

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, April 10, 2015

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April 24: [Student advisory council](#) elections
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Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. RIDE testifies on bills on parental refusal, financial literacy, proficiency-based learning, other educational matters

This has been an important week for us on the legislative side, as many education-related bills were scheduled for hearings before House and Senate committees. We provided testimony on a number of these bills.

House bill number [5894](#) would require RIDE to develop curricular materials for financial literacy.

We testified that we agree that high-quality instruction based on excellent standards will help to prepare our students when they make important decisions about spending, saving, applying for college loans, getting a job, and living independently. In November 2014, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education endorsed our first statewide standards on financial literacy. This legislation, however, would further centralize the system of public education in Rhode Island, reduce local autonomy, and require duplicative efforts. RIDE, therefore, does not support this proposed legislation.

House bill number [5579](#) would create a joint legislative commission to “study the restraint reporting requirements” of “any agency, organization, or public or private entity ... that provides support or care, residential support, education, health care, treatment, or direct supervision.”

We testified that this bill introduces the opportunity to create a legislative study commission to “report on restraint reporting requirements of each of the covered facilities and make

recommendations to ensure that reporting is as uniform as possible and appropriate data is collected to inform practice and policy decisions.” With the limited scope of the commission as described in the bill, RIDE would support the creation of this study commission and would willingly serve on such a commission.

Senate bill number [735](#) would require public schools to have at least one full-time certified school social worker on staff for every 400 students.

We testified that school districts have many methods of allocating social services within and among school buildings, and we believe that it is best to preserve LEA flexibility and autonomy so that our school leaders can continue making these staffing decisions at the local level.

Senate bill number [10](#) would require the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education to adopt a competency-based or proficiency-based learning policy and model district policy.

We testified that RIDE would welcome the opportunity to “increase programmatic opportunities for students to earn credits through demonstrations of proficiency,” and we are particularly supportive of the provision in this legislation that “any available seat time” that proficiency-based learning frees for students must be used not as “free time” but rather to “advance the academic and/or technical training of students.” This provision is particularly timely in that the Board of Education is soon to vote on the approval of regulations on dual and concurrent enrollment. This provision is also well aligned with our continuing work to expand opportunities for participation in Advanced Placement courses and for internships and apprenticeships in settings that will prepare students for success in challenging careers.

Finally, Senate bill number [736](#) would allow parents and legal guardians to “elect to have their child opt out of Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for Colleges or ‘PARCC’ assessment, or similar assessments.”

We testified that we strongly caution against passing legislation that formalizes a statewide process for families refusing to allow their children to participate in state testing. This is our first year of PARCC testing, and we will not use the results for student, teacher, or school accountability. Teachers and schools, however, will receive information that will serve to inform and improve instruction. This year’s results will provide us with baseline information so that we can plan professional development for teachers and supports for students. In addition, full participation in high-quality annual assessments enables all of us to see whether schools and districts are doing all they can to help students succeed. Parents and students deserve to know to what extent schools are meeting students’ needs and where schools need to improve.

From RIDE

Assessments:

2. RIDE to hold PARCC Performance Based Assessment debrief for superintendents, assistant superintendents on April 28

As the Performance Based Assessment portion of the PARCC assessment comes to a close, we would like to take the opportunity to hear from you about the challenges and successes during the administration. We also want to hear your thoughts

about the overall test design. Therefore, on **April 28** RIDE will hold a debrief session to gather information from superintendents and assistant superintendents to inform our processes and procedures during the End of Year administration and during long-term PARCC planning. This session will be in addition to the sessions being held for school and district administrators, which we shared with testing coordinators earlier this week. Following these meetings, Supt. Mario Andrade will attend a meeting in Washington, D.C., to meet with superintendents from other PARCC states in order to hold a similar conversation. It will be important for him to hear from you so that he can represent the Rhode Island perspective. Mark your calendars:

PARCC Performance Based Assessment Debrief Session

Participants: superintendents and assistant superintendents

Date: **April 28**

Time: 8:30 to 11 a.m.

Location: RIDE, 255 Westminster St., Providence - Room 260

3. NECAP Science testing to begin on May 4

The NECAP Science testing window this year is May 4 through May 28. All science testing—including accommodations and make-up testing—*must* be completed by **May 28**. In planning your assessment schedule you should take into consideration religious holidays, if any, and local events that may affect students' ability to participate. It is important that you allow ample time for make-up test sessions for those students who are absent for any reason (including absences for religious holidays) during regularly scheduled testing dates.

Principals and test coordinators are ultimately responsible for ensuring that all eligible students are tested. Therefore, you and your staff members must:

- ensure that parents and guardians are aware of the purpose of the assessment and that they have access to your NECAP testing schedule in advance so that they can plan accordingly;
- strongly discourage parents and guardians from planning any vacations or other activities that would prevent their children from testing with their peers during scheduled test-administration days;
- ensure that parents and guardians are aware that their children must make up any testing they missed while absent and that all make-up testing must be completed no later than May 29; and
- encourage parents and guardians to contact the principal, test coordinator, or teacher if their children will be absent during testing so that schools can arrange for make-up testing.

During the testing period, please encourage students to get plenty of rest, to eat a good breakfast on the day of testing, and to perform at their very best so that we all can take pride in the accomplishments of our students and their teachers!

4. PARCC bulletins provide guidance on test completion, preparation for End of Year assessments

The current [administrative bulletin](#) from the Pearson PARCC Program Team contains important information regarding important dates, test completion guidance, Personal Needs Profile guidance, and End of Year assessment-block preparation.

The current [technology bulletin](#) pertains to a Java critical update, PearsonAccessNext.com maintenance outage, and resolutions to commonly reported issues.

If you have any questions these bulletins, please contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.Martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

5. RIDE prepares for migration of PARCC data for End of Year assessments

The PARCC End of Year (EOY) student registration, Personal Needs Profile (PNP) Data Import Process, and PNP guidance documentation have been placed in the PARCC Technology Toolkit on [District Exchange](#) in the public folder. These documents will facilitate the migration to the EOY assessment block of your Performance Based Assessment student data, PNP data, and session data. If you have any questions about this data migration, please contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.Martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

6. *Reminder: PARCC online testing ends Monday*

The computer-based testing portion of the PARCC PBA block will end on Monday (April 13). If you have any questions PARCC PBA testing, please contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.Martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

Data Collections and Data Quality:

7. 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. We are looking for LEAs that use other assessments, such as DIBELS, NWEA, MAP, AIMSWEB, or locally produced (e.g., end-of course-exams or common tasks), to allow us to visit and work with you to build the process of integrating these assessments into the Instructional Support System.

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.

8. Roster Verification to begin on May 11

The initial stage of Roster Verification will occur between May 11 and May 21. During this process, principals will review the teachers, courses, and sections on their roster-verification tab within the [EPSS on RIDEmap](#). The second stage of review will occur from May 27 through June 6, during which 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, at <https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

9. *Reminder: SCED version 1.0 codes will be obsolete in eRIDE as of April 17*

We have been monitoring the School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) version 2.0 migration in our Teacher-Course-Student data, and we still see some LEAs with version 1.0 codes coming in. These version 1.0 SCED codes will be invalid in eRIDE as of **April 17**. After this date, any version 1.0 code will be rejected and a valid version 2.0 code will need to be entered. If you have any questions or concerns about this version update, please contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.Martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

Professional Development:

10. RIDE seeks volunteers to be “master scorers” for series of videos on professional practice; deadline, April 25

RIDE is seeking volunteers to become master scorers for a series of videos that we will use for professional development. Master scorers will be responsible for applying the Rhode Island Model Teacher Professional Practice Rubric to a series of videos and

developing rationales for the ratings. The time commitment is up to five hours of pre-work and attendance at three in-person three-hour work sessions at RIDE. In return for their commitment, master scorers will receive a \$450 stipend. Interested evaluators, evaluation coordinators, induction coaches, and intermediary-service providers can review the desired qualifications and complete the application here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZW3XQKX>.

All applications are due by **April 25** (extended from the previous deadline of April 18). Please contact Lauren Matlach, at lauren.matlach@ride.ri.gov, if you have any questions this opportunity.

From the U.S. Department of Education

11. New report shows greater need for access to high-quality preschool

Please see this message from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach; Rhode Island is proud to be one of the state to receive from the U.S. Department of Education a Preschool Development Grant:

The U.S. Department of Education released a new report on Tuesday detailing the unmet need across the country for high-quality preschool programs.

According to the report, [*A Matter of Equity: Preschool in America*](#), of the approximately 4 million 4-year olds in the United States, about 60 percent – or nearly 2.5 million – are not enrolled in publicly funded preschool programs,

including state preschool programs, [Head Start](#), and programs serving children with disabilities. Even fewer are enrolled in the highest-quality programs.

The report highlights the need for an [Elementary and Secondary Education Act \(ESEA\)](#) that expands access to high-quality early learning opportunities and makes the law preschool through 12th grade, rather than K-12. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan discussed the report on Tuesday during a visit to Martin Luther King Jr. Early Childhood Center in Phoenix, Arizona.

“This new report shows that we are a long way from achieving full educational opportunity in this country. Students have made enormous progress in recent years, thanks to the hard work of educators, families and the students themselves, but we have so much farther to go, and making high-quality preschool available to all families who want it must be part of that,” Duncan said. “We’ve made key investments in early learning, but we need to do more. Expanding access to high-quality preschool within the reauthorization of ESEA will narrow achievement gaps, and reflect the real, scientific understanding that learning begins long before a child enters kindergarten.”

High-quality preschool provides benefits to society of \$8.60 for every \$1 spent, according to the White House Council of Economic Advisors December 2014 report, [The Economics of Early Childhood Investments](#), about half of which comes from increased earnings for children when they grow up. An impressive coalition of education, business, law enforcement, retired military, child-advocacy groups, and faith-based leaders and 70 percent of voters said in a recent

Gallup poll that they would support increasing federal funding to make sure high-quality preschool programs are available for every child in America.

The Obama Administration has made significant investments in early learning through the [Early Learning Challenge](#) and the [Preschool Development Grants](#) programs. The grants lay the groundwork for states to be prepared for the proposed [Preschool for All](#) program. The Administration has asked for an increase of \$500 million for Preschool Development Grants in the FY16 budget request to expand this opportunity to more states, the [Bureau of Indian Education](#), tribal educational agencies, territories, and the outlying areas.

Preschool Development Grants support states' efforts to build or enhance their infrastructure to provide high-quality preschool programs, and expand programs in high-need communities. The \$250 million awarded to 18 states will benefit more than 33,000 additional children in 200 high-need communities, where families have little or no access to affordable, high-quality preschool. With additional funding, the U.S. Department of Education could have provided high-quality opportunities for many more children in the 36 states that applied.

From other organizations

12. Rhode Island Foundation schedules Community Conversation on improving student outcomes in urban schools

Please see this notice from the Rhode Island Foundation:

The next Community Conversation 2015 will, Leading for Change in Urban School Systems, will feature Dr. Andres A. Alonso, former CEO Baltimore Public Schools. The conversation will take place on May 7, at 5:30 p.m., at the Providence Career & Technical Academy.

Few know the challenges of improving student outcomes in urban school systems better than Dr. Andres Alonso, Professor of Practice at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and former CEO of Baltimore Public Schools. In his six years as CEO, Baltimore Public Schools reduced its high school drop-out rate by half, raised student achievement across the city, and embarked on a \$1-billion campaign to rebuild the city's schools. Join Dr. Alonso and Rhode Island educators for a wide-ranging conversation on leading for change in urban school systems in the 21st century.

To register for this event, please [click here](#).

More information on this series can be found [here](#).

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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