

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo  
Friday, November 4, 2016**

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## Notes from Commissioner Wagner

### 1. RIDE receives requests for \$1.5 million in funding for leadership development; application deadline, November 18

As we recognize the importance of leadership at all levels of our school system, we are pleased that we have funding in our current budget to offer a total of \$350,000 in mini-grants to principals and their leadership teams to provide professional development and access to resources on school leadership. Our budget also includes funding for a Leadership Fellow to work at RIDE for the year, focusing on leadership issues. Alexis Meyer is our Leadership Fellow; she is on leave from the Archie R. Cole Middle School, in East Greenwich. While she was at Cole, her school won a 2015 National Blue Ribbon Award from the U.S. Department of Education.

Earlier this year, in partnership with the Rhode Island Association of School Principals (RIASP), which also has some funds for leadership development, we held an informational session for you and your principals to launch the mini-grant application process and to provide time for you to meet with potential partners who can support your leadership work.

Applications for the RIDE-RIASP leadership grants and are due **November 18**, but we asked interested school leaders to submit letters of intent by mid-October. So far, we have grant requests for about \$1.5 million in funding – well beyond what we have the funding to support. We are pleased, however, to see this tremendous interest in leadership

development and the need for leadership support at all levels: teachers, principals, and superintendents. We recognize the magnitude of this need, and we hope to have funding available in future years to continue with this initiative. We expect to announce the grant recipients for this years by the middle of next month.

Grant-application materials are located on the RIDE website, at this [LINK](#). For further information or support regarding these grant, email [alexis.meyer@ride.ri.gov](mailto:alexis.meyer@ride.ri.gov).

## **2. R.I. educators to be invited to nominate students to attend conferences for future medical, technology leaders**

We want to let you know that educators across Rhode Island will be receiving a letter from John C. Mather, Ph.D., National Academy of Future Scientists and Technologists Science Director and Winner of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Physics, and Dr. Robert Darling, National Academy of Future Physicians and Medical Scientists Medical Director and White House Physician to the President of the United States (1996–1999). Drs. Mather and Darling will write to inform Rhode Island educators that high-school teachers, counselors, and principals can nominate students for the Congress of Future Medical Leaders (June 25-27, 2017) and the Congress of Future Science and Technology Leaders (June 29-July 1), to be held at UMass Lowell.

Each year, the Academies write to schools throughout the nation to seek assistance in identifying their most promising and academically talented high-school students interested in STEM and medical careers. These qualifying young people will be mentored by some of the greatest living figures in science, technology and medicine. The Congresses were created to inspire the next generation to pursue the STEM and medical fields, and the Congresses include hundreds of students who will attend on full academic scholarships. Educators in

Rhode Island will have the opportunity to award a portion of these scholarships. For more information, see:

[www.futuredocs.com](http://www.futuredocs.com)

[www.scitechleaders.com](http://www.scitechleaders.com)

### From RIDE

#### ***Students:***

### **3. Met School student is finalist in Breakthrough Junior Challenge; competition for awards-ceremony invite ends Wednesday**

Please see this message from the Met School:

We're excited to announce that Met student Owen Cuseo is one of 30 finalists (from a pool of more than 100,000 applicants from more than 200 countries) for the Breakthrough Junior Challenge, an annual global competition to inspire creative thinking about science.

Students enter the Breakthrough Junior Challenge – sponsored by National Geographic, Khan Academy, and Facebook – by submitting a five-minute video on the science-related subject of their choosing. Check out Owen's submitted video on The Second Law of Thermodynamics.

Based upon their own merits, 10 of the 30 finalists will be invited to the Breakthrough Challenge awards ceremony, to be held in California next month. We're confident that Owen will be among these ten; however, one finalist will be chosen based upon a social-media campaign.

The finalists' videos appear on the Breakthrough Challenge Facebook page through **Wednesday** (November 9). The video with the most combined Likes and Shares will automatically be invited to the national ceremony:

<https://www.facebook.com/BreakthroughPrize/>

Your assistance is greatly appreciated!

#### **4. RIDE provides resources to help LEAs prepare required reports on disparities in student suspensions**

In the September 9 [Field Memo](#) (see item #1), we provided an update on a new provision pertaining to requirements for out-of-school suspensions set forth in the amended RIGL §16-2-17: Right to a Safe School. The law also creates another new requirement:

(d) All school superintendents, or their designees, shall review annually the discipline data for their school district, collected in accordance with the specifications set forth in §16-60-4(21), to determine whether the discipline imposed has a disproportionate impact on students based on race, ethnicity, or disability status and to appropriately respond to any such disparity. In addition to the data submitted, if a disparity exists, the school district shall submit a report to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education describing the conduct of the student, the frequency of the conduct, prior disciplinary actions for the conduct, and any other relevant information and corrective actions to address the disparity, after consultation with representatives of the faculty has been taken to address the disparity. The reports shall be deemed to be public records for purposes of title 38.

We strongly encourage you and your designees to make use of resources available on the [InfoWorks website](#). State-, district- and school-level charts in InfoWorks provide information on the annual number of incidents of suspension, an unduplicated count of students who were suspended at least once, the total number of days students were suspended over the course of the year, and the suspension rate (i.e., the number of incidents of suspension per 100 students, based on Average Daily Membership).

Furthermore, RIDE has created six [Advanced Reports](#) with more detailed information on suspensions. Particularly relevant to this annual review are:

- [Suspension Rates by Race](#); and
- [Suspension Rates by Program Status](#), which includes rates for students with IEPs.

Please refer to the [Data Guide](#) for more information about these reports.

RIDE has posted on the RIDE website additional resources and recommendations to help you determine whether differences in rates should be deemed disproportionate. See:

[www.ride.ri.gov/Discipline](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Discipline) under “Suspension Data.”

If you have any questions about these suspension reports or these resources, please email [David.Sienko@ride.ri.gov](mailto:David.Sienko@ride.ri.gov).

## **5. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act amended; RIDE posts materials on homeless-education issues**

The McKinney-Vento Act is designed to address the challenges that homeless children and youth have faced in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school; the act strongly emphasizes the importance of school stability for homeless children and youth.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) amendments to The McKinney-Vento Act *Education for Homeless Children and Youth program* are already in effect (as of October 1). On July 27, the U.S. Department of Education released non-regulatory guidance to help school districts and states implement amendments to the McKinney-Vento Act made by ESSA; you may access this guidance at:

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/160240ehcyguidance072716.pdf>.

On October 18, RIDE provided a clinic for the LEA homeless liaisons with a national expert on homeless-education issues and the changes in ESSA so as to ensure that all LEAs had this important information in order to implement the changes. The materials from the clinic, including the PowerPoint presentation, along with other valuable resources on this topic, can be found at:

<http://www.naehcy.org/essa-training-and-professional-development-resources>

Important dates to note:

- the amendments to the McKinney-Vento Act *Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program* are already in effect (as of October 1); and
- on **December 10**, the phrase “awaiting foster-care placement” will be deleted from the definition of homelessness in the McKinney-Vento Act.

Please be sure to check in with your LEA homeless liaison to discuss the changes that are now in effect and to ensure that all of the McKinney-Vento requirements are being implemented in your LEA so that students experiencing homelessness will have access to the educational and related services that they need to enable them to meet the same challenging state academic standards to which all students are held. For additional information or clarifications about education for homeless children, please email Eileen Botelho, State Homeless Coordinator, at [Eileen.Botelho@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Eileen.Botelho@ride.ri.gov) .

***Educators:***

**6. RIDE certification office to close for five days**

The RIDE educator-certification office will be closed for 5 days to participate in a Lean event. On November 21, 22, 29, 30 and December 1, all RIDE certification staff will participate in the Lean event. Lean is a process that focuses on the customer and uses a prescribed methodology to continuously improve and eliminate unnecessary steps or waste. The process originated in manufacturing but is used broadly today. The certification team is focused on developing solutions for streamlining the paper application process, especially during the summer months.

***Instruction:***

**7. Events scheduled, survey launched to support computer-science initiatives in R.I. schools**

CS4RI (Computer Science for Rhode Island), our statewide computer science initiative, brings together a coalition of partners to offer a menu of options for schools to expand computer-science education in

kindergarten through grade 12. RIDE and the Office of Innovation strive to provide opportunities for students, educators, and school leaders to participate in the CS4RI program. You can find information about the CS4RI initiative at <http://CS4RI.org>.

Upcoming CS4RI opportunities include:

- *2016 CS4RI Summit*  
[Register today](#) for the 2016 CS4RI Summit to be held on Wednesday, December 14, from 8 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., at the [Ryan Center at the University of Rhode Island](#). More than 1,000 students, educators, and school leaders are already registered to attend. The Summit registration deadline is Monday, **November 14**. The CS4RI Summit aims to inspire the next generation of computer scientists, entrepreneurs, and engaged tech-sector employees — bringing together industry professionals, training providers, community members, and middle-school, high-school, and college students to showcase projects, research, education, and career opportunities related to computer science and technology. Our goals are to excite students from across Rhode Island about the varied educational and career opportunities that result from studying computer science and to celebrate computer science in action.

Exhibitors will include representatives from business and industry as well as from colleges and universities. Middle-school and high-school students, along with college students, will have an opportunity to showcase their computer-science work on topics including virtual and augmented reality, robotics and physical computing, big-data visualization, security and networking, and more!

- *Short CS4RI Implementation Survey*

The CS4RI Advisory Council, which includes K-12 (teachers, coordinators, principals, and superintendents), RIDE, postsecondary education, and industry professionals, has developed a simple online survey that will help us be responsive to the needs of educators introducing or continue to teach computer science in your classrooms. Please take a few minutes to share your perspectives through this link:

<https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/2981770/New-standard-survey>.

- *CS4RI Community of Practice*

Join educators from across Rhode Island for the CS4RI Community of Practice meeting, on Thursday, **November 17**, from 4:30 – 6 p.m., at the Galanti Lounge, located on the third floor at the URI Library, Kingston Campus, to learn more about CS4RI programs and Computer Science Week activities and opportunities and to lend your voice to the conversation. Register to attend the Community of Practice meeting [here](#).

- *Save the date: CS Education Week - **December 5-11***

Computer Science Education Week (CSEdWeek) is an annual program dedicated to inspiring K-12 students to take interest in computer science. Originally conceived by the Computing in the Core coalition, Code.org® organizes CSEdWeek as a grassroots campaign supported by 350 partners and 100,000 educators worldwide. CSEdWeek is held in recognition of the birthday of computing pioneer Admiral Grace Murray Hopper (December 9, 1906).

Hosting an Hour of Code during a CSEdWeek event at your school is easy! *Anybody* can learn – *no experience* required – and the

event takes only an hour. [Add your school to the map](#) and organize an event during Computer Science Education Week. The list of [Hour of Code activities](#) has just been refreshed with new content, an updated look, and a filter tool that will allow you to find the best activity for your classroom. Visit <https://hourofcode.com/us/how-to> for ideas on how to host an event, promotional materials, and FAQs.

Please email [octavia.abell@innovate.ri.gov](mailto:octavia.abell@innovate.ri.gov) with any questions about CS4RI or CSEdWeek.

## **From the U.S. Department of Education (USED)**

### **8. Secretary King posts letter on The Job of a Principal**

In recognition of National Principals Month, Education Secretary John B. King, Jr., posted this letter to school leaders: “The Job of a [Principal](#) Is an Exercise in Love.”

### **9. USED launches challenge to designers to build educational simulations that strengthen CTE skills**

The U.S. Department of Education has launched the [EdSim Challenge](#), a \$680,000 competition to design the next-generation of educational simulations that strengthen career and technical skills. The Challenge calls upon the virtual reality, video-game developer, and educational-technology communities to submit concepts for immersive simulations that will prepare students for the globally competitive workforce of the 21st century.

“This initiative is an exciting example of how virtual reality and game technologies can be applied to give students everywhere the tools to prepare for future success,” said [Johan Uvin, acting assistant secretary](#)

[for career, technical, and adult education](#). “We encourage developers from all disciplines to answer our call and help define the future of applied learning.”

Simulated digital learning environments, such as virtual and augmented reality, 3D simulations, and multiplayer video games, are an emerging approach to deliver educational content, and provide students with enriched experiences in information retention, engagement, skills acquisition, and learning outcomes. Students who participate in digital learning simulations for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) learning had a 23-percent higher achievement rating than those who do not.

The Challenge seeks to spur the development of computer-generated virtual and augmented reality educational experiences that combine existing and future technologies with skill-building content and assessment. Collaboration is encouraged among the developer community to make aspects of simulations available through open source licenses and low-cost shareable components. The USED is most interested in simulations that pair the engagement of commercial games with educational content that transfers academic, technical, and employability skills.

Those interested in participating in the Challenge should submit their simulation concepts by **January 17**. A multidisciplinary panel of judges will evaluate the submissions and select up to five finalists to advance to the Virtual Accelerator phase. Each finalist will be awarded \$50,000 and gain access to expert mentorship as they refine their concept and build a simulation prototype.

The Challenge winner(s) will be awarded the remainder of the \$680,000 prize money and additional sponsor prizes from IBM, Microsoft, Oculus, and Samsung.

For a complete list of Challenge rules, visit <http://www.edsimchallenge.com/>.

### **From other state agencies**

#### **10. Center for Health Data Analysis to hold annual open house on November 17**

The staff of the Center for Health Data Analysis (CHDA) at the Department of Health invites you to attend our 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Open House, which will be held on Thursday, **November 17**, from 1- 3 p.m., at the Department of Health, 3 Capitol Hill (Room 407), Providence.

Come visit us and learn who we are, where we are, and what we can do for you. Refreshments, demonstrations, new games and activities, raffles, and many prizes will be provided. Get to know the CHDA staff and have some fun!

The Center for Health Data and Analysis leads, supports, and coordinates the acquisition, provision, and use of clear, accurate, and appropriate data and analyses. These activities should inform and drive public-health program and policy decisions through internal and external partnerships.

### **From other organizations**

#### **11. Rhode Island Foundation seeking applicants for Innovation Fellowships; information session, November 14**

The Rhode Island Foundation is seeking applicants for our Rhode Island Innovation [Fellowship](#), an annual program which, in 2017, will focus on one challenge: increasing and improving civic engagement. Made possible by philanthropists Letitia and John Carter, the Fellowship

provides up to two individuals with up to \$300,000 over three years to develop, test, and implement innovative ideas. Join us **November 14** for our [information](#) session.

**12. Two R.I. organizations named finalists for Nellie Mae Education Foundation Youth Organizing Award; voting ends November 30**

We know that putting students at the center of their learning means giving them a voice, not only in decisions about their individual learning but also in shaping the future of learning for all students. That's why we are celebrating the achievements of seven amazing New England youth organizing groups, who are all in the running for the [2016 Nellie Mae Education Foundation Youth Organizing Award](#).

Two of the finalists are from Rhode Island: The Providence Student Union and Young Voices.

Our finalists need your help! From now until noon on **November 30**, you will be able to vote for the nominee of your choice. The nominee with the most votes at the end of the voting period will receive a \$50,000 grant for their organization.

**13. SkillsUSA RI Team Engineering Challenge scheduled for March; informational meeting to take place November 14**

The Team Engineering Challenge will take place on March 16, at CCRI Warwick, from 9 a.m.-1:30p.m. Open to SkillsUSA RI members, this contest is designed and judged by industry members. Teams of 3 students will solve a problem using engineering concepts and ideas. The purpose of this contest is to recognize students for their excellence and professionalism in the areas of creative and critical thinking. SkillsUSA

RI wants to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate their creativity, innovation, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.

The Gold Medalist team will move on to represent Rhode Island at the National Leadership and Skills Conference in Louisville, Kentucky.

An informational contest meeting will take place at CCRI, Knight Campus (room 1130), 400 East Ave., Warwick, on **November 14**, at 3:30 p.m. Please email Sarah Testoni, SkillsUSA RI Program Manager, at [stestoni@skillsusari.org](mailto:stestoni@skillsusari.org), for more information about this challenge.

#### **14. College scholarship available for study of forestry, environmental science, natural resources**

The National Wood Flooring Association (NWFA), located in Chesterfield, Missouri, has established a college scholarship that may be of interest to students in Rhode Island.

The NWFA Education & Research Foundation Wood Studies Scholarship is designed to promote the postsecondary study of forestry and related forestry sciences. Trees are a natural resource providing the raw materials that support the livelihood of those employed in the forestry industry, including members of the NWFA. This nonrenewable scholarship in the amount of \$1,000 will be awarded to a current high-school senior who will study forestry, environmental science, or natural resources in an effort to advance and improve forestry practices for generations to come. The deadline is **February 1**. For more information, see:

<http://www.nwfa.org/nwfa-wood-studies-scholarship.aspx>.

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

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