

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

**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

1. LEAs reminded to notify RIDE of adjustments to [school calendar](#)
2. RIDE develops, posts videos on [Common Core](#) State Standards
3. [NECAP retest](#) to begin **Tuesday** (February 25)
4. Providence schools, The Learning Community, Inspiring Minds receive [grants](#)
5. Three Rhode Island teams advance to East Super-Regional First Tech Challenge [robotics challenge](#)

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

***Educator Evaluations:***

6. RIDE seeking participants for support-professional primary evaluator [focus group](#)

***Educator Certification:***

7. RIDE announces system to monitor professional development required for some [certification renewals](#)

**From other organizations**

8. RIASCD to hold professional-development event on [Common Core State Standards](#), PARCC assessments
  9. Learning First Alliance/Rhode Island to hold [technology conference](#)
  10. Applications available for [National School Change Awards](#)
- 

### **Action Item Calendar**

March 7: [School Health Profiles](#) due

---

### **Notes from Commissioner Gist**

#### **1. LEAs reminded to notify RIDE of adjustments to school calendar**

Although the school calendar calls this week the “mid-winter recess,” I know that at least one of our school districts (Cumberland) has held classes this week to make up for cancellation days caused by the winter storms. I appreciate the challenges you have faced this school year, as you’ve made tough decisions about cancelling classes and events and have

maintained your commitment to providing a full year of excellent instruction. As you know, state law requires a minimum of 180 days of instruction every school year. If you have to adjust or extend your calendar because of school cancellations, please be sure to file your adjusted calendar with RIDE, using the enrollment-census application on [ecert](#). Please feel free to call me if you have any questions about your school calendar or the required number of school days.

## **2. RIDE develops, posts videos on Common Core State Standards**

As we continue with our transition to the Common Core State Standards, which clarify and specify what we expect our students to know and be able to do at each grade level, it's very important that parents, business leaders, elected officials, and others members of our community have a clear understanding of what the Common Core State Standards are – and are not. We are fortunate to have received a foundation grant to help advance our communications regarding the Common Core. This grant has financed the team of Common Core Ambassadors, who have led a series of informational forums on the Common Core in many communities. The grant has also enabled us to develop several informational [videos](#) on the Common Core, which we have completed and posted on our website. I encourage you to take a look at these videos and to share them as widely as possible with others on your team and in your community. If you have suggestions as to how we can make these videos available to an even wider audience, I would love to hear from you on that point.

## **3. NECAP retest to begin Tuesday (February 25)**

As I noted to you in last week's Field Memo, I am pleased with the progress our high-school students are making in mathematics and reading, as evidenced by the latest NECAP results, and I am encouraged that we continue to increase the number of students in the current senior class who have met the state-assessment graduation requirements. At present, more than 75 percent of the high-school students who initially took the NECAP assessments in 2012 have met this graduation requirement. The next step for students who have not yet met this graduation requirement is the opportunity to take the Rhode Island High School NECAP retest, which we will begin administering in several LEAs on Tuesday (February 25). Our schedule calls for a series of administrations through March 7, with two make-up dates scheduled to be held here at RIDE on March 10 and March 11. If you have any questions or concerns about the schedule for NECAP retests, please let me know and I will be sure to get you the information that you need.

#### **4. Providence schools, The Learning Community, Inspiring Minds receive grants**

Congratulations to the Providence Public Schools and Ready to Learn Providence on the receipt of a \$3-million Investing in Innovation competitive grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The grant will support efforts to engage with families to teach "the life skills every child needs to succeed."

Congratulations as well to The Learning Community charter public school, which has received a \$75,000 grant from Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island to "engage students and their families in a lifelong commitment to exercise and healthy living." I also congratulate our friends and partners at the nonprofit agency Inspiring Minds, which has received a \$9,000 grant from AT&T to support the Inspiring Minds Tech Center. It's great to see our

schools and programs receiving support and recognition through competitive-grant processes.

### **5. Three Rhode Island teams advance to East Super-Regional First Tech Challenge robotics challenge**

Three Rhode Island teams will advance to the East Super-Regional First Tech Challenge robotics championship, to be held in Pennsylvania in April. Among the 72 teams competing for awards in the East region will be The Ladybots (from Mount Hope High School, in Bristol Warren), the Renegade Robotics (from Burrillville High School), and The Fellowship (from Foster and Scituate). Best of luck to all three teams on the road toward the world championships!

### **From RIDE**

#### ***Educator Evaluations:***

### **6. RIDE seeking participants for support-professional primary evaluator focus group**

RIDE is seeking primary evaluators for support professionals to participate in a focus group on the design and implementation of the Rhode Island Model Support Professionals Evaluation and Support System. Feedback collected from this focus group, in addition to the support professionals' mid-year survey, will help guide improvements to the system in preparation for full implementation. This focus group is scheduled for Tuesday, March 18, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., here at RIDE (255 Westminster St./80 Washington St., Providence). Please share this opportunity with your primary evaluators. Please note: This focus group is designed

for evaluators who are currently evaluating support professionals and using the Rhode Island Model.

Anyone interested in serving on this focus group should register online through this eRIDE link:

<https://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopReg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=935>.

***Educator Certification:***

**7. RIDE announces system to monitor professional development required for some certification renewals**

Certification regulations that went into effect in January 2012 establish a requirement that educators who receive ratings of Developing or Ineffective must participate in professional development for the renewal of their certificates. The Certification Renewal Audit System is the system that RIDE will use to monitor the completion of required professional-development hours based on educator-evaluation ratings for certification renewal. An educator who is selected for a Certification Renewal Audit is required to submit evidence of completed improvement plans at the time of certification renewal.

For more information on the Certification Renewal Audit System, go to:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Certification-Updates>

If you have any questions about this process, please contact our Certification Office, at [eqac@ride.ri.gov](mailto:eqac@ride.ri.gov).

## From other organizations

### **8. RIASCD to hold professional-development event on Common Core State Standards, PARCC assessments**

The Rhode Island ASCD announces a professional-development opportunity: “Keeping Up with the Core: What R.I. Educators Need to Know to Implement Common Core Thoughtfully and Prepare Purposefully for PARCC.” The event will take place on **March 19**, from 4 to 5:30 p.m., at the Cranston Public Library, Cranston Public Library, 140 Socanosset Cross Rd.

This high-level presentation and discussion will provide an overview of what the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) mean for our students and our classrooms and how the CCSS prepares our students for college and challenging careers. The presenters will provide an overview of the latest information that Rhode Island educators should know to implement CCSS thoughtfully and to prepare purposefully for PARCC assessments. The presentation will also discuss and model ways to discuss the CCSS with parents and the community. A question-and-answer period will allow for dialogue on common issues related to CCSS implementation. Handouts will be provided.

#### Goals and Objectives:

- Understand the current status of CCSS implementation in schools across Rhode Island, what is changing, and how Rhode Island is preparing.

- Increase understanding of PARCC-assessment design and implications for teaching and learning.

Presenters:

Julie Lima-Boyle, Department Chairperson and teacher,  
Coventry High School

Dr. Michael Barnes, Superintendent, Foster-Glocester  
Regional Schools

This session is free to RIASCD members. The fee is \$10 for all others. Register at [www.riascd.org](http://www.riascd.org).

### **9. Learning First Alliance/Rhode Island to hold technology conference**

The Learning First Alliance/Rhode Island will host its second technology conference on March 8, at Johnston Senior High School, 345 Cherry Hill Rd. The conference, “Digital Learning: Empowering Educators,” will feature 12 workshop sessions offered by both local and regional professionals and will include a variety of vendors. Registration is open, at [www.lfari.org](http://www.lfari.org).

### **10. Applications available for National School Change Awards**

Please see this notice from the National Principals Leadership Institute:

Has your school made dramatic improvements? Do you know one that has? Has the school been recognized and rewarded? The deadline is approaching (**March 31**) so apply

now to win international recognition and an awards package valued at more than \$10,000!

[Apply for the 15th Annual National School Change Awards](#)

and make your case, using data, documentation and letters of support, to show how your school went from disappointing (or worse) to dynamic and successful.

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

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