

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo  
Friday, June 12, 2015**

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### **Action Item Calendar**

**Monday** (June 16): Preliminary [CTE](#) collection due

**Tuesday** (June 17): [CEIS Report](#) due

**Thursday** (June 19): [Homeless, Title I, EIS](#) collections due

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 10: [Educator-evaluation](#) reports due

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

July 15: [Housing Aid](#) forms due

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### **Notes from Commissioner Acting Commissioner Abbott**

#### **1. Note on transition to new Education Commissioner**

With Commissioner Gist en route to Tulsa and to the next phase in her life's journey, I know we all wish her the very best as she sets out to transform the schools in her home town. As the

Deputy Commissioner at RIDE, I have the responsibility of serving as acting commissioner in the interim before the appointment of a new commissioner.

For as long as necessary, I will do my very best to keep us moving forward with all of our on-going initiatives, to sign documents and contracts as needed, and to maintain good communications with you, with the Board of Education, with the education field at large, and with all friends of education. I feel confident in this endeavor as I know I can count on the full support and dedication of the RIDE team during this time of transition.

## **2. House Finance Committee approves FY 16 budget**

On Tuesday night, the House Finance Committee voted to approve the Fiscal Year 2016 budget. We at RIDE are pleased that the budget that the House Finance Committee approved provides funding for key education initiatives in Governor Raimondo's budget proposal, including increases in aid to LEAs, prekindergarten expansion, full-day kindergarten, and school construction. As you may be aware, the approved budget also includes cuts to the operating budget for RIDE totaling approximately \$800,000. We have real concerns about the impact of these cuts. This significant decrease in funding will diminish our capacity to fully serve you and your schools. At particular risk are essential data systems and tools (e.g., the Instructional Support System) that help you and your educators understand student learning and meet the needs of their students every day. We will continue to monitor the budget-approval process in the hope that the General Assembly may restore these funds to our operating budget.

### **3. RIDE to draft proposed revisions to regulations on the length of the school day**

Over the past year or more, we have received numerous inquiries from superintendents every winter about our Board of Education Regulations Governing the School Calendar and School Day, in particular about what constitutes a full school day in the event of delayed school opening or early dismissal. These inquiries are understandable, as the school-day regulations are vexing and they contain some apparent inconsistencies. Members of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education have asked us to review these regulations and to suggest appropriate revisions to make the regulations clear and consistent. At the Council meeting on Tuesday, I told the Council members that we will begin work on this project and will prepare revisions for their consideration before the start of the next school year. We expect the Council to discuss this matter at its next meeting, scheduled for June 22.

### **4. U.S. Department of Education reviewing RIDE request for changes to accountability system**

As you know, the U.S. Department of Education has been reviewing our application for renewal of our request for flexibility under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We have proposed several revisions to our system for school recognition, accountability, and support, which we have shared with you through several posts, meetings, messages, and webinars. We developed our request by working closely with a group of practitioners, including several superintendents, and your recommendations are a central part of our request.

We had a positive conference call on Monday with the review team from the U.S. Department of Education. They have asked us

to provide some additional information on a few aspects of our timeline for intervention in the lowest-achieving schools and on our criteria for determining Commended Schools. We remain hopeful that by the end of the month the U.S. Department of Education will approve our request for renewal of our flexibility for one year – essentially leaving all school classifications in place for 2015 with the exception of our list of Commended Schools.

It appears that when we receive our 2015 PARCC assessment results we will resubmit our flexibility request. At that time, the U.S. Department of Education will consider the changes we have proposed regarding measures of gap closing, proficiency levels, and student growth. Any such changes would affect school classifications for next year.

### **From RIDE**

#### ***Transportation:***

##### **5. School Bus Monitor Variance requests due June 30 for summer transportation, August 14 for the coming school year**

If your LEA is planning to use one of the approved School Bus Monitor Variances for the coming school year (20-2016), it is time to submit your requests through the eRIDE system. Please submit requests by **June 30** for any July-through-August K-5 transportation. Please submit requests for variances for September through June of the 2015-16 school year by **August 14**. If you have any questions regarding access to the variance module through eRIDE or the allowable variances, please contact Patti Durfee, at [patti.durfee@ride.ri.gov](mailto:patti.durfee@ride.ri.gov) or 222-4273, or Cindy Brown, at 222-4257 or [Cynthia.Brown@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Cynthia.Brown@ride.ri.gov).

## ***Educator Evaluations:***

### **6. *Reminder:* RIDE offers coaching, support on educator evaluation through the principal partnership**

For the second year, RIDE is seeking principals interested in forming a partnership with members of the Educator Quality Team to support the implementation of educator evaluations in their school. Educator-quality specialists from RIDE will partner with principals to conduct a needs assessment and to set clear goals to focus their work together. They will provide ongoing support throughout the coming school year with the long-term goal of sharing with the field best practices and lessons learned. Possible goals for the partnership include increasing the strategic use of data to plan differentiated professional learning opportunities, increasing the consistency of the quality and rigor of Student Learning/Outcome Objectives, calibrating the scoring of Professional Practice and Professional Responsibilities scores, improving the efficiency of the evaluation process, and implementing with quality the full support-professional evaluation process. To learn more about this opportunity, please visit our website, at:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Evaluation/Education-Eval-Main-Page/Eval Partnership Flyer 2015.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Evaluation/Education-Eval-Main-Page/Eval%20Partnership%20Flyer%202015.pdf).

To express interest in the program or for additional information, please contact our Educator Quality Team by June 19, at:

[educator.evaluation@ride.ri.gov](mailto:educator.evaluation@ride.ri.gov).

## **From the U.S. Department of Education**

### **7. U.S. Department of Education to award grants for Social & Emotional Learning**

As RIDE continues to promote the importance of Social & Emotional Learning (SEL), the U.S. Department of Education is offering grants for the development of middle-school SEL competencies through the “Skills for Success” grant initiative. In the announcement, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Innovation and Improvement reports that:

Recent research shows that students who graduate ready to succeed in college and careers have more than just academic skills. The most successful students pair cognitive skills with additional skills, such as persisting through adversity, collaborating effectively, and exercising self-discipline. While we know that these additional skills are important, we want to learn more about the best ways to nurture them in our schools and classrooms. That’s why the U.S. Department of Education Office of Innovation and Improvement announced an exciting new grant competition called Skills for Success.

We’re asking the nation’s most innovative education organizations, schools, and districts to apply so that they can learn even more about how to give students these important skills. In particular, we’re focusing on middle grades – that time when students begin developing the habits and mindsets that they will take with them through life. If you are part of an organization, school district, or other team that’s working on giving middle-school students

all the skills they need to succeed, we would love to have you apply.

For details, please visit:

<http://www.ed.gov/edblogs/oii/2015/06/new-skills-for-success-grant-competition-announced/>.

And be sure to visit the RIDE SEL web page at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/HealthSafety/SocialEmotionalLearning.aspx>.

## **8. Applications being accepted for 2015 Investing in Innovation grants**

Please see this message from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach:

Last week, the U.S. Department of Education launched its 2015 [Investing in Innovation](#) (i3) Validation and Scale-Up grant competitions. These grants will fund successful innovations that support new teachers and leaders; help educators align their instruction to college- and career-ready standards; improve student learning across science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields; or reform high schools by making the standards more engaging, rigorous, and relevant for students. Each [Validation grant](#) will provide up to \$12 million to fund efforts with prior evidence of success. Each [Scale-Up grant](#) will provide up to \$20 million to fund the expansion of efforts that have a strong track record of success. As with prior competitions,

all projects focus on high-need students, particularly those in rural areas.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to notify the agency of their intent to submit an application for funding by completing a [web-based form](#). The deadline for a notice of intent is **June 25**. The deadline for applications is **August 4**.

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

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