

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo  
Friday, June 19, 2015**

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### **Action Item Calendar**

- Today** (June 19): [Homeless, Title I, EIS](#) collections due
- Wednesday** (June 24): Principals to sign off on [rosters](#)
- June 30: [Dual-enrollment](#) polices completed
- June 30: [Preschool](#) Performance Report due
- June 30: Final [CTE](#) collection due
- July 1: [CRP](#) due
- July 3: Personnel Assignments Submission deadline (see [below](#))
- July 10: [Educator-evaluation](#) reports due
- July 15: [Special Education](#) Performance Report due
- July 15: [Housing Aid](#) forms due
- July 17: Physical-restraint reports due (see [below](#))
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## **Notes from Acting Commissioner Abbott**

### **1. RIDE, PARCC states prepare for communications regarding assessment results**

Yesterday, I participated in a conference call with Education Secretary Arne Duncan and leaders from all of the states in the PARCC consortium. Secretary Duncan emphasized the importance of communicating with parents “early and often” about the score reports they will receive for their children in the fall. He also stressed the importance of communicating with educators in the field and with boards of education – local and statewide – so that all stakeholders have a good understanding about the value of PARCC assessments and of college- and career-readiness.

The states in the PARCC consortium are developing a “library” of resources to provide to school leaders, teachers, and families to help them understand PARCC results – and to help teachers use PARCC results to improve instruction. At RIDE, we have been meeting with a focus group of school leaders to help us design and develop communications tools for dissemination later this summer and throughout the fall. You will hear more from us about various aspects of the PARCC assessments – including scoring, performance-level setting, and the release of results – in the coming weeks.

### **2. Council to consider revised regulations on length of school day**

During and following our extremely difficult winter, we received numerous inquiries from the field about our regulations on the school calendar and the length of the

school day. These inquiries led us to look closely at these regulations and to propose revisions.

As I indicated to you in last week's Field Memo, on Monday we will present to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education revised regulations for review and discussion. I am confident that the revised regulations clarify, simplify, update, and improve the existing regulations in a number of aspects.

First, these revised regulations eliminate the confusion and contradictions regarding delayed school openings and early dismissals. Instead, they say simply: a school "shall remain open for at least three hours in order to be considered a school day" – regardless of when the day starts or ends.

Second, these regulations authorize the Commissioner "to shorten the school year for individual schools based on short term emergency closures of no more than five school days." This change obviates the need for school committees to petition the Council for emergency reductions – an operational area that we believe does not require review and discussion by a policy-making body.

These regulations also emphasize that the instructional school day must include the full range of academic requirements included in the Basic Education Program, including instruction in the arts, world languages, physical education, health, library-media studies, and student advisories.

Our hope is that the Council will consider these revised regulations for vote and approval at a future meeting, well before the start of the coming school year.

### **3. Schools must be closed on Monday, July 6, in observance of Independence Day**

I want to remind you that Rhode Island law (RIGL § 16-20-1) specifies that “no session of any school ... shall be held” on official state holidays, including Independence Day. Keep in mind that, with July 4 falling this year on a Saturday, the Secretary of State has set Monday, **July 6**, as the official date of the Independence Day holiday this year in Rhode Island. Therefore, no session of any school should be scheduled for or held this year on July 6.

### **4. Calcutt Middle School, Scituate High win national awards for energy education**

We’ve received the really great news that *two* Rhode Island schools are national winners of 2015 Youth Awards for Energy Achievement, from the National Energy Education Development (NEED) project. As NEED explains on its website:

[The awards] recognize those who achieve excellence in energy education in their schools and communities. The students and teachers set goals and objectives and keep a record of their activities. In April, the students combine their materials into presentations and submit them online.

Our national winners are the Calcutt Middle School, in Central Falls, and Scituate High School.

Calcutt Middle School was named the National Junior Level School of the Year for its project “Educating the Planet,” under the leadership of Stephanie Racine. A team of 8<sup>th</sup> graders at Calcutt took on 12 projects for energy

conservation, and they used social media to share their knowledge with others in Puerto Rico, Columbia, and Japan.

Scituate High School was named the National Senior Level School of the Year for the its NEED Project, under the supervision of Shannon Donovan. Scituate students spent the fall learning about the science of energy – then sharing their knowledge with others in the second half of the school year. Among other projects, the students made videos about energy-saving tips, taught third-graders about transportation fuels, held a plant sale to promote use of local foods, started a project to get young students involved with food production, and worked in partnership with Calcutt students to win a grant to plant trees around their school.

Congratulations to these teams from Rhode Island! You can read more about the 2015 NEED Youth Awards here:

<http://www.need.org/youth-awards>.

## **From RIDE**

### ***Health and Safety:***

#### **5. Physical-restraint data reports due July 17 – *Action Item***

The Rhode Island physical-restraint regulations require all public education programs to report incidents of physical restraint to RIDE on an annual basis. You must report the number of restraint incidents and the number of students involved in physical restraint in each school during the current (2014-15) school year (from July 1, 2014, through June 30, 2015). A detailed incident report must be kept on file in your LEA, and parents or guardians should be

informed as soon as possible (no later than two school days after the incident) regarding every incident of restraint involving their child.

Please submit data for your schools by **July 17**, by logging into eRIDE and clicking on Physical Restraint Data Collection. In addition to reporting numbers, you must answer two questions regarding whether training was provided for all staff within the first month of school (required within the first month of employment for new staff) and whether advanced training was provided for staff members identified to serve as a schoolwide resource.

If you need an eride account, please contact the data manager in your LEA. For technical support, please enter a ticket at [www.support.ride.ri.gov/tickets/new](http://www.support.ride.ri.gov/tickets/new) . For restraint data-related inquiries, please contact Alice Woods, at 222-8983 or [alice.woods@ride.ri.gov](mailto:alice.woods@ride.ri.gov).

### ***Innovation Powered by Technology:***

#### **6. Innovation Powered by Technology Conference to be held October 17; RIDE seeks presentation proposals by August 8**

Save the date of **October 17** for our 4th annual statewide Innovation Powered by Technology Conference: Accelerating Personalization.

This full-day event will provide you with the opportunity to engage and interact in conversations with more than 1,000 attendees, including teachers, students, technology coordinators, staff developers, administrators, policy-makers, professors, government and industry representatives, as well as national leaders in educational policy and practice.

Immerse yourself in ideas, strategies, and resources and meet face to face with well-respected professionals in both the education and technology fields.

Learn about new and exciting approaches in blended learning and digital learning ecosystems throughout Rhode Island, and hear from schools that are changing the culture of teaching and learning through digital-learning transition.

Discover free digital planning resources such as the Future Ready Dashboard, which provides assistance to school districts for systemic planning regarding the effective use of technology and digital learning to achieve the goal of college- and career-readiness for all students.

This conference will deepen our thinking around personalized learning and the digital-learning transition. To that end, we are seeking presentation proposals to accelerate the implementation of high-quality blended learning. Educators, school leaders, policy-makers, and technology coordinators are all encouraged to share implementation strategies, best practices, and lessons learned at the conference. We will accept proposals until the close of business on **August 8**. Lead presenters will be notified of proposal decisions by August 22.

You can find information on this conference on the RIDE website, at:

[www.ride.ri.gov/TechConf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/TechConf).

Please share this information widely with your team and in your community.

***Data Collections and Data Quality:***

## **7. LEAs must complete Personnel Assignment Submissions by July 3 – *Action Item***

We would like to remind you that the last date to submit the data in the Personnel Assignment Submission (PAS) in eRIDE is Friday, **July 3**. Human resources personnel are requested to review the Out of Area reports for their LEA and resolve the errors, and, if needed, submit a ticket to our help desk, at <http://support.ride.ri.gov>. Please be sure to complete the submission by clicking the “Signoff and Submit Assignment Data” link in the PAS module.

## **8. *Reminder*: Instructional Support System can integrate data from local assessments**

The Instructional Support System has the capability of integrating local assessment data from LEAs. We have collaborated with Renaissance Learning to integrate the STAR assessment data, with minimal effort by LEAs. Contact your Renaissance representative and ask for the data-sharing agreement to start receiving STAR data in the Instructional Support System. When your Renaissance data agreement has been submitted, please notify Greg Martin so that RIDE can monitor the progress of your data-sharing request.

If you have any questions concerning the integration of local assessment data in the Instructional Support System, please contact Greg Martin, at [gregory.martin@ride.ri.gov](mailto:gregory.martin@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8495.

## **9. *Reminder*: Roster verification to end on June 24**

The second stage (teachers' review) of roster verification is complete. The third stage of roster verification will run through **June 24**. Principals are asked to review and sign off on the rosters that their teachers have verified in the previous stage.

Updated user guides for principals and teachers are available at:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EducatorEvaluation/EducatorPerformanceandSupportSystem\(EPS\).aspx](http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EducatorEvaluation/EducatorPerformanceandSupportSystem(EPS).aspx).

In preparation for this year's roster-verification process, all principals are familiar with LEA policy regarding contributing educators. You can find updated guidance on Establishing Teacher-Course-Student Connections at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EducatorEvaluation/GuidebooksForms.aspx#19333-other-guidance>.

For questions about roster verification, please submit a help-desk ticket, at <https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

### **10. *Reminder: Several data collections due by the end of June***

We have just a few remaining data collections due by the end of the month:

- The [final Homeless Children & Youth, Title I, and Early Intervention Services \(EIS\)](#) collection is due **today** (June 19).
- The [final CTE collection](#) due on **June 30**.

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**

#### **11. Highlander Institute seeks applicants for cohort of educators interested in blended learning; information session on Monday**

Please see this message from the Highlander Institute:

Are you interested in applying for the second Fuse RI cohort? Do you want to learn more about the program? Are you curious about what it takes to be a Fuse Fellow?

The Highlander Institute is looking to expand its dream-team of Fuse Fellows to lead the initiative of implementing, disseminating, and scaling blended learning across the state of Rhode Island!

Do you possess the following rock-star qualities?:

- enthusiasm for blended learning
- research-driven
- passion for people
- time-management
- think outside the box

Come learn what it takes to be a Fuse Fellow!

We are hosting an informational meeting for prospective Fuse Fellows on **Monday** (June 22) from 4 to 5:30 p.m. Due to growing interest, the meeting has been moved to a larger venue: Highlander Charter School, 42 Lexington Avenue, Providence (on the corner of Broad and Lexington). This meeting is for anyone interested – teachers, administrators, and all are welcome.

Why Fuse RI? The promise of technology is only beginning to take shape in Rhode Island. We believe that now is a critical time to invest in statewide systems that support and incentivize excellence across districts. At the heart of the project, Fuse RI provides a systematic yet customizable solution for all Rhode Island school districts — created by, with, and for Rhode Island educators.

Do I need to be an expert in blended learning? No! Fuse Fellows need to be passionate, curious, and innovative. They need to understand the importance of blended learning in schools, and are eager to learn more about it.

For more information, visit our website:

[fuseri.highlanderinstitute.org](http://fuseri.highlanderinstitute.org).

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

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