

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, January 3, 2014

Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. RIDE to hold informational sessions on 2013 [high-school NECAP](#) results; registrations due **Monday** (January 6) – **Action Item**
2. [Weather advisory](#) from Emergency Management Agency transmitted to all LEAs
3. Rhode Island teachers win [Presidential Awards](#) for mathematics, science teaching
4. Providence schools place in top ten in national [attendance challenge](#)

From the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE)

Diploma System:

5. RIDE posts information on student eligibility for [waivers](#) from graduation requirements

Educator Evaluations:

6. [Surveys](#) on educator evaluations to be completed by **February 3** – **Action Item**

From the U.S. Department of Education

7. Fulbright-Hays program seeking applications for summer program in [China](#)

From other organizations

8. Rhode Island invited to participate in national [academic tournament](#)

Action Item Calendar

Monday (January 6): Registration deadline for [NECAP results](#) meetings
January 15: Deadline for [Race to the Top budgets](#), reimbursement forms
January 31: Deadline for checking [demographic file](#)

February 3: Deadline for submitting evaluation surveys (see [below](#))

Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. RIDE to hold informational sessions on 2013 high-school NECAP results; registrations due Monday (January 6) – *Action Item*

Welcome back after the New Year's holiday! I hope you had a wonderful break and were able to spend time with family, friends, and neighbors. Severe weather greets us this week as we return to school, but I'm sure you are well prepared for the storm and for the second semester of the school year.

At RIDE, we are preparing for the release of the results of the 2013 state assessments (NECAP). These results will be particularly significant in that we will also have the results for the 4,000 current seniors who had to retake the assessments in order to meet the requirements of our Diploma System.

Later this month, we will have the results for seniors who took the 2013 NECAP assessments. In anticipation of this, next week (January 8) I will hold the first of two scheduled meetings to help you and your team prepare communications with students, families, and the public regarding the results of the 2013 NECAP assessments. These communications will emphasize the options for current seniors who still need to meet this graduation requirement in order to earn a diploma this spring. (Note that we do not yet have the 2013 results and that we will *not* be distributing results at these meetings.)

As we noted in the most-recent Field Memo (December 20), each LEA *must* attend one meeting as a team, which should include at a minimum the superintendent or director, the assistant superintendent, special-education directors, and all high-school principals. (In the previous Field Memo, we neglected to list special-education directors among those who should attend; special-education directors are listed in the registration link.) The first meeting will take place on **Wednesday** (January 8), in the Paff Auditorium at RIDE, 255 Westminster St. or 80 Washington St, Providence, from 5 to 7 p.m., and the second meeting will take place on **January 14**, at a location to be determined, also from 5 to 7 p.m.

LEAs that do not have full district or school leadership present at the meeting will not receive their October 2013 NECAP results. Participants must register by **January 6**. Registration for the meeting dates will be on a first-come, first-served basis, as space allows.

Registration information is here:

NECAP Score Release Meeting – January 8

(January 8 Meeting Link:

<https://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopReg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=900>)

NECAP Score Release Meeting – January 14

(January 14 Meeting Link:

<https://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopReg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=901>)

For more information on these meetings, you may contact Sharon Lee

(Sharon.Lee@ride.ri.gov).

2. Weather advisory from Emergency Management Agency transmitted to all LEAs

Yesterday (January 2), the Emergency Management Agency transmitted a winter-storm weather advisory to all superintendents through the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association. RIDE forwarded this advisory to other LEAs: charter public schools, mayoral academies, and state-operated schools. Please let me know if you have any concerns about this means of transmitting weather advisories from the Emergency Management Agency. Of course, when necessary and appropriate, we will schedule conference calls as well to discuss issues regarding storms, other emergencies, and school closings.

3. Rhode Island teachers win Presidential Awards for mathematics, science teaching

On December 20, President Obama named two Rhode Island teachers as winners of the 2012 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. Congratulations to Regina Kilday, of the Metcalf Elementary School, in the Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District, who won the award in mathematics, and to Clare Ornburn, of the Ashaway Elementary School, in the Chariho Regional School District, who won the award in science. As the Presidential Awards website states:

The Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching is awarded annually to outstanding K-12 science and mathematics teachers from across the country. The winners are selected by a panel of distinguished scientists, mathematicians, and educators following an initial selection process done at the state level. Each year the award alternates between teachers teaching kindergarten through 6th grade and those teaching 7th through 12th grades.

Winners of this Presidential honor receive a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation to be used at their discretion. They also are invited to Washington, D.C., for an awards ceremony and several days of educational and celebratory events, including visits with members of Congress and the Administration.

I am very pleased that we have two Presidential Awards winners from Rhode Island, and I am confident that Regina and Clare will continue to be examples of excellence as they inspire their students with a passion for learning mathematics and science.

4. Providence schools place in top ten in national attendance challenge

As educators, we all are aware that students who miss school frequently are highly likely to fall behind their peers. One of the best steps schools can take to improve learning outcomes is to work to improve student attendance rates. With that goal in mind, several Providence schools have taken up the [Get Schooled](#) Grad4Más Attendance Challenge. Competing against 143 schools from across the country that have signed up for this attendance challenge, four Providence schools placed in the top 10 nationally:

Gilbert Stuart Middle School (2nd place), Governor Christopher Del Sesto Middle School (3rd place), Mount Pleasant High School (4th place), and the Juanita Sanchez Educational Campus (10th place). Congratulations to the school leaders, the teachers, the families, and the students of these Providence schools! You are taking major steps to improve attendance and to advance teaching and learning.

From RIDE

Diploma System:

5. RIDE posts information on student eligibility for waivers from graduation requirements

RIDE has released a Waiver Decision Tree to assist school leaders in making decisions regarding student eligibility for consideration for a waiver from the state-assessment graduation requirement. You can access the [Waiver Decision Tree](#) on our website.

For more information about waivers, please contact Cali Cornell (Cali.Cornell@ride.ri.gov).

Educator Evaluations:

6. Surveys on educator evaluations to be completed by February 3 – *Action Item*

The mid-year educator-evaluation surveys for teachers, support professionals, building administrators, and central-office administrators are now open. Feedback collected through the surveys will help RIDE identify the successes and challenges of implementation and will help guide continued improvements. This is the last round of statewide surveys that will have a direct impact on model refinements before the conclusion of the Race to the Top grant, so it is critical that we hear from as many Rhode Island educators as possible.

The surveys are differentiated by role and are intended for all Rhode Island educators, regardless of the specific evaluation system that your LEA is implementing. Links to the surveys are below, and we are asking you to share the appropriate survey links with your teachers, support professionals, building administrators, and central-office administrators. The deadline for completing the surveys is Monday, **February 3**.

Teacher survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/13-14MYTE>

Support-professional survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/13-14MYSP>

Building-administrator survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/13-14MYBA>

Central-office administrator survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/13-14MYCO>

From the U.S. Department of Education

7. Fulbright-Hays program seeking applications for summer program in China

Please see this notice from the U.S. Department of Education:

The [Fulbright-Hays Seminars Abroad Program](#) provides K-16 educators with unique opportunities for overseas experience. This year, the program is open to teachers and administrators at the K-12 level with responsibilities for curriculum development in fields related to humanities, languages, and area studies. The topics and host countries vary annually, although all seminars are held outside of Western Europe. There is a seminar being offered this summer in China, with 14-16 positions, subject to the availability of funds. The deadline for applications is **February 5**.

From other organizations

8. Rhode Island invited to participate in national academic tournament

We have received this invitation from the Council of Chief State School Officers regarding the National Tournament of Academic Excellence. We will be working to see if a team of Rhode Island students can represent our state in this event. If you or anyone on your team is interested in participating, please let me know:

The State of Florida is hosting an academic tournament for students across the United States, the National Tournament of Academic Excellence. The tournament will be held at the Convention Center of Walt Disney World's Contemporary Resort in Lake Buena Vista, Florida on June 14 – 16.

The tournament showcases the excellence of the U.S. educational system and rewards individual scholastic achievement of student participants. The tournament hosts teams from many states, as well as teams from the District of Columbia, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This is a highly academic national high-school competition modeled after Florida's statewide tournament. Each team consists of six students (four players and two alternates) and one coach. Students enrolled in grades 9 through 12 during the school year are eligible. As many as six teams may compete against one another in one competition. This is not a quick-response, trivial-pursuit contest. Instead, it is a slower-paced tournament in which players are asked questions from the areas of mathematics, science, language arts, social studies, the fine arts, world languages (French and Spanish), and technology. The questions are written by educators from high schools and colleges throughout the nation.

If you require addition information, please feel free to contact Lisa Rawls by phone, at (863) 968-5168, or by e-mail, at lisa.rawls@polk-fl.net. Information can also be found online at <http://www.academic-challenge.org/ntae/index.html>.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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