

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, May 8, 2015

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Action Item Calendar

- Today** (May 8): [PARCC](#) administration survey due
Today (May 8): [Teacher-absenteeism](#) survey due
May 22: CRP due for summer activities (see [below](#))
June 2: Student contact file due (see [below](#))
June 5: Preliminary [CEIS data](#) due
June 5: School Health report due (see [below](#))
June 5: Preliminary Homeless and Title I files due (see [below](#))

June 5: Disproportionality Performance Report due (see [below](#))

June 17: [CEIS Report](#) due

June 30: [Dual-enrollment](#) polices completed

June 30: Preschool Performance Report due (see [below](#))

July 1: CRP due (see [below](#))

July 15: Special Education Performance Report due (see [below](#))

Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. Two R.I. students named Presidential Scholars

Congratulations to the two 2015 U.S. Presidential Scholars from Rhode Island:

- Victoria E. Araujo, from Charles E. Shea Senior High School, in Pawtucket; and
- Joshua I. Beck, from South Kingstown High School.

Victoria listed as her “most influential teacher” Grace Malkasian. Joshua’s most influential teacher was Jeffrey Johnson.

Education Secretary Arne Duncan announced the names of this year’s Presidential Scholars on Monday. There are a total of only 141 Presidential Scholars, selected from among the 3 million students expected to graduate from high school this year! The award honors students “based on their academic success, artistic excellence, essays, school evaluations and transcripts, as well as evidence of community service, leadership, and demonstrated commitment to high ideals.”

2. Rhode Island exceeds adult-education, workforce-development goals; earns grant opportunity

Last week the U.S. Departments of Education and of Labor announced that Rhode Island is one of three states eligible to apply for incentive grant awards authorized through the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. Rhode Island is one of the three eligible states because we exceeded our Program Year 2013 performance levels for adult-education and workforce-development programs, which the Workforce Investment Act establishes. These goals include targets for employment after training and related services, retention in employment, and improvements in literacy levels. This is the second time that Rhode Island adult-education and workforce-development programs have exceeded their goals and earned Rhode Island this grant opportunity. Congratulations to the adult-education programs that RIDE supports and to the many successful adult learners in Rhode Island!

3. East Greenwich teacher to represent R.I. at global education summit

Congratulations to Pat Page, of East Greenwich High School, the 2014 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year, who will represent Rhode Island in the Education First Global Student Leaders Summit.

Pat will join a delegation that will develop and lead a Global Education Symposium for New England schools in October. The delegation, including other New England State Teachers of the Year, will travel to Finland, Sweden and Switzerland next month to examine their world-class school systems, interact with high-school students, and apply design-think models to address

challenges and opportunities within the evolving educational landscape.

4. RIDE schedules webinars on proposed revisions to accountability system; seeking public comment, feedback

We continue to welcome your public comment on our proposed revisions to our system of school classifications, accountability, and support, which the U.S. Department of Education will review as part of our request for continued flexibility under the provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

To help you and other friends of education understand our proposed revisions to the accountability system, we have scheduled two information webinars:

- Monday, May 18 @ 4:30 p.m.; and
- Tuesday, May 19 @ 4:30 p.m.

To register for either webinar, go to:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/1862419132189145090>

Some of the key elements in our flexibility request include these components of our system of classifications:

Proficiency: Instead of receiving points or credit for percentages of students attaining proficiency and percentages of students attaining distinction, schools would receive various amounts of credit for the percentage of students at each level of achievement, with additional credit for improving achievement levels of students facing

additional learning challenges (students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students).

Closing Achievement Gaps: Schools would receive credit for closing the achievement gap between the lowest-achieving quartile in the school and the top 50 percent of student achievement in the school (or, if the school achievement as a whole is especially low, the top 50 percent of achievement in Rhode Island). This requested change would help alleviate the problem of many schools still not being held accountable for gap-closing for various students groups because of low “n-sizes.” It would also respond to concerns educators and others have raised regarding “blaming” various student groups for low school achievement – rather than focusing on the achievement and growth of all students. Additionally, it would respond to concerns about schools that may have “closed” achievement gaps only because of an overall decline in student performance in the reference group.

Growth: Rather than maintain our focus on the median growth of all students and of various identified student groups, our request would allow us to focus on the growth of students a growth percentile lower than 35 (i.e., 66 percent of students or more have made greater growth over the past academic year). Students below the 35th growth percentile are those most likely to lose academic ground over time.

Along with these proposed changes, it is important to note that we will continue to use graduation rates and participation rates as key components in our system of accountability and, most important, that we will continue to calculate and publicly report annual targets and progress toward those targets for all student

groups. Schools that fail to meet their participation-rate targets of 95 percent cannot be classified as Commended Schools. Schools that fail to meet any annual target for three consecutive years – including the participation-rate target – will receive an “alert” as part of their classification and will be ineligible for either of our highest classifications, Commended and Leading.

With approval of our flexibility request, we will have clearer pictures of how schools are improving over time and we will be able to more accurately measure gains of students who are approaching but have not yet achieved proficiency on our state assessments. Most important, our continued use of sophisticated diagnostic tools will provide better information regarding what individual schools need to focus on in the short term to improve teaching and learning. We are confident that our request is responsive to the needs of our schools, supportive of our teachers and school leaders, and in the best interest of the students of Rhode Island.

The changes would go into effect for the school classifications beginning with the 2015-16 school year, and our request for flexibility covers a span of three school years.

We have posted on our website a PowerPoint on these proposed revisions to our accountability system:

<http://ride.ri.gov/InformationAccountability/Accountability.aspx> (see under “New: RI Accountability Revisions”)

We have posted our complete flexibility-renewal request here:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Information-and-Accountability-User-Friendly->

[Data/Accountability/ESEA %20Flexibility Renewal Red-Lined Final 03312015.pdf](#)

Comments and feedback from you and from your team are welcome; please use this email address: ESEA.flex@ride.ri.gov.

From RIDE

Webinars, Workshops, and Professional Development:

5. RIDE to hold webinar on Tuesday to receive feedback on equity plan

RIDE invites you and your principals to provide feedback on sections of the Rhode Island equity plan. The plan, which focuses on how Rhode Island will ensure that all students have equitable access to excellent educators, must be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education by June 1. Join us to share your thoughts on this important issue at our upcoming webinar on **Tuesday** (May 12), at 4 p.m. During the webinar, facilitators will provide an overview of the equity-plan development process, share findings from earlier stakeholder engagement sessions, and seek your feedback on elements of our equity plan. Register here:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6922561858328501506>

6. Registration opens for summer workshops for new evaluators

Registration is open for the multi-day Summer Academies for new evaluators. The 2015 Summer Academies for new evaluators will mirror the trainings that RIDE provided last summer. The 4-day

Summer Academies for personnel evaluating teachers are scheduled for July 13-16 and August 17-20. Each academy will cover the same material, so evaluators may register for either.

Evaluators can register for the Summer Academy on the eRIDE Workshop Calendar, at:

July 13-16:

<https://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopReg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=1276>

August 17-20:

<https://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopReg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=1278>

7. RIDE develops on-line training module on IDEA portion of CRP

RIDE has developed a new on-line training module to assist LEAs in completing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B and Preschool portion of the Consolidated Resource Plan (CRP). This module will be helpful to special education directors experienced in completing the CRP application as well as to new special education directors. The module provides an overview of all areas of the IDEA applications, and it also allows a person to target a particular topic where there is a question or need for review. The module provides information on how to complete each page of the CRP: Maintenance of Effort, Private School, EIS, and Budget items. In addition, there is some information on how to navigate the Accelegrant system, use the Document Library, and find assistance when help is needed.

To access this module, click here:

www.ride.ri.gov/IDEA-CRP-Training-Module

Or, from the RIDE website, under the Funding and Finance banner, click on Federal Funds and Accelegrants and you will see “IDEA CRP Training Module.”

Reminder: The due date for the CRP is **May 22** if your LEA is requesting funds for summer activities and **July 1** for all other LEAs.

Other due dates:

- Disproportionality Performance Report: **June 5**;
- Preschool Performance Report: **June 30**; and
- Special Education Performance Report: **July 15**.

8. RIDE seeking secondary schools to join network on proficiency-based graduation; applications due June 1

RIDE is accepting applications from schools interested in joining the Scaling up Proficiency-Based Graduation (PBG) network. The network focuses on scaling up performance-assessment work, which is one of our proficiency-based graduation requirements (PBGRs). In partnership with the [Center for Collaborative Education](#), RIDE will support about 16 schools through a variety of powerful professional development opportunities and through networking. Over the next 18 months (from next month through December 2016), Scaling up PBG will provide professional development opportunities for:

- about six high schools with strong capacity for implementing PBGR, which will serve as Demonstration Schools;
- about 11 high schools hoping to strengthen their existing practices in implementing PBGR, which will serve as Practicing Schools; and
- all public secondary schools that self-select targeted professional development opportunities to strengthen their proficiency-based graduation systems.

To apply to join this network, see:

www.ride.ri.gov/DiplomaSystem.

All Scaling up PBG applications are due electronically by **June 1** at 5 p.m. Please contact Sharon Lee, at sharon.lee@ride.ri.gov, or Cali Cornell, at cali.cornell@ride.ri.gov, if you would like more information about this initiative.

Data Collections and Data Quality:

9. Five data collections scheduled for early June – *Action Item*

Next month will be a busy time for data collections. We have the [Student contact](#) file due on **June 2**. Then, on **June 5**, the [School Health Report](#) and the preliminary files for [Homeless Children & Youth, Title I](#), and [Early Intervention Services \(EIS\)](#) are due. Only LEAs that applied for EIS funds are required to submit an EIS file. As June will be a busy collection period, it is recommended that you start working on these files now to ensure the quality of the data and timeliness of the submission.

You can find information on upcoming data collections and their details on our [data collection calendar](#). We also hold a weekly [webinar](#) that provides details regarding upcoming collections, along with a question-and-answer period.

10. *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 currently partnered with Renaissance to integrate the STAR assessment data, with minimal efforts by LEAs.

When you submit your Renaissance data agreement, please notify Greg Martin so that we can monitor the progress of your data.

If you have any questions or concerns about this data integration, please contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.Martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

11. *Reminder: Roster Verification to begin on Monday (May 11)*

The initial stage of Roster Verification will occur between **Monday** (May 11) and May 21. During this process, principals will review the teachers, courses, and sections on their roster-verification tab within the Educator Performance and Support System on RIDEmap. The second stage of review will occur from May 27 through June 6, during which time teachers will review their rosters. During the second stage, principals will also monitor the status of teacher roster verification. Once this second stage is completed, principals will verify and sign off on the rosters, between June 8 and June 24.

Updated user guides for principals and teachers are available at:

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

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

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

If you have any questions about roster verification, please submit a help-desk ticket through:

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

Assessments:

12. ***Reminder: Deadline for requesting student exemption from NECAP Science testing is May 29***

All requests for state-approved special consideration or exemption from NECAP Science testing must be submitted online no later than **May 29**, via eRIDE, using the following link:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/SASC/>

We strongly encourage all requests for exemption to be submitted as soon as possible rather than at the end of the testing

window. Early submission of these requests will allow you sufficient time to test the student if the request for exemption is denied. (Please note that parental refusals or requests for student non-participation in state assessments are not approved reasons for state-approved special consideration or exemption.)

As a reminder, *no* exemption request will be processed until a *signed copy* of the “Form 1: District Assurances Form” has been faxed to RIDE (222-3605).

As in previous years, when you or LEA testing coordinators log into eRIDE you will see the icon “NECAP/RIAA Exemption Requests” and you can use this to access the necessary online forms.

In addition, the “State-Approved Special Considerations for Statewide Assessments: Guidelines & Forms” document has been updated for the current school year to outline the policies and procedures for requesting student exemptions. This document is available on the RIDE website, at:

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

It is also available on the eRIDE exemptions page, at:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/SASC/>

It is very important that you review the guidance document before attempting to submit requests through eRIDE. If you have any questions about these exemptions, please contact Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley, at 222-8494 or Kevon.Tucker-Seeley@ride.ri.gov.

From Federal Agencies

13. CDC releases report on educational interventions to combat effects of lead poisoning

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently released [*Educational Interventions for Children Affected by Lead*](#), underscoring the importance of considering health issues and their effects on school performance. This publication outlines scientific data on the effects of lead poisoning, summarizes relevant parts of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and provides information on how these provisions relate to children affected by lead poisoning. Gaps in the scientific understanding of the efficacy of educational interventions for reversing academic problems in children affected by lead poisoning are also included. This report highlights the need for the prevention of lead poisoning as well as partnerships with public health, housing, employment and other systems that play a role in helping children come to school ready to learn and are necessary to achieve the Rhode Island educational equity goals.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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