

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, May 10, 2013

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Action Item Calendar

- May 24: [Asset Protection Plans](#) due
June 3: [Preliminary EIS data](#) report due
June 5: PARCC Technology Readiness data update (see [below](#))
June 25: [EIS data](#) report due
July 15: Housing-aid reimbursement forms due (see [below](#))
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Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. RIDE publishes 2014 graduation timeline

As I noted on April 30 in my State of Education Address to the General Assembly, teachers and school leaders are “stepping up” to provide students with the instruction and support they need in mathematics so that they can improve performance on the NECAP assessments and earn a meaningful diploma. Schools across the state are putting programs in place to bring students the supports they need. Schools and districts are focusing on and advancing communication with families, summer programs, math tutorials, after-school classes, virtual-learning programs, and of course great classroom instruction – and I commend you for these outstanding efforts.

As I've noted in recent Field Memos, we do have procedures in place for students to take other approved assessments, such as Accuplacer, as they work to improve their performance in mathematics and meet the statewide-assessment graduation requirement. I do want you to be aware, however, that we believe that improving performance on the NECAP retake in grade 12 is the best and most direct way for students who scored "substantially below proficient" to meet the state-assessment graduation requirement. We would encourage students considering taking one of the other approved assessments to do so in their senior year if necessary, after they have the results of their NECAP retake. To help you and your community understand the steps and opportunities on the pathway toward graduation, we have developed this 2014 graduation timeline:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Diploma-System/2014-Graduation-Timeline.pdf>

I hope that you will find this document useful; please feel free to share it with your team.

2. Commissioner publishes op-ed, The Truth About Testing

As we discuss our diploma system and its affect on the Class of 2014, all of us have focused a lot of attention on the role of statewide assessments. It is important to remind ourselves – and to remind students and families as well – that assessments are only one part of the diploma system and only a part of the process of great instruction. To help people understand the role that assessments should and should not play in our schools, I have written an op-ed, The Truth About Testing, which you may have seen today (May 10) in the Providence Journal. Here is a link:

[Our schools and the truth about testing on Page A16 of Friday, May 10, 2013 issue of The Providence Journal](#)

3. RIDE posts Fiscal Year 2014 federal-fund allocations

As sequestration has loomed over us, I know that you have been eager to receive detailed information about the allocation of federal funds to your LEA during the coming fiscal year (2014). We now are able to share preliminary information with you, and we have posted a table showing the preliminary allocations for the federal Title Programs (Title I, Title II, Title III, IDEA Part B, and IDEA Preschool) on the our website, at:

<http://ridegms.blob.core.windows.net/documentlibrary/A6856981-5D06-4284-AC15-E99D24210E49.xls>

We have also entered this information into the Consolidated Resource Plan (CRP) that you and your team will use to complete your federal-program applications. When you review the projected allocations, you will see that three factors affect these calculations: (1) the effects of sequestration, (2) changes in poverty density across the state, and (3) changes in the distribution of eligible students in need in across the state.

The effects of sequestration will be challenging for all of us this year. Our federal program and fiscal staff will assist you in any way we can to help you plan for the impact of these cuts in funding while do all that you can to maintain the important services you provide for students in need. If you need assistance or additional information, if you have questions about this matter, or if you need support with specific programming questions, please contact your assigned federal-program staff person, as

listed in your CRP application under “related documents.” If you cannot find the name of your assigned staff person, you may contact David Sienko, Director of Student, Community, and Academic Supports, at 222-8333 or David.Sienko@ride.ri.gov, for further assistance.

4. Commissioner to issue Summer Reading Challenge to schools, students

To promote summer learning and to encourage Rhode Island students to engage in and enjoy reading throughout the summer months, I am developing a Summer Reading Challenge, which I will send to all principals sometime next week. My plan is to issue a challenge to those willing to participate: Encourage your students to read by establishing summer-reading goals. To honor the schools with the highest percentage of students who meet their goals, I will take a skydive from a plane – along with the principals or other willing adults from each winning school! We have been talking with folks from the R.I. Office of Library & Information Services about linking this challenge with their Summer Reading Program. I don’t have all of the details at this time, but I will communicate with you and with your principals further about this challenge over the coming weeks.

5. PBS broadcasts *Ted Talks Education*

On Tuesday, PBS broadcast the premiere of a program called *Ted Talks Education*, with John Legend as the host. The program, part of the PBS American Graduate initiative, focused on the issue of high-school dropouts. Following the TED talks format, the program consists of a series of concise speeches from a wide range of education stakeholders, including students, teachers, and several well-known advocates for public education such as

Geoffrey Canada, Bill Gates, and Sir Ken Robinson. I found the program to be full of fascinating insights from a variety of perspectives, with many of the speakers emphasizing the importance of building personal connections with students and emphasizing creativity and problem-solving as an essential part of great instruction. Here is a link to the broadcast:

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/ted-talks-education/>

6. Two students honored for volunteer community service

On Monday, two Rhode Island students were honored for their outstanding volunteer services as the Rhode Island winners of the 2013 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. Marina Palumbo, a senior at East Greenwich High School, makes and sells necklaces to support a school in Haiti and she started a club at her school to increase awareness about poverty in Haiti. The club has become one of the largest at East Greenwich High. Cody Clarkin, an 8th grader at the Chariho Middle School, led a project to restore the flagpole at Ninigret Park. He is now working to create a memory garden in the park to honor veterans. The Prudential Spirit of Community Award honors the top youth volunteers from across the country – one high-school student and one middle-school student from each state. Congratulations, Marina and Cody!

From RIDE

Data systems:

7. Instructional Management System to drop Pinnacle component

Global Scholar, our contractor for some of the tools on the Instructional Management System (IMS), has informed RIDE that it will no longer include the Pinnacle component of its product line. The Pinnacle component hosts the curriculum and reporting functions within the IMS. We are in conversation with Global Scholar to understand the details and long-term planning needs in light of this news. We will work diligently to keep you informed and to ensure that we plan for transitions. This development will not impact the work we are doing in the upcoming school year. Please contact Phyllis Lynch, Director of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum, at phyllis.lynch@ride.ri.gov, if you have questions about this matter.

8. RIDE adds Fall 2013 NECAP data to private Growth Model Visualization tool

The Fall 2013 NECAP data has been added to the private Growth Model Visualization (GMV) tool.

In addition to central-office and school-building administrators, teachers have also been given access to this tool. Teachers have access to Individual Student Growth data pertaining only to the students they are currently teaching. As such, this is *not* the data that will be used for educator-evaluation purposes.

The private GMV can be accessed through the RIDEmap, at:

<https://ridemap.ride.ri.gov/default.aspx>

To help teachers better understand the Rhode Island Growth Model, RIDE is developing a series of recorded presentations for teachers. Below is a schedule for posting the series to our website:

The *Rhode Island Growth Model for Teachers* series:

Part 1: How is individual student growth calculated?

Today (May 10)

Part 2: How is student growth calculated for a group of students? How are growth data displayed in the Public version of the Growth Model Visualization tool?

May 17

Part 3: How are growth data displayed in the private version of the Growth Model Visualization tool?

May 17

Part 4: How will growth data be calculated and used for educator-evaluation purposes?

July

The *Rhode Island Growth Model for Teachers* series can be assessed at:

www.ride.ri.gov/RIGM

If you have a question regarding the Rhode Island Growth Model, please send your question to RIGM@ride.ri.gov.

9. RIDE launches Data Dashboard for LEA use

RIDE is pleased to announce the launch of a new Data Dashboard module in eRIDE. Developed based on feedback provided by the field as part of the Data Quality Initiative, the Data Dashboard provides LEA users with interactive reports on data submitted to

RIDE by the LEA, beginning with the current school year. The reports available to LEA staff at this time include:

- enrollment data
- duplicate-record counts
- demographic errors
- discipline-record counts
- attendance-record counts (total, absent, tardy, and early dismissal)
- TCS records (course, section, staff, and student).

To access this new module, log in to eRIDE and click on “Dashboard.” If you do not have access to this module in the eRide portal, please contact your district data manager.

Future additions to the dashboard will include new reports, interactive functionality, and analytical tools based on continuous feedback from LEA users. If you have questions about the Data Dashboard, please contact Lee Rabbitt, at lee.rabbitt@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

10. ***Reminder: Nominations for Rhode Island Data Quality Award are being accepted***

Last week, RIDE announced the launch of the Rhode Island Data Quality Award Program. This award will recognize the commitment and effort you and your team members make to ensure that our educators and the public at large have access to high-quality data and that we use data for wise decision-making to improve teaching and learning.

Through May 22, RIDE will accept nominations for individuals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership and commitment to excellence in data quality. Early next month, Commissioner Gist will present the first Data Quality Award at a special ceremony honoring the recipient.

You can find the nomination forms on our website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/DataQualityAward>.

For more information about the award program, please contact Lee Rabbit, at lee.rabbit@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

School finances:

11. RIDE to seek two waivers regarding expenditure of Title I funds

RIDE intends to submit two requests to the U.S. Department of Education for waivers of provisions of Title I, Part A. The first waiver request would allow RIDE to grant LEAs a waiver of excess carryover provisions more than once every three years. The second waiver would allow RIDE to extend the period of availability on Title I 1003(a) School Improvement funds to June 30, 2014. Additional information on these waiver requests can be found at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/InstructionalResources/TitleIImprovingAcademicAchievement.aspx>

Prior to requesting any waivers from the U.S. Department of Education, RIDE is required to provide LEAs with an opportunity to comment on the requests. RIDE will submit all comments to the

U.S. Department of Education, which will consider the comments when determining whether to grant the waiver. Please submit your comments to colleen.hedden@ride.ri.gov, by **May 24**.

12. Housing-aid reimbursement forms posted, due by July 15

LEAs that complete school-housing projects for repair, renovation, or new construction may be eligible for state housing-aid reimbursement, pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws 16-7-35 through 16-7-47. These laws are designed to guarantee adequate school housing for all public-school students and to prevent the cost of school housing from interfering with the effective operation of the schools. Fiscal Year 2014 housing-aid instructions and forms are now available online. For detailed information, instructions, and forms please see:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/FundingFinance/SchoolConstructionProgram/HousingAidProgram.aspx>

Forms are due by **July 15**. Please note that the General Assembly changed the housing-aid payment dates from October 31 and April 30 to September 15 and March 15. Therefore, it is extremely important that all housing aid submissions be submitted by the July 15 deadline.

Technology:

13. RIDE provides resources to help schools, districts transition to digital education

Schools and districts are now in the process of transitioning to digital education. Among the elements schools are considering

during this transition process are: professional learning, curriculum and instruction, use of time, technology and infrastructure, data and assessment, academic supports, and budgets and resources

As you plan for transition to digital education, RIDE has made available a *free* [school or district self assessment results report](#), which provides detailed information to help inform the following planning questions:

- For which elements has the school or district already made significant progress?
- What needs more attention and should be a focus in planning?
- If you are not yet prepared to discuss key issues identified within the element, what can be done to increase knowledge and skills in the area?

These resources, tools, and research found on the RIDE website support these conversations within schools and districts:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/EducationPrograms/VirtualLearning.aspx>

As you work on this matter, please save the date for our next Innovation Powered by Technology Conference, to be held on **October 5!**

14. **PARCC Technology Readiness inventory due June 5**

The next data snapshot for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Technology Readiness Tool will be taken on June 5, and it will be a critical benchmark for

PARCC, as well as for LEAs and states, in assessing capacity in preparation for the assessment in the school year 2014-15. Please be sure that your LEA's data is updated and free of errors prior to June 5.

Data collected in the June 5 snapshot will be used on InfoWorks to provide an update at the state, district, and school levels on the overall Rhode Island technology readiness for PARCC.

If you need your PARCC Readiness Tool password reset, if you have questions, or if you need any other help on this matter, please e-mail Mike Ferry, at Michael.Ferry@ride.ri.gov, or Jaime Viti, at Jaime.Viti@ride.ri.gov.

Educator evaluations:

15. RIDE posts user guides, schedules webinars on Roster Verification

The Roster Verification process for the current school year will take place in the Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS) data system for all principals and applicable teachers (those assigned to grades 3 through 7 who are considered Contributing Educators in English language arts or mathematics, based on LEA policy or guidance). The process in the EPSS will open for use on May 22, with a set-up and review period for principals. Teachers will be able to verify their rosters beginning May 29. The following resources are now available for LEAs to share with teachers and principals to help them review the process and prepare to complete it:

User Guide for Teachers:

http://www.eride.ri.gov/RosterVerification/UserGuide_Teacher.pdf

Teacher Training Video:

http://www.eride.ri.gov/RosterVerification/TrainingVideo_Teacher.html

Principal User Guide URL:

http://www.eride.ri.gov/RosterVerification/UserGuide_Principal.pdf

Principals can also sign up for a Roster Verification webinar by using the registration links below. Space is limited, and interested principals are encouraged to register early. The webinar will also be recorded and posted on the RIDE website for those who cannot attend one of the live sessions. Register for one of the Roster Verification webinars at:

Monday, May 20, 1 – 2 p.m.

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/123542750>

Wednesday, May 22, 10 – 11 a.m.

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/389404742>

16. Registration opens for summer workshops for new and returning evaluators

Registration is open for the summer workshops for returning personnel evaluating teachers and for returning personnel evaluating building administrators. The 1 ½-day, in-person workshop for personnel evaluating teachers will be offered 24 times between the weeks of July 8 and August 19, and the 1-day

workshop for personnel evaluating building administrators will be offered 5 times between the weeks of July 17 and August 19. Both workshops will build on the current-year trainings and are part of the ongoing educator-evaluation training continuum.

Registration is also open the multi-day Summer Academies for new evaluators. The 2013 Summer Academies for new evaluators will mirror the trainings that were provided last summer. The 4-day Summer Academy for personnel evaluating teachers is scheduled for July 22-25 and August 19-22. The 2-day Summer Academy for personnel evaluating building administrators is scheduled for July 15-16.

Evaluators can register for a summer workshop or a Summer Academy on the eRIDE Workshop Calendar, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx>

Professional Development:

17. RIDE announces free Social Studies Institute at Rhode Island College on June 1

RIDE, the Rhode Island State Panel on Civic Education (SPCE), and the American Democracy Project will host the 2013 Rhode Island Social Studies Summer Institute on June 1, at Rhode Island College. This conference will provide teachers with opportunities to hear first-hand from their peers about successful strategies and resources for teaching the newly expanded Rhode Island Social Studies GSEs, integrating social studies content with the Common Core State Standards, and topics in Rhode Island history and civic education.

A brochure with workshop and registration information can be found at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Social-Studies>

Sign-in for workshop sessions begins at 8:30 a.m.; workshops start at 9 a.m., and the conference will end at 2:30 p.m.; lunch is provided. Certificates of participation are available.

Registration is open until **May 24** – please register soon as space is limited! Please contact Kamlyn Keith (kamlyn.keith@ride.ri.gov) if you have any questions about the conference.

Educator Quality:

18. RIDE announces changes in Induction initiative for beginning teachers for coming school year

As we approach the next school year and the end of the Race to the Top grant, we have more limited funding available for Induction. The remaining funding for the Induction initiative will ensure that we can support 180 beginning teachers across the state. However, based on past trends and current projections, we could have more than 300 beginning teachers. The RIDE team has been working to find ways to use the remaining funding in the most meaningful way.

Next year, 180 first-year teachers across the state will be supported. Our focus will be first-year teachers. In order to do this, the following changes will be made:

- The data-entry deadline will be **September 30**, or earlier if we reach 180 teachers prior to September 30.
- Year 2 teachers in the urban-core districts will not be supported unless districts would like to use their discretionary, uncommitted, or other unused Race to the Top funds to pay the per-beginning-teacher cost.
- Teachers who are in alternate-route-to-certification programs will not have additional induction support. They are supported through their programs.
- Teachers who were hired late and were not supported in the current school year may not be able to receive support next year unless our numbers of beginning teachers are fewer than the current projections.

If you have questions about this program, please contact Hilda Potrzeba (222-8891) or Donna Okrasinski (222-8982).

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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