

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, November 21, 2014**

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## Notes from Commissioner Gist

### 1. Rhode Islanders express their views on education, set priorities for next strategic plan

We continue to work together on the development of the next Rhode Island strategic plan for education, with the goal of presenting a plan to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education for approval in June. As you know, as an initial step, RIDE is conducting a statewide survey through which all Rhode Islanders can express their views and suggest priorities. To date, we have received about 5,000 responses – half-way to our goal of at least 10,000 responses by the end of the year. So far, the results show that Rhode Islanders think the most important skills students should learn before graduating are communications, problem-solving, and basic academic skills. The main purposes public education serves, according to survey results to date, are preparing students for economic success and ensuring that students have basic academic skills.

Please share with your team, your school leaders, and your community the link to the strategic-plan survey. We want the voices of all Rhode Islanders to be part of this plan, which will guide our work over the next five years.

Here is a direct link to the survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2BSZ7L6>

For the latest summary of survey results, see:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Board-of-Education/Strategic-Plan/Survey\\_Results\\_Progress-2014\\_11\\_14.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Board-of-Education/Strategic-Plan/Survey_Results_Progress-2014_11_14.pdf)

We have also received more than 200 applications from people volunteering to serve on the committee that will develop and write the plan. We will present the Council with recommendations for a team of 15 to 20 people for the “Ambassador Design Team”; the Council is expected to select the team on December 11.

Here is a link to our web page on the overall development of the strategic plan:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/BoardofEducation/RI2015-2020StrategicPlanforEducation.aspx> .

## **2. Ceremony to honor 2014 Commended Schools scheduled for December 11**

On Thursday, December 11, at 5 p.m., we will hold a special ceremony in the State Room, at the State House, to honor the 30 Rhode Island 2014 Commended Schools. If you have 2014 Commended School in your LEA, you should have received an invitation to this ceremony. Because space is limited in the State Room, we can accommodate only two guests from each Commended School. All Commended Schools will receive an official certificate at this event. Governor Chafee, Board Chair Mancuso, and Council Chair Guida will participate in this event. It should be a wonderful occasion, and I look forward to recognizing some of the accomplishments our schools have made toward improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps.

## **3. Rhode Island educators participate in White House conference on technology; technology summit to be held in R.I. next year**

We are very fortunate that the White House invited two Rhode Island educators to participate in “ConnectED to the Future,” a day-long conference held on Wednesday “to explore the potential of education technology and the innovations needed to bring America’s schools into the digital age.” Gara Field, the principal at the Pleasant View Middle School, in Providence (winner of our first Innovation Powered by Technology Model School grant) and West Warwick Superintendent [Karen Tarasevich](#) joined the conference – and, what’s more, Karen was the first person President Obama called out in his opening remarks! President Obama cited the 1:1 initiative (one device per student) in West Warwick and recognized Karen as a superintendent who is “making a difference.”

We are also excited and honored that, at the conference, the U.S. Department of Education announced that, as part of the “Future Ready” initiative, there will be 12 Regional Summits next year on using technology and digital learning; the New England Regional Summit will take place in Rhode Island – with the exact date, location, and program to be announced. Thanks to your ongoing efforts to “connect” our schools to the future, Rhode Island continues to receive recognition as a leading state for innovation powered by technology.

## **4. Review of NECAP science results continues; RIDE to propose next steps regarding release of results in early December**

As you are aware, we have postponed the release of 2014 NECAP science results because concerns you have raised and that we share about the preliminary results that we received from our assessment vendor, particularly the results for grade 8. Our concerns have centered on a set of constructed-response items on the science inquiry task on which a majority of students statewide scored a 0 (out of 2 or 3 possible points). Some of these students showed

that they are high-performing students on other portions of the science NECAP or on other assessments such as NECAP mathematics.

Our initial review indicates that those who scored the assessments followed proper procedures. As our review process continues, however, we are looking into the preparation that those scoring the tests received, including the sample student responses and the “anchor papers” that the scorers use as guiding examples of responses that would receive no credit, partial credit, or full credit. We are now reviewing relevant scoring materials to confirm the nature and scope of the issue. A team at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst is reviewing part of the scoring process, and one of our consultants is analyzing the science results at all grade levels. We plan to complete the review and present some proposed next steps regarding the release of the NECAP science results early next month.

### **From RIDE**

#### ***Charter Public Schools:***

#### **5. RIDE issues call for proposals for new charter public schools to open in 2016**

Charter public schools play a vital role in our work toward accelerating all schools toward greatness. Successful charter public schools provide an array of opportunities for thousands of students, and these successful schools push all of us to think about how we can improve teaching and learning in all classrooms. We expect our charter public schools both to form partnerships with traditional public schools and to share best practices so as to improve student achievement in the entire community.

With that goal in mind, as in previous years the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) has issued a call for proposals for new charter public schools. We are seeking proposals from schools that hope to open for enrollment in the fall of 2016. We welcome proposals from individuals and groups that are committed to excellence and to innovation in public education. In preparing recommendations for approval by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, we will place a priority on applications that focus on enrolling and serving traditionally underserved students or special populations of students.

We have posted instructions for submitting proposals for new charter public schools on the RIDE website, at:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Students-and-Families-Great-Schools/Charter-Schools/RI\\_Request\\_for\\_Charter\\_School\\_Proposals\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Students-and-Families-Great-Schools/Charter-Schools/RI_Request_for_Charter_School_Proposals_FINAL.pdf)

Statements of Intent from new applicants are due on Friday, **January 9**.

Charter Proposals are due on Friday, **April 3**.

For further information, contact Drew Allsopp, in our Office of Transformation and Charter Schools, at 222-8255 or [drew.allsopp@ride.ri.gov](mailto:drew.allsopp@ride.ri.gov).

**Assessments:**

**6. LEAs asked to review coding for all mathematics courses to ensure course alignment with PARCC assessments**

The Institute of Education Sciences has updated list of School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) codes to version 2.0. Due to this update, there will be 5 mathematics SCED codes that we will use to trigger the appropriate PARCC mathematics test. The details of these mathematics codes can be found on [here](#) on our website. It is important to review your coding for these mathematics courses and to update the SCED codes. Also, pay special attention to your courses that are categorized as “Mathematics Other” in your system, as this categorization will trigger the Integrated Math II exam.

**7. Professional development scheduled on PARCC literacy, mathematics assessments**

Due to increased demand, RIDE is offering additional professional development sessions to provide an opportunity for all educators – especially those teaching in the grades or subjects that will be part of the PARCC assessments as well as literacy and mathematics coaches, special educators, and teachers of English learners – to develop a deeper understanding of the PARCC English language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics assessments.

*Deeper Understanding of the PARCC ELA/Literacy Assessment:*

*Two sessions offered each day, one from 8 – 11 a.m., the other from 12:30 – 3:30 p.m.*

- Thursday, December 4, Middletown Administration Building
- Tuesday, December 16, Ponaganset Middle School, Room 150
- Wednesday, January 21, Coventry Administration Building

*Deeper Understanding of the PARCC Mathematics Assessment:*

*Two sessions offered each day, one from 8 – 11 a.m., the other from 12:30 – 3:30 p.m.*

- Tuesday, December 2, Middletown Administration Building
- Friday, December 5, Woonsocket Middle School
- Thursday, January 29, Cariho Career & Technical Center, Room 107

Registration for these sessions to be completed within eride, at:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopreg/main.aspx>

**Data Collection:**

**8. LEAs asked to review student-exit data by December 19 – Action Item**

We just completed the mid-November data collections for Non-Certified Staff, At-Home Instructed, June Graduating Class, and Summer Exits. Thank you for working with our data-and-analysis team in making these data collections a success. With that collection completed we have another data collection coming up next month: Reviewing Student Exit Data for Calculation of Cohort Graduation Rates. To complete this data collection, please log into the Cohort application within the eRIDE website and review your student-exit by the **December 19**.

**Common Core:**

**9. Grants available to support participation in institute on literacy standards**

RIDE is pleased to announce the opportunity for grants to support your LEA's participation in the Close Reading Institute, Spring 2015. The Close Reading Institute supports educators, including those who teach diverse learners, working together to ensure that all students across classrooms have access to the rigorous expectations of the English Language Arts/Literacy Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Special focus will be placed on aligning close reading instruction to reflect the diverse needs within and across educators' classrooms. Grant awards will be based on the scope of the project, the number of educators involved, and costs for substitutes or stipend reimbursement. All funds must be spent by June 30, 2015.

The application is due at RIDE by Friday, December 19, at 4 p.m. The application, instructions, and rubric will be available on Tuesday (November 25) here:

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

You can direct questions about the grant or the institute to Diane Girard, at [diane.girard@ride.ri.gov](mailto:diane.girard@ride.ri.gov).

If you interested in applying for this grant opportunity, we invite you to participate in the Close Reading Institute webinar on Friday, December 5, at 1 p.m. The literacy specialists at RIDE will be available to answer any questions regarding the application.

To register for the December 5 webinar, please use this link:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2509327789743499778>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation e-mail containing information about joining the webinar.

## From other state agencies

### 10. *Ebola monitoring in Rhode Island now includes travelers from Mali*

Thank you to Dr. Fine, from the Department of Health, and Director McDonald, from the Emergency Management Agency, for the conference call this morning on the Ebola virus. We are sending this information from the Department of Health as a follow-up:

The Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH)'s program of post-arrival monitoring of travelers whose travel originated in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea has been expanded to include travelers from Mali. Monitoring will continue for the 21 days after individuals' last possible exposure to Ebola. (Twenty-one days is the longest time it can take from the time a person is infected with Ebola until that person has symptoms of Ebola.)

*Updated fact sheet – Ebola Information for Rhode Island:*

The Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) has updated its [one-page fact sheet](#) about Ebola.

#### *Stress Testing*

HEALTH is conducting Ebola stress tests with each acute-care hospital in Rhode Island. (Acute-care hospitals do not include Butler, Bradley, and Eleanor Slater Hospitals.) HEALTH and hospital leadership will use the results of these exercises to strengthen the response plans at hospitals. Additional testing will be conducted in select outpatient care settings.

*Additional resources:*

[The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[The Rhode Island Department of Health](#)

*Key Messages for Rhode Island:*

The CDC is notifying HEALTH of travelers arriving from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Mali. HEALTH is monitoring these travelers daily for symptoms of Ebola. Monitoring will continue for 21 days from date of departure from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Mali.

To date, no one has become infected with Ebola in Rhode Island.

In Rhode Island, only people who have been in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, or Mali in the past three weeks are at risk of developing Ebola. Even if someone has relatives in

Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, or Mali, they are NOT at risk for developing Ebola if they have not traveled to one of these countries in the past three weeks.

The Ebola outbreaks in Senegal and Nigeria are now considered over.

There is [specific guidance](#) available for people coming here from Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Mali about monitoring their temperatures.

People are not contagious until they show symptoms.

You *cannot* get Ebola through:

- casual contact with someone who has no symptoms of the disease;
- air;
- water; or
- food in the U.S.

The Ebola outbreak is an evolving process. Healthcare workers, the CDC, and others are learning how best to respond. We are expanding our response to meet the needs. There will be changes and adjustments as we go.

### From other organizations

#### 11. ExcelinEd announces public voting for My School Information Design Challenge

Please see this message from the Foundation for Excellence in Education:

[The Foundation for Excellence in Education](#) (ExcelinEd), has opened public voting for parents, policymakers, and other stakeholders to cast their vote in the [My School Information Design Challenge](#) (#SchoolInfo). ExcelinEd launched this challenge to help states reimagine their school report cards. With a total prize purse of up to \$35,000, designers were asked to transform the report card into a user-friendly, 21st-century tool.

The overall Challenge winner and runner-up are currently being selected by a [diverse panel of judges](#) representing parents, designers, and educators. This panel includes designer Genevieve Gorder; recent Broad Prize winner Orange County superintendent Dr. Barbara Jenkins; Chris Minnich, Executive Director of the Council of Chief State School Officers; and designer Duncan Swain. The winners selected, by the judges and by the public vote, will be announced in early December.

Vote until **December 2** by visiting [www.myschoolinfochallenge.com](http://www.myschoolinfochallenge.com).

For more information about the challenge, read the [My School Information Design Challenge: Building a Better. School Performance Report Card for Parents and Students](#) brief or visit [www.myschoolinfochallenge.com](http://www.myschoolinfochallenge.com).

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

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