and private-sector leaders from across the country, including those efforts underway here in Rhode Island! Creating a talented and diverse pipeline of computer-science students is critical to the future of our state. The Rhode Island IT industry is a leading force in the Rhode Island economy, and STEM and IT jobs are our fastest-growing positions. We need to develop a workforce with the skills necessary to fill these high-wage, high-growth jobs, so we plan to drive forward the goals of the Computer Science for All initiative by expanding access to computer science in Rhode Island and building on the great work our schools and community partners are already doing.

Join us, the Rhode Island STEM Center, and computer-science partners for a webinar to learn more about the opportunities that will soon be available to your school:

- **Wednesday** (March 2) @ 2 p.m. - [Register Now](#).
- **Friday**, March 4 @ noon - [Register Now](#).

Questions about this initiative can be directed to Octavia Abell, at the R.I. Office of Innovation: Octavia.Abell@innovate.ri.gov.

Data Collection and Quality:

15. LEAs required perform monthly emergency drills, submit reports

LEAs are required to perform emergency drills on a monthly basis. Four of these drills should be obstructed-egress or rapid-dismissal drills, two must be lockdowns, and two must be evacuations. For full details of

drill execution, please refer to [RIGL 16-21](#) or the RIDE [emergency preparedness site](#). LEAs are also required to submit emergency-drill reports the day the drill is conducted. These reports can be submitted through eRIDE under the Emergency Drill Report application.

If you have any questions about the emergency-drill report, please submit a helpdesk ticket, at:

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

16. LEAs advised to resolve duplicate-enrollment issues

Data managers should review their duplicate enrollments for students in the enrollment census and work on resolving these duplicate-enrollment records. Resolving duplicate-enrollment records is critical to receiving proper funding; if a duplicate is not resolved, then neither LEA receives funding for that student.

17. *Reminder: Users able to reset RIDEmap passwords*

We have done some analytics on the number of helpdesk tickets being submitted regarding RIDEmap password resets for users and found that these tickets consist of over 80 percent of the support tickets. We would like to make users aware that they have the capability to reset their password through RIDEmap once they have set up their self-service questions.

Users should follow these steps to update their self-service question in order to reset their password. When logged into RIDEmap, users see their username in the upper right-hand corner of the screen. Click on the username, then click on “Update User Profile.” Users can then choose to either “Update Profile,” “Change Password,” or “Answer Self-Service Questions.”

Selecting “Answer Self-Service Questions” will allow users to choose and answer three security questions. They will be asked one of these questions when they request a password change from the system. They must answer three questions. Answering one question will not allow them to self-reset their password.

If you have any questions about RIDEmap self-service questions, please submit a helpdesk ticket, at:

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

18. *Reminder: Several data collections open, due in the next month*

The following are the data-collection deadlines for next month:

- March 14: [Funding Formula - Due](#)
- March 31: [Textbook Data Collection – 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 other organizations

19. Parent Support Network to offer legislative-policy training; registration closes today (February 26)

The Parent Support Network of Rhode Island is holding a legislative-policy training and free dinner for parents who would like to learn about the legislative process and state budget. We believe that parents

should have their voices heard and be the ones to educate policymakers and our legislators. Parents will learn about the priority agenda for behavioral health and human services. This training and dinner will be held Tuesday (March 1), from 5:30 -7:30 p.m. The location is 535 Centerville Road, Suite 202, Warwick. Parents interested in attending must pre-register **today** by either calling 467-6855 or emailing Beth Azero, at b.azero@psnri.org. Onsite childcare will be provided if requested.

20. RISPA conference scheduled on Mindfulness

The Rhode Island School Psychologists Association (RISPA) is hosting a spring conference on Friday, March 25, at Rhode Island College. The topic is Mindfulness, presented by Debra Burdick, LCSW, BCN. NASP-approved provider credits, as well as NASW credits, will be available upon completion. Registration can be done online at www.rispa.org. Each participant will be provided with Debra Burdick's book *Mindfulness Skills for Kids and Teens*. For more information, see:

<http://rispa.wildapricot.org/resources/Documents/2016%20RISPA%20Brochure%20-%20Mindfulness.pdf>

21. PPAC offers discounted seating for school groups for *Sound of Music*

The Providence Performing Arts Center is offering balcony seating for school groups, either \$20 per person for First Dress Balcony or \$17 per person for Second Dress Balcony, for *The Sound of Music*, 1 p.m. matinee on Thursday, March 10. The prices include all fees. PPAC also can offer 2 comp tickets for the purchase of 40 or more tickets.

For more information, take a look at the Teaser Video for the show: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LtN6RXN2CWg>

And, you can download a study guide, here:

http://ppacri.s3.amazonaws.com/doc/tsomstudyguide_singlepages.pdf

For more information, call or email Paul Hiatt, at 574-3162 or

phiatt@ppacri.org

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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