

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, April 18, 2014

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Attachments to this Field Memo

Cyclical Evaluation Model

Action Item Calendar

- April 25: [NECAP Science](#) testing schedules due
 - April 28: Selection of [induction model](#) due
 - May 30: District [Teacher of the Year](#) nominations due
 - June 20: School [Health](#) Reports due
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Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. LEAs can opt for cyclical evaluation model

We all are proud of our ongoing work toward ensuring that we have excellent teachers in every classroom and excellent leaders in every school. Our commitment to educator evaluations that provide educators with valuable information to improve performance is a key part of this on-going initiative.

As you know, we have received a lot of input over the past year from teachers, from principals, and from you and your association encouraging us to consider approval of a cyclical model for teacher evaluations. Educators have expressed a strong desire to maintain a high-quality evaluation process that emphasizes improvement, but they have also expressed a serious concern about the capacity of our evaluators to conduct full-scale evaluations of every teacher each year, as our current design requires. Over the past few months, we have worked closely with both the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association and the Rhode Island Association of School Principals to design together a cyclical model for evaluations that could begin in the coming school year. We are pleased that we have identified cyclical options that will allow us to maintain our shared commitment to providing a high-quality evaluation system while easing some of the burden on practitioners.

Thanks to this work, next year you will be able to select from among a new set of several options so as to make the best choice for evaluations that meet the needs of your school community. In the coming school year, you may choose to fully evaluate all teachers, to continue with the differentiated model that we approved a year ago, or to implement the newly designed cyclical model. I have attached to this field memo a document (Cyclical Evaluation Model) that outlines the features of the cyclical model.

In the coming weeks, we will provide you with more details and guidance about the cyclical model and how to notify us as to which model you will use in your schools. I appreciate the opportunity to work in partnership with you and the leadership of your association to develop this option for your consideration.

2. LEAs receive 2014 NECAP retest results

I am glad that we were able to provide you on Wednesday afternoon with the your students' results on the 2014 NECAP retake. I hope that your high-school team has been able to speak to as many students and families as possible before the April vacation. It's important that students who have met the state-assessment graduation get this information as soon as possible, and it's also important that students who have not yet met this graduation requirement review with your team their next steps toward earning a diploma. Here at RIDE, we continue to collect information about the status of students in the Class of 2014, and I plan to report next month to the Board of Education regarding how many students are eligible for graduation this spring and how many current seniors are pursuing other options, such as other approved assessments, waivers, or more time in school.

3. RIDE schedules webinars on ESEA Flexibility Request

As I noted to you in last week's Field Memo, we are in the process of developing our application for renewal of our ESEA Flexibility Request, which allowed us to implement our current system of school accountability in 2012. In renewing our request, we intend to leave the accountability system largely unchanged, but we do have to make some changes because of our transition next year from NECAP to PARCC assessments. We continue to seek input on our renewal application, and to that end we have scheduled two

webinars for people in the education field and for the general public as well.

- Tuesday, April 29, from 4:30-5:30 p.m.: [RSVP online](#)
- Wednesday, April 30, from 4:30-5:30 p.m.: [RSVP online](#)

(The content will be the same for both, so those interesting in participating need to RSVP for only one.)

I invite you and others on your team to participate in either webinar, and please feel free to share this invitation with others in your community.

4. Mount Pleasant, Ponaganset leaders selected as principals of the year

Congratulations to Patricia Marcotte, of the Ponaganset Middle School, in Foster-Glocester, and to Scott Sutherland, principal of Mount Pleasant High School, in Providence, on their selection by the Rhode Island Association of School Principals as Rhode Island 2014 principals of the year.

The association honored Patricia as the Middle School Principal of the Year, noting that parents appreciate how hard Patricia works to provide supports to students in need of extra help, that teachers are motivated by her depth of knowledge and her enthusiasm, and that administrators recognize how she is continually engaged with the other schools in her community to ensure smooth transitions for students entering middle school and for graduates moving on to Ponaganset High School.

The association honored Scott as the High School Principal of the Year, recognizing that he has served for more than 10 years as a

school administrator in Providence and that over the past two years he has “dramatically led the culture and climate transformation” at Mount Pleasant. The association noted that Scott has “led the transformation to ... establish a safe, welcoming environment [and] create a true professional learning community” at the school.

Thank you, Patricia and Scott, for the work you are doing for students and teachers in your schools and for the families in your communities!

5. Met School teacher to be honored for teaching entrepreneurship

The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship will recognize Jodie Woodruff, of The Met School, in Providence, as one of the Global Enterprising Educators of 2014 at its annual Global Gala next week in Washington. The organization will honor Woodruff for establishing the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center at The Met, for setting up internships for her students, and for bringing entrepreneurs from the community into the school on a weekly basis. Congratulations to Jodie and to The Met on this recognition!

From RIDE

Assessments:

6. Deadline for requesting student exemption from NECAP Science testing is May 23

All requests for state-approved special consideration or exemption from NECAP Science testing must be submitted online no later than **May 23**, via eRIDE, using the following link:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/SASC/>

We strongly encourage all requests for exemption to be submitted as soon as possible rather than at the end of the testing window. Early submission of these requests will allow you sufficient time to test the student if the request for exemption is denied.

As a reminder, *no* exemption request will be processed until a *signed copy* of the “Form 1: District Assurances Form” has been faxed to RIDE (222-3605).

As in previous years, when your and your testing coordinators log into eRIDE you will see the icon “NECAP/RIAA Exemption Requests,” and you can use this icon to access the necessary online forms.

In addition, the “State-Approved Special Considerations for Statewide Assessments: Guidelines & Forms” document has been updated for the current school year to outline the policies and procedures for requesting student exemptions. This document is available on the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/Assessment/NECAPAssessment/NECAPExemptions.aspx>

The document is also available on the eRIDE exemptions page, at:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/SASC/>

It is very important that you review this guidance document before attempting to submit requests through eRIDE. If you have any questions about NECAP Science exemptions, please contact Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley (phone: 222-8494; e-mail: Kevon.Tucker-Seeley@ride.ri.gov).

7. Second testing window for the grade-8 technology assessment to open April 28

The second testing window for the grade-8 21st Century Skills technology assessment opens right after April vacation, from **April 28 to May 23**. All grade-8 students who did not take the assessment during the first window must take the assessment during this window. A refresher webinar is being offered for those proctors who would like to brush up on details for administering the assessment. Proctors may register for one of the refresher webinars, which we will offer on Wednesday, April 30:

- [Refresher Webinar – Wed., April 30th – 8:00 AM](#); or
- [Refresher Webinar – Wed., April 30th – 3:00 PM](#)

A reports-overview webinar will be held on June 4, after all students have completed the assessment for the year. This webinar will help proctors retrieve the appropriate level of student, class, school, and district reports; read and interpret the 21st Century Skills data contained in the reports; and apply the results to instructional or programmatic decision-making. Details for registering for the Reports Overview webinar will be sent directly to proctors.

More information about the 21st Century Skills assessment can be found on the [RIDE web site](#).

Educator Certification:

8. RIDE seeks public comments on new tests for educator certification in two areas

ETS, the testing company whose assessments we use for educator certification, is adding new tests and phasing out older tests. There are currently two tests (speech-language pathology and middle-school science) that have been regenerated; these changes will affect certification requirements in Rhode Island. We are seeking public comment from the education community and the general public on the proposed redesigned certification tests and on the passing scores for initial educator certification in the areas of speech-language pathology and middle-school science. To provide comments on the proposed certification tests and passing scores, please visit:

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

If you have any questions about these new assessments, please feel free to contact Hilda Potrzeba, at hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov or 222-8891.

Grants and awards:

9. RIDE awards \$2.9 million in grants for 21st-Century Community Learning Centers

RIDE has awarded \$2,926,223 in grants to run school-linked afterschool and summer programs, as part of the federally funded 21st-Century Community Learning Centers initiative.

We have awarded grants to:

- AS220 – \$88,200
- The Boys & Girls Club of East Providence – \$163,353
- The Boys & Girls Club of Providence – \$105,000
- The Central Falls School District – 2 grants – \$240,350
- The Cranston Public Schools – 2 grants – \$235,589
- The East Bay Community Action Program – \$61,000
- The Highlander Institute – \$135,000
- Inspiring Minds – \$149,000
- The Learning Community Charter School – \$105,000
- The Met School – \$100,000
- The Mt. Hope Learning Center – \$149,858
- Newport Community School – 2 grants – \$214,379
- The Paul Cuffee School – \$135,000
- The Pawtucket School Department – 2 grants – \$343,732
- The Swearer Center, at Brown University – \$141,762
- The Woonsocket Education Department – 2 grants – \$300,000
- The YMCA of Greater Providence – 2 grants – \$259,000

These grants are to provide before-school, afterschool, vacation-time, and summer programs for children and youth in high-poverty communities. The programs offer academic support, enrichment, recreation, and family-engagement services. RIDE awarded the grants through a competitive application process. With the addition of these grants, there will be 24 agencies in Rhode Island operating 21st-Century Community Learning Centers that serve a total of 53 schools.

RIDE administers the 21st-Century Community Learning Centers program and provides technical assistance and professional development to the grant recipients to ensure that the programs are of high quality, that they are linked to academic achievement, and that they are aligned to the state standards for afterschool programs.

From other organizations

10. Highlander Institute to hold blended-learning conference on May 3

The Highlander Institute is hosting its third annual Blended Learning & Technology Conference on Saturday, May 3, at the URI Feinstein Campus, in Providence. Strands for both educators and administrators promise to inspire. The afternoon “unconference” will provide participants with the time and space to discuss topics that they are tackling in their schools. The conference keynote speaker will be Richard Culatta, director of the Office of Educational Technology for the U.S. Department of Education. His work focuses on leveraging technology to create personalized learning experiences for all students and on promoting increased connectivity to improve access to education and to make college more affordable. Culatta is passionate about accelerating innovation in education, with a particular interest in games for learning, personalized learning, and open education. Click here to [register for the Blended Learning and Technology Conference](#).

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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