

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, July 26, 2013**

**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

1. U.S. Department of Education Officials to visit [Green Ribbon Schools](#) in Providence on **Monday**
2. PARCC releases [cost estimates](#), almost exactly the same as NECAP per-student costs

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

***Webinars and training:***

3. Space available in orientation sessions for facilitators of [formative-assessment professional development](#)

***Surveys:***

4. LEAs asked to complete survey on [kindergarten-entry practices](#) by **August 9 – Action Item**

***School Finances:***

5. Fiscal Year 2012 [UCOA](#) data posted, 4<sup>th</sup>-quarter Fiscal Year 2013 reports due – **Action Item**

***Assessments:***

6. [PARCC](#) releases information, materials on accommodations for students with disabilities, English Learners

***Technology:***

7. Deadline **today** for submitting presentation proposals for RIDE [technology conference](#)

***Data Services:***

8. RIDE to provide support to field through online [Helpdesk Support System](#)
9. LEAs asked to ensure [district, school profiles](#) are up to date

---

**Action Item Calendar**

**Monday** (July 29): Submit [enrollment, attendance, suspension, TCS](#) reports

**Thursday** (August 1): [Wireless Classroom Initiative](#) surveys due  
August 9: [Kindergarten-entry practices](#) survey due (see below)  
September 27: UCOA files due (see [below](#))

---

**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

1. **U.S. Department of Education Officials to visit Green Ribbon Schools in Providence on Monday**

Our mission at RIDE is to ensure that all of our students are prepared for success in college and in challenging careers. To meet this goal, we need to ensure that we have great teachers in every classroom and great leaders in every school. We need to be sure that our schools are safe and supportive places for teaching and learning. We also need to be sure that we invest our taxpayer dollars wisely whenever one of our communities constructs or remodels a school building. Sustainable schools, or green schools, are excellent environments for students and great investments for our communities.

This summer, the U.S. Department of Education is conducting a nationwide best-practices tour of school facilities, "Education Built to Last." The purpose of the tour is to spotlight best practices in school design, construction, operations, and management and to receive input as to how the U.S. Department of Education can encourage innovation and improvement regarding school facilities.

Rhode Island is proud to have four U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Award-winning schools, including The Compass School (a charter public school in South Kingstown) and three Providence schools: Classical High School, Nathan Bishop Middle School, and the Providence Career and Technical Academy. In recognition of this accomplishment, the second stop on the Education Built to Last tour will take place on **Monday**, in Providence, where school leaders from southern New England will gather to meet with officials from the U.S. Department of Education: Green Ribbon Schools Director Andrea Falken and Donald Yu, Special Advisor to the Secretary of Education.

If your schedule allows, please feel free to join us at this event on Monday (July 29), from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m., for a speaking program

and panel discussion with audience feedback, at the Providence Career and Technical Academy, 41 Fricker St. A tour of the Academy, and then a tour of Nathan Bishop Middle School, will follow the speaking program and panel.

## **2. PARCC releases cost estimates, almost exactly the same as NECAP per-student costs**

Last week (July 22), the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) released the estimated cost-per-student for administration, scoring, and reporting of the PARCC assessments. The estimate from PARCC, which will launch in the 2014-15 school year, is \$29.95 per student, almost exactly the same on a per-student basis (\$30) as the current cost of NECAP assessments. We will, however, be testing students in grades 9 and 10 for the first time. This grade expansion will add about 25 percent to the total assessment cost.

All told, statewide assessments account for a minuscule portion of overall education expenditures – about 19 cents for every \$100 dollars that we spend on public education! I am confident that this is a worthwhile and necessary expenditure. We want to ensure that our state assessments are of high quality, that they align with the Common Core State Standards, that they involve critical thinking and problem-solving, and that they lead to timely reports to families and teachers in order to guide instruction and advance student achievement. While an high-quality assessment aligned to the Common Core would be appropriate for us to use in Rhode Island, we have been an active member of the PARCC consortium and I am therefore well informed about and confident in the high-quality assessment that PARCC consortium is developing.

I also know that you are working hard at the local level to make additional investments in technology, in order to administer the PARCC on computer, laptop, or tablet. PARCC readiness varies significantly across the state, and therefore RIDE has been actively engaged in developing a detailed technology inventory to get a complete picture of local technology resources across the state. As noted in the Field Memo last week, you will receive a spreadsheet next week, showing your current technology inventory, along with instructions for review and for updating information. It is important that, while this investment in technology will allow for online assessments, the benefits technology will provide for our teachers and students are far greater – opening up many new avenues for personalized instruction, access to curriculum, blended learning, and other innovations.

## **From RIDE**

### ***Webinars and training:***

#### **3. Space available in orientation sessions for facilitators of formative-assessment professional development**

RIDE has scheduled several orientation sessions across the state to introduce facilitators to the formative-assessment online professional development. Each two-hour session will include an overview of the course content, will explain the role of the facilitator, and will highlight resources available to facilitators. In addition, each session will introduce the new online platform for accessing the course. These sessions are for administrators and teacher leaders who will be leading or facilitating the formative-assessment course in their school or district, not for all educators

who will be taking the course. It is necessary to attend only one session. For more information, please contact Laura Kacewicz, at [Laura.Kacewicz@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Laura.Kacewicz@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8993.

Sessions are scheduled for the following dates and locations:

- Wednesday, August 7, from 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. Warwick Public Library, 600 Sandy Lane
- Tuesday, August 13, from 9 - 11 a.m., Pawtucket Administration Building, 286 Main St.
- Thursday, August 15, from 9 – 11 a.m., Ponaganset Middle School, 7 Rustic Hill Rd., North Scituate
- Tuesday, August 20, from 9 – 11 a.m., Calef School (High School Annex), 7 Waveland St., Johnston
- Friday, August 23, from 9 – 11 a.m., Portsmouth High School (library), 120 Education Lane
- Monday, August 26, from 9 – 11 a.m., International Charter School, 334 Pleasant St., Pawtucket

### ***Surveys:***

#### **4. LEAs asked to complete survey on kindergarten-entry practices by August 9 – *Action Item***

As part of our Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant, Rhode Island will be developing a new Kindergarten Entry Assessment. RIDE has partnered with Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) to conduct a survey in order to gain a better understanding of current kindergarten-entry practices across the state. The topics in this survey include supports your school provides to families as children enter kindergarten as well as any assessments conducted or other data collected as children

transition into your kindergarten program. Your input is critical, as RIDE will use the information provided to inform the development of a new Kindergarten Entry Assessment tool. The survey should be completed by the administrator or curriculum coordinator most familiar each school's current kindergarten-entry policies and practices. RIDE will be emailing the survey directly to district and school administrators on Monday (July 29). The survey should take no more than 20 minutes to complete, and the data will go directly to EDC, which will analyze the data and report findings to RIDE. The results of the study will be available this fall. Please complete and submit the survey by Friday, **August 9**.

***School Finances:***

**5. Fiscal Year 2012 UCOA data posted, 4<sup>th</sup>-quarter Fiscal Year 2013 reports due – *Action Item***

The Fiscal Year 2012 Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA) data have now been posted. The following link will take you to the UCOA webpage, where you can access these data and reports:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/FundingFinance/SchoolDistrictFinancialData/UniformChartofAccounts.aspx>

Preliminary 6/30/13 UCOA files for Fiscal Year 2013 were due last week. To ensure that data are compiled and available at the beginning of November, you must send data files at this time. Doing so will allow us to conduct quality-assurance tests and to provide you with information regarding any corrections needed so that your final file, due **September 27**, will be error free. Please help by ensuring that your LEA has submitted your 4<sup>th</sup>-quarter file.

***Assessments:***

## **6. PARCC releases information, materials on accommodations for students with disabilities, English Learners**

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) has released the first edition of the *PARCC Accessibility Features and Accommodations Manual*. PARCC states have agreed to develop and implement common policies and procedures, including common participation policies and accommodations policies for students with disabilities and English Learners, with the purpose of establishing equitable access and comparability of results across schools, districts, and states. During field testing in Spring 2014 ,operational testing in 2014-15, and beyond, PARCC states will collect information on the use of all accommodations at the state, district, and school level for monitoring purposes. As data are collected through item try-outs and field testing, changes may be made to the policy to reflect best practices.

The manual details three ways in which the PARCC computer-delivered assessments are designed to provide students with increased access to the assessments:

- *Features for All Students*: Features for all students, which will be embedded through the PARCC online delivery platform or will be part of the PARCC assessment administration;
- *Accessibility Features for All Students (identified in advance)*: Features available to all students but provided to students who have a need identified ahead of the PARCC assessment; and

- *Accommodations:* Supports for students with disabilities, English Learners, and English Learners with disabilities, which increase access while maintaining a valid and reliable score.

In addition to the manual, several supporting tools have been developed, including [Frequently Asked Questions](#) and guides for [parents](#) and [teachers](#) of students with disabilities. Guides for parents and teachers of English Learners will be available in September.

For more information or to view the policies and materials, please visit:

<http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-accessibility-features-and-accommodations-manual>.

### ***Technology:***

#### **7. Deadline today for submitting presentation proposals for RIDE technology conference**

The deadline for submitting your [Technology Conference Presentation Proposals](#) for our 2013 Innovation Powered by Technology Conference is **today** (July 26).

RIDE would also like you to know that we are inviting corporations, foundations, and nonprofits to our [Innovation Powered by Technology Conference](#) on **October 5**. Below is the notice we are sending out:

RIDE invites corporations, foundations, and nonprofit organizations providing services to the K-12 education sector to join more than 700 participants in a conference focused on developing digital learning ecosystems across Rhode Island.

Join teams of educators and decision-makers working hard to accelerate digital learning in schools across the state. Engage and interact in conversations with more than 700 attendees, including teachers, students, technology coordinators, staff developers, administrators, policy-makers, professors, and government and industry representatives, as well as national leaders in educational policy and practice.

Three key reasons to participate in the Innovation Powered by Technology Conference:

- *Networking* - Engage and interact with conference attendees to hear what those in the forefront are thinking and doing;
- *Access* - Experience unprecedented access to an extraordinary group of decision-makers from districts across Rhode Island; and
- *Recognition* - Take advantage of the broad recognition opportunities that exhibitor packages and sponsorship offers to corporations, foundations, and nonprofits providing services to the K-12 education sector and e-learning.

[Exhibitor Packages and Sponsorship Opportunities](#)

Exhibitor and Sponsor Registration – Coming Soon!

***Data Services:***

**8. RIDE to provide support to field through online Helpdesk Support System**

Beginning on **Wednesday** (July 31), all requests for RIDE helpdesk support will be provided by the RIDE Helpdesk, at:

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

Any requests for support, including those that previously were e-mailed to [helpdesk@ride.ri.gov](mailto:helpdesk@ride.ri.gov) or called in to 401-222-8400, should now be entered into our user-friendly RIDE Helpdesk Support System. The RIDE Helpdesk provides support for all RIDE data systems, including RIDEMap portal systems and eRide portal systems. The RIDE Helpdesk team operates from 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. on weekdays.

If you have any questions about our Helpdesk, please contact Lee Rabbitt, at 222-8495 or [lee.rabbitt@ride.ri.gov](mailto:lee.rabbitt@ride.ri.gov)

**9. LEAs asked to ensure district, school profiles are up to date**

LEAs should make sure that the district and school profiles are up to date in the eRide School Profile module. This application allows schools and districts to update their contact information and addresses. Users can view, edit, or add information for a district or schools. It is important that RIDE have the correct contact information for all districts and schools. Please note that a school cannot be closed or opened and grades cannot be

reconfigured online; however, the appropriate forms can be downloaded from the School Profile module. Please contact Lee Rabbitt, at 222-8495 or [lee.rabbitt@ride.ri.gov](mailto:lee.rabbitt@ride.ri.gov), if you have any questions about district or school profiles.

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

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