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Friday, October 30, 2015

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Action Item Calendar

Today (October 30): XQ [Super School](#) Advisory Committee due
Sunday (November 1): [School safety](#) plan assurance
November 10: [Nonpublic](#) data due
November 12: [Graduation](#), dropout data
November 12: [Summer Exits](#) Through Enrollment Census
November 13: [graduating class](#), at-home, nonclassified
November 13: [At-Home Instructed](#) Students
November 13: [Non-Certified Staff](#) Report
December 4: [Textbooks](#) reimbursement forms due

Notes from Commissioner Wagner

1. NAEP results for Rhode Island: Strong performance in reading, decline in mathematics

On Wednesday morning, the U.S. Department of Education released the results of the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The results were mixed for Rhode Island. Rhode Island reading scores remain above the national average:

- Grade 4: 40 percent proficient, 5 points above national average; 16th in the country based on scale scores
- Grade 8: 35 percent proficient, 2 points above national average; 29th in the country based on scale scores

Rhode Island mathematics scores, however, are at or below the national average:

- Grade 4: 37 percent proficient, 2 points below national average; 35th in the country based on scale scores
- Grade 8: 32 percent proficient, same as the national average; 29th in the country based on scale scores

Our results this year mirror the national trends. Rhode Island mathematics scores declined since the previous NAEP administration (2013), as did the national scores in mathematics. Based on the percent of students attaining proficiency, Rhode Island reading scores improved slightly (up 2 points) in grade 4 (national average up only 1 point), and were down by 1 point in grade 8, in line with the national scores.

As with the nation as a whole, our scores have improved dramatically over the past two decades of NAEP assessments. The decline this year in mathematics scores is of concern; it is not clear at this time why scores in mathematics scores declined, both locally and nationally. Clearly, we have much work to do to improve our outcomes, but I would not draw any hard and fast conclusions based on the results of this single year of assessments.

NAEP results are posted here:

http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2015/#?grade=4

2. Board of Education approves five-year strategic plan

On Wednesday, the Board of Education approved a strategic plan that will prepare Rhode Island students at all levels of the system of public education. The Board unanimously approved the 2015-2020 Rhode Island Strategic Plan for Public Education. The plan includes three sections: the “2020 Vision for Education: Rhode Island’s Strategic Plan for PK-12 & Adult Education 2015-2020,” “Sailing Ahead: Strategic Plan for Postsecondary Education (2015-2020),” and a section on “areas of joint work,” which identifies priorities that require shared commitment across all education sectors, prekindergarten through secondary and adult education and postsecondary education.

This strategic plan includes the thoughts and ideas of thousands of Rhode Islanders who contributed their insight and guidance throughout the planning process. The result is a powerful set of values and priorities that will help us redesign our high schools, support our teachers and school leaders, improve school facilities and the funding formula for aid to education, and expand pathways to lead students toward career readiness. I look forward to working with all stakeholders to ensure that we are providing our students with the preparation they need for success in postsecondary education and in challenging careers.

The plan is posted on the RIDE website, at:

http://media.ride.ri.gov/BOE/BOE_Meeting_102815/Encl6a.pdf

3. Report finds R.I. making progress on early-childhood programs

On Tuesday, the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services issued a “progress update” on the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grants. The report found that Rhode Island is making progress toward building and enhancing early-learning programs by increasing the number of preschool programs and increasing the number of children, including children with high needs enrolled in high-quality preschool programs.

Through our quality rating system and through the award of program-quality improvement grants, we have provided resources and incentives to help early-learning programs improve the quality of instruction and child care. In keeping with the goals of our strategic plan, we need to continue to expand the Rhode Island Prekindergarten Program, publicize the availability of high-quality preschool, and form district and community partnerships to promote and invest in high-quality prekindergarten programs – and we will work hard to keep this early-learning initiative in the forefront.

The report is posted here:

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenges/2014apr/rtt-elc-2014-apr-progress.pdf>

4. White House, USED issue principles on assessments

Last weekend, President Obama and the U.S. Department of Education issued news releases regarding a set of principles for

“fewer and smarter assessments” and suggested steps “ to correct the balance, protecting the vital role that good assessment plays in guiding progress for students and evaluating schools and educators, while providing help in unwinding practices that have burdened classroom time or not served students or educators well.” The principles state that assessments must be worth taking, of high quality, time-limited, fair, fully transparent, just one of multiple measures, and tied to improved learning.

Our policies regarding assessments are very aligned with these principles. We continue to encourage school districts to eliminate unnecessary testing that does not support teaching and learning. To further reduce our state assessments, however, might require a changed to our approved flexibility under ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) or additional waivers regarding the assessment of English learners and students with disabilities.

We have prepared this statement for release, if asked for comment on these assessment principles:

Although we need measures of student progress, tests should be high-quality and as short as possible to achieve their objectives. In addition, we should stop excessive test prep and we should focus on teaching and learning. The best test prep is great teaching. We will continue to support local school districts with assessment literacy to eliminate any non-required assessments that do not contribute to teaching and learning.

Here are links to the releases from the U.S. Department of Education and the White House:

<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-testing-action-plan>

<https://www.facebook.com/WhiteHouse/videos/10153858451374238/>

5. U.S. Department of Education announces campaign for open education

Yesterday I was pleased to be able to participate on the Open Education Symposium that the U.S. Department of Education co-sponsored with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. At the conference, the U.S. Department of Education announced the launch of #GoOpen, a campaign to encourage states, school districts, and educators to use openly licensed educational materials. As part of the campaign, the U.S. Department of Education will propose a new regulation that would require all copyrightable intellectual property created with Department grant funds to have an open license.

Education Secretary Arne Duncan said:

In order to ensure that all students – no matter their zip code – have access to high-quality learning resources, we are encouraging districts and states to move away from traditional textbooks and toward freely accessible, openly-licensed materials. Districts across the country are transforming learning by using materials that can be constantly updated and adjusted to meet students' needs.

For more details about the symposium and about open education, see:

<http://tech.ed.gov/open-education/>.

6. LEAs urged to submit census data for dual, concurrent enrollment

At present we do not have complete data from all LEAs regarding the number of students enrolled in dual or concurrent enrollment programs. We will shortly report to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education on the status of our dual-enrollment initiatives and the number of high-school students enrolled in postsecondary institutions. It would be very helpful for this report to have complete data from all LEAs. As our Office of Data, Analysis, and Research notes, dual enrollment is a daily data collection, which your team must keep up to date through the Enrollment Census. Aside from the state reporting of data, tuition reimbursements depend on the accuracy of this information. If you have any questions about this data collection, please submit a helpdesk ticket to:

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

7. Pawtucket principal receives national award for school leadership

Congratulations to Dr. Edna Coia, principal of the Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary School, in Pawtucket, one of the 2015 recipients of the [Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding School Leadership](#). Named for the second Secretary of Education, the award honors school leaders who are committed to education as a powerful and liberating force in people's lives. The U.S. Department of Education notes that these are principals who do “whatever it takes” to foster successful teaching and learning and help their students meet high standards. The award honors Dr. Coia for her work in her previous assignment, as the principal of

the Francis J. Varieur School, in Pawtucket, a winner of a 2015 Blue Ribbon School award from the U.S. Department of Education. She will receive the award in a ceremony in Washington on November 9.

8. *Reminder: Applications due today for XQ Super School Challenge Advisory Committee*

Applications are due **today** (October 30) for a statewide advisory committee to support Rhode Island teams submitting proposals for the XQ Super School Project, in which teams will come up with plans to design their own school.

The project notes: “Our mission at XQ Super School Project is to empower parents, teachers, students, politicians – all of us—to rethink high school.” They do so through communications and mobilization efforts, through rigor, and through galvanizing activities that “bring together all participants necessary to create change.”

We have challenged communities to form teams and to take on this exciting and important challenge. We are now encouraging others who would like to play an advisory role to apply to support teams as they prepare their submissions.

As the XQ Super School folks noted:

Rethinking high school is an audacious goal—no one can do it alone. We need your support to reach every innovator, creator, maker, and builder to join this movement.

There are many ways to get involved, and we hope you'll learn more by visiting xqsuperschool.org and by downloading [these materials](#) that describe the movement.

If you are interested in being a part of the XQ Super School Challenge Advisory Committee, please send your resume and a short note explaining your interest as soon as possible, to:

info@ride.ri.gov.

For more information about the XQ Super School Challenge:

Explore the latest research.

Download resources and access expertise on school design. Start with modules on topics such as Students in the 21st Century, Youth Experience & Aspirations, and the Science of Adolescent Learning, at xqsuperschool.org/challenge.

Share what you learned with your colleagues and friends.

Let them know what excites you about this movement. And, consider sharing @XQAmerica on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). Share your point of view on how you would [#RethinkHighSchool](#).

Join or start a team.

Tap your local networks or go to my.xqsuperschool.org. There you'll find the directory where people across the nation are raising their hands to help design the high schools our children deserve. (The Twitter hashtag is [#RethinkHighSchool](#).)

Watch and learn.

Visit our [Youtube channel](#) for videos on the history and necessity of rethinking high school. Share them with your network.

9. *Reminder*: Scholarships available for high-achieving high-school seniors with financial need, Tuesday deadline

The Cooke Foundation offers the largest scholarships available to exceptionally high achieving, low-income students. Scholars receive up to \$40,000 a year to cover tuition, living expenses, books and other fees. Cooke Scholars come from every state with no restriction on background, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, political affiliation or citizenship status.

There is no nomination process, although each of the scholarships has rigorous eligibility criteria, including minimum GPAs and, in some cases, minimum standardized test scores. Financial eligibility for all of our scholarship programs require a student's family income generally not exceed \$95,000 per year. The average family income of Cooke Scholars is \$35,000 a year and many Cooke Scholars are eligible to receive Pell Grants.

In addition to assisting in covering tuition and expenses, Cooke Scholars receive:

- academic advising
- access to internship stipends
- opportunities to study abroad
- networking with alumni and community of scholars

Cooke College Scholarship:

This scholarship is available to 12th graders. Applications are due by **Tuesday** (November 3). The Cooke College Scholarship is an undergraduate scholarship available to high-achieving high school seniors with financial need. They may enroll in any accredited state or private four-year college and university.

Cooke Community College Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship:

The scholarship is available to community college students. Applications are due by **December 3**. The Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship makes it possible for the nation's top community college students to complete their bachelor's degrees by transferring to a four-year college or university.

Educators are obviously in the best position to help us get the word out about these scholarships. However, organizations that routinely have access to schools, school leaders, political officials and business leaders can help. Please visit www.jkcf.org/outreach to find more information about the scholarships. The Cooke Foundation encourages school systems in particular to share information about the scholarship with their students and families. Feel free to contact the foundation's Manager of Outreach Nara Lee by phone, at (571)209-1792, or by email, at nlee@jkcf.org, for further guidance about identifying candidates. Students and families can learn more by visiting www.jkcf.org/scholarships.

From RIDE

Assessments:

10. PARCC consortium posts released items; valuable tool for teachers, parents

On Sunday, the PARCC consortium launched one of the most powerful instructional tools in the PARCC assessment system – the released items.

This release gives teachers a powerful tool to inform and improve classroom teaching and learning. The tests were built with robust mathematics problems and authentic reading passages selected and reviewed extensively by dozens of educators from PARCC states.

The release includes the equivalent of roughly one complete test per grade level/subject – more than 850 items – and the released items will give parents a better idea of the challenging standards their students are now being measured against.

The released items are accompanied by the standard(s) associated with them, answer keys and scoring rubrics, and examples of student work at various levels of performance – scored and annotated. Your educators have been anticipating this moment for months – consistently it is one of the one or two things about the PARCC system that most excites them in conferences, webinars, and other events – so please share this information with others on your team.

The released items are located at:

[https://prc.parcconline.org/assessments/parcc-released-items.](https://prc.parcconline.org/assessments/parcc-released-items)

11. PARCC Results will be available on RIDEMap District Exchange

On November 9, district- and school-level PARCC results will be available on the District Exchange within RIDEMap. Administrators and educators will be able to log in to RIDEMap and view their result files associated with their security permissions within RIDEMap. We recommend that administrators and educators test their login prior to the release date and contact their SSO administrator to resolve any login or permission problems.

If you have any questions about how to access RIDEMap or District Exchange, please submit a helpdesk ticket, at:

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

12. *Reminder: Fall Block Testing trials should be under way within the next few weeks*

Those schools participating in Fall Block Testing should be conducting infrastructure trials in the next few weeks. Almost every aspect of the testing technology is new or significantly updated. The most recent technology bulletin has a technology-readiness section that you should review. If you need any assistance or if you have questions regarding the testing technology or would if you would like someone from RIDE to be on site for your infrastructure trial, you can contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.Martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

13. *Reminder: LEAs must validate student registration, update testing details and personal-needs profiles for PARCC assessments*

RIDE will be performing the initial import of student registration data for the current school year PARCC assessment using the data submitted to eRIDE. It will be the your responsibility to validate the student registration and to update the testing details and the personal-needs profile data in the new student registration and personal-needs profile (SRI/PNP) data file. If you have questions regarding the PARCC technology, please contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.Martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

Students with Disabilities:

14. U.S. Department of Education issues dear colleague letter on dyslexia

At the request of several disability advocacy organizations, the U.S. Department of Education has issued a Dear Colleague letter regarding the use of the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia as specific learning disabilities under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The letter is particularly helpful in Rhode Island because it reinforces the policies and practices in our LEAs regarding the determination of eligibility for special education, the process for developing an individualized education program for eligible students, and how LEAs may use a Multi-Tiered System of Supports, both academically (Response to Intervention) and behaviorally (through practices such as positive behavioral interventions and supports) in the process of addressing the needs of students. Please share this information with your administrators and other staff members. If you need assistance, you may contact J. David Sienko, Director of our Office of Student, Community and Academic Support, at David.Sienko@ride.ri.gov.

The guidance letter and other related materials are posted here:

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/index.html?src=OC>

<https://medium.com/@usedgov/raising-awareness-on-specific-learning-disabilities-cc057dfef527#.6mn8wel7k>

<https://twitter.com/EDPressSec/status/657580462592888832>

Data Collection:

15. *Reminder: RIDE announces changes to helpdesk*

On Monday the Helpdesk@ride.ri.gov email inbox was closed. Emails from this site are now automatically directed to our RIDEmap helpdesk vendor, and an incident ticket will be generated.

If you have any questions about this change, please submit a helpdesk ticket, at:

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

16. *Reminder: RIDE urges LEAs to ensure that all collection codes are included in their discipline-data reports*

It has come to our attention that not all Student Information Systems have been updated to reflect all of the changes made to the Discipline collection codes over the past few years. In

particular, several LEAs do not appear to have three weapon codes that were added for the 2014-15 collection *specification*. Please review your system to ensure that all of the necessary codes appear in your reference tables.

If you have any questions about the discipline collection, please submit a helpdesk ticket, at:

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

17. *Reminder: Several data collections are open or due in the next month*

The following are the data-collection deadlines for November:

- November 10: [Non-Public Schools Attestations - Due](#)
- November 12: [Graduate and Dropout Reporting Data - Due](#)
- November 12: [Summer Exits Through Enrollment Census](#)
- November 13: [At-Home Instructed Students – Due](#)
- November 13: [June Graduating Class Fall Membership - Due](#)
- November 13: [Non-Certified Staff Report - Due](#)
- November 16: [Graduate and Dropout Reporting Signoff-Due](#)

Information about upcoming data collections can be found on the [data collection calendar](#). Weekly collection [webinars](#) provide details regarding upcoming collections, along with a question-and-answer period.

From the U.S. Department of Education

18. Schools encouraged to invite veterans into their classrooms

The Office of Communications and Outreach at the U.S. Department of Education writes:

Schools are encouraged to invite U.S. military veterans into their classrooms around [Veterans Day](#) (November 11). Veterans can share their experiences and teach students lessons about the history and significance of the federal holiday, helping students reflect upon the importance of the ideals of liberty, freedom, and democracy. (Note: A [teacher resource guide](#) is posted online.)

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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