

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, April 24, 2015**

**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

1. Design team completes Prototype 3 of next [strategic plan](#) for education, seeks feedback by **May 4**
2. R.I. [Pre-kindergarten Program](#) to serve 9 communities in 2015-16
3. Met School (Newport), Ponaganset High win [Green Ribbons](#)
4. RIASP names high-school, middle-school [Principals of the Year](#)

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

***Assessments:***

5. Deadline for requesting [student exemption](#) from NECAP Science testing is **May 29**
6. RIDE develops [survey](#) for superintendents, others on PARCC administration – **Action Item**
7. *Update:* Pearson now recommends upgrade to latest [Java release](#)
8. *Update:* Pearson provides updated guidance on PARCC End of Year Assessment block [data migration](#)
9. *Reminder:* RIDE to hold [PARCC PBA debrief](#) for superintendents, assistant superintendents on **Tuesday**

***Legal:***

10. RIDE issues Commissioner's decision on [attorneys' fees](#)

***Meetings and Webinars:***

11. RIDE to hold informational webinars on [dual-enrollment regulations](#), policies

12. RIDE seeks feedback on draft of [equity in education plan](#); meeting scheduled for **May 5**

***Data Collections and Data Quality:***

13. *Reminder:* [Instructional Support System](#) can integrate data from local assessments

14. *Reminder:* [Roster Verification](#) to begin on May 11

15. *Reminder:* [School calendars](#) to be submitted to RIDE by **Monday – Action Item**

***Educator Recognition:***

16. *Reminder:* [District Teacher of the Year](#) Profile Sheets due **May 1**

***School Finance:***

17. RIDE updates calculations of education aid, posts [local aid payment rates](#) for Fiscal Year 2016

## From the U.S. Department of Education

18. U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights releases [Title IX](#) guidance

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### Action Item Calendar

**Today** (April 24): [Student advisory council](#) elections

**Monday** (April 27): School [calendars](#) due

**Tuesday** (April 28): [Early learning](#) surveys due

**Wednesday** (April 29): [School for the Deaf](#) survey due

May 8: PARCC administration survey due (see [below](#))

June 5: Preliminary [CEIS data](#) due

June 17: [CEIS Report](#) due

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### Notes from Commissioner Gist

**1. Design team completes Prototype 3 of next strategic plan for education, seeks feedback by May 4**

I am pleased to let you know that the 26 members of the Ambassador Design Team have completed Prototype 3, the current draft of the strategic plan for public education in Rhode Island that will guide our work over the next five years. To

develop this plan, the members of the design team began by using input from the 11,000 people who participated in our statewide survey on public education. As the team members have developed and refined the plan over the past four months, they have continued to rely on feedback from ongoing surveys and from meetings of numerous community groups and organizations. In fact, an additional 4,000 people have provided input since the design team began its work!

Prototype 3 marks a milestone in the development of the strategic plan, as it is the first prototype to include all of the plan components: values, priorities, “visions for success,” and strategies. The strategies, which are still marked “early draft,” describe the actions that all of us – RIDE, LEAs, and the community at large – will take in order to fulfill priorities and attain the outcomes that the plan sets forth.

The design team is now seeking public input on Prototype 3, which we have posted on our website here:

[www.ride.ri.gov/plan-feedback](http://www.ride.ri.gov/plan-feedback)

I encourage you to review Prototype 3 and respond to our feedback survey, and please feel free to spread the work to your team and throughout your community. The design team will collect all responses by **May 4**, at 8 a.m., and will then begin the process of developing a final draft. The team intends to present a final version to the Board of Education and the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education for approval in June.

**2. R.I. Pre-kindergarten Program to serve 9 communities in 2015-16**

On Tuesday we announced that we will be adding six sites this fall to the Rhode Island Pre-kindergarten Program, bringing the total number of sites to 18, serving 9 communities. Pre-kindergarten programs will be located in Central Falls, Cranston, East Providence, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, Warwick, West Warwick, and Woonsocket.

Pending approval of Governor Raimondo's budget proposal, which would provide an additional \$1 million for early-childhood programs, and thanks to the federal Preschool Expansion Grant that RIDE received from the U.S. Department of Education last year, the 2015-16 Pre-Kindergarten Program will be the largest ever. With continued funding from the grant and from the state budget, the long-term goal is to expand the number of prekindergarten classrooms to 60 by the year 2019.

As an educator with a background in early-childhood education, I know it is essential that all children, regardless of the economic status of their family or their community, have opportunities to enroll in high-quality early-learning programs. Our goal is to continue increasing high-quality early-learning opportunities through the Pre-kindergarten Program and other important on-going initiatives, including our Quality Improvement Grants for early-learning programs and efforts to expand access to full-day kindergarten.

The 2015-16 Pre-Kindergarten Program child lottery application and a new online Pre-Kindergarten Program child lottery application system will open by the end of the day. Families will be able to apply online at <https://www3.ride.ri.gov/PKLottery> or family members may pick up an application at any Pre-Kindergarten Program location. Families can also download the application, at [www.ride.ri.gov/EC-Programs-PreK](http://www.ride.ri.gov/EC-Programs-PreK). Completed

applications should be returned to the program of choice. Applications will be accepted through **June 1**. Please be sure to spread the word to families in your community who may be seeking high-quality prekindergarten programs for the coming school year.

### **3. Met School (Newport), Ponaganset High win Green Ribbons**

Education Secretary Arne Duncan announced on Wednesday that two Rhode Island schools are winners of 2015 Green Ribbon School awards. The winning schools are:

- The Paul W. Crowley East Bay Met School (Newport); and
- Ponaganset High School (Foster-Glocester)

“These honorees are compelling examples of the ways schools can help children build real-world skillsets, cut school costs, and provide healthy learning environments,” Duncan said. “U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools are an inspiration and deserve the spotlight for embodying strong examples of innovative learning and civic engagement.”

Nationwide, only 58 schools received Green Ribbon awards this year.

With this week’s announcement from the U.S. Department of Education, we now have eight Rhode Island public schools that have received Green Ribbon awards. These awards are a tribute to the students and teachers who are committed to hands-on learning about environmental issues as well as to the school and community leaders who have been willing to invest in improving the quality of our school facilities. Congratulations to the students, teachers, and school leaders at this year’s winning

schools: The Paul Crowley campus of the Met School and Ponaganset High School.

The six previous Green Ribbon winners from Rhode Island are:

- The Compass School, a charter public school in South Kingstown;
- The Claiborne Pell Elementary School, in Newport;
- The Greene School, a charter public school in West Greenwich; and, in Providence,
- Classical High School, Nathan Bishop Middle School, and the Providence Career and Technical Academy.

#### **4. RIASP names high-school, middle-school Principals of the Year**

The Rhode Island Association of School Principals has selected two of our great educators as 2015 Rhode Island Principals of the Year: Alan Tenreiro, of Cumberland High School, is the high-school principal of the year, and Jaime Crowley, of the Thompson Middle School, in Newport, is the middle-school principal of the year. Congratulations to Alan and Jaime on receiving this recognition for the excellent work you do every day for the teachers, students, and families in your communities!

**From RIDE**

***Assessments:***

**5. Deadline for requesting student exemption from NECAP Science testing is May 29**

All requests for state-approved special consideration or exemption from NECAP Science testing must be submitted online no later than **May 29**, 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. (Please note that parental refusals or requests for student non-participation in state assessments are not approved reasons for state-approved special consideration or exemption.)

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 you or your testing coordinators log into eRIDE, you will see the icon “State Assessment 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/AssessmentExemptions.aspx>

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

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

It is important that you review the guidance document before attempting to submit requests through eRIDE. If you have any questions about these exemptions, please contact Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley, at 222-8494 or [Kevon.Tucker-Seeley@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Kevon.Tucker-Seeley@ride.ri.gov).

## **6. RIDE develops survey for superintendents, others on PARCC administration – *Action Item***

To better understand our implementation of the PARCC assessment, RIDE has created a short survey that will assist us with:

- gathering feedback on the support provided during the Performance Based Assessment (PBA) administration to inform our processes for the End of Year (EOY) administration;
- identifying problematic issues or unclear processes related to general test administration that RIDE can address before the EOY administration;
- identifying issues or processes related to PARCC testing for which RIDE and the PARCC consortium should begin to develop long-term solutions; and
- gathering input on larger administration topics (e.g., testing time, administration windows, policies).

This survey is designed specifically for superintendents, assistant superintendents, test coordinators, technology coordinators, data

managers, principals, and special education directors. To access the survey, please use the following link:

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RI\\_PARCC\\_PBA](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RI_PARCC_PBA)

We ask you to please complete the survey by **May 8**. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley (222-8494 or [kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov](mailto:kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov))

### **7. Update: Pearson now recommends upgrade to latest Java release**

Pearson has released a new [Administrative bulletin](#) that has an impact on the technology used in the schools during the PARCC End of Year (EOY) assessment. A key technical detail that you should be aware of is the Java critical patch update released on April 14. Pearson has changed its recommendation and now *recommends* that LEAs upgrade to this release of Java. If you have any questions about this bulletin, please contact Greg Martin, at [Gregory.Martin@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Gregory.Martin@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8495.

### **8. Update: Pearson provides updated guidance on PARCC End of Year Assessment block data migration**

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

## **9. Reminder: RIDE to hold PARCC PBA debrief for superintendents, assistant superintendents on Tuesday**

With the Performance Based Assessment portion of the PARCC assessment completed, 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 you and from assistant superintendents to inform our processes and procedures during the End of Year administration and during long-term PARCC planning. Following this meeting, 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:* **Tuesday** (April 28)

*Time:* 8:30 to 11 a.m.

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

### ***Legal:***

## **10. RIDE issues Commissioner's decision on attorneys' fees**

RIDE has issued this Commissioner's decision:

Attorneys' fees under regulations relating to the education of children with disabilities cannot be awarded in the context of a Commissioner's hearing.

[http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2015/004-15\\_P.S. aka Student by and through%20 JOANNA S. v S. Kingstown %20S D %20041515.pdf](http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2015/004-15_P.S. aka Student by and through%20 JOANNA S. v S. Kingstown %20S D %20041515.pdf)

***Meetings and Webinars:***

**11. RIDE to hold informational webinars on dual-enrollment regulations, policies**

On Monday (April 27), the Board of Education will be asked to approve the Dual Enrollment Regulations for promulgation. The proposed regulations establish a statewide dual-enrollment policy for Rhode Island high schools and public postsecondary institutions. The regulations expand access to dual-enrollment opportunities at the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and the Community College of Rhode Island; they establish clear eligibility criteria, which allows teachers, students, and families to determine if students are prepared to take college-level coursework; and they provide clear processes for high schools to expand concurrent-enrollment courses— i.e., when a high-school student takes a college-level course for dual credit but the course is taught on a high-school campus by a high-school instructor. RIGL 16-100-4 and these regulations also require LEAs to adopt local dual-enrollment policies by **June 30**.

In anticipation of adoption of these regulations at the Board meeting on Monday, RIDE has scheduled informational webinars to support LEAs in meeting the requirements of these regulations and the local-policy requirement. The information presented on the webinars will be pertinent to district and school leaders, school counselors, teachers of concurrent-enrollment courses,

and other educators who support students in accessing dual-enrollment coursework.

The webinars will also discuss Governor Raimondo's Prepare RI Dual Enrollment Fund, which, if approved by the General Assembly, will provide funding to enable students to participate in dual- and concurrent-enrollment programming.

To learn more about the regulations and about how you can reduce the cost of college for your students and increase their likelihood to receive a college degree, please register for one of the webinars, which are scheduled for the following dates:

May 1	10 a.m.	<a href="#">Register here for May 1 webinar</a>
May 6	2 p.m.	<a href="#">Register here for May 6 webinar</a>
May 7	10 a.m.	<a href="#">Register here for May 7 webinar</a>

For additional information about these webinars, please call Sharon Lee, at 222-8484, or Paula Barney, at 222-8399.

## **12. RIDE seeks feedback on draft of equity in education plan; meeting scheduled for May 5**

RIDE invites you and your principals to provide feedback on sections of the Rhode Island equity plan at a meeting we will hold at the Achievement First Providence Mayoral Academy, 370 Hartford Ave, on May 5, at 4 p.m. The equity plan, which RIDE needs to submit to the U.S. Department of Education by June 1, focuses on how Rhode Island will ensure that students in low-income areas and students of color are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers. In the feedback session, participants will review the root causes of inequitable distribution of educators that stakeholders

have identified to date. Participants will also provide feedback on the strategies and on the implementation approach that the draft plan outlines. Interested in attending? RSVP here:

<http://www.eventbrite.com/e/rhode-island-equity-plan-feedback-session-tickets-16718011021>

### ***Data Collections and Data Quality:***

#### **13. Reminder: 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.

#### **14. Reminder: 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>.

**15. *Reminder: School calendars to be submitted to RIDE by Monday – Action Item***

This is a reminder that it is time for your data managers to submit 2015-16 calendars to RIDE. Data managers will be advised that calendars must be submitted using the e-ride system no later than **Monday**; RIDE no longer accepts hard copies of calendars. Please contact Mario Goncalves, at 222-8968 or [Mario.Goncalves@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Mario.Goncalves@ride.ri.gov), for assistance with this matter.

## ***Educator Recognition:***

### **16. Reminder: District Teacher of the Year Profile Sheets due May 1**

The 2015-16 District Teacher of the Year profile sheet has been posted on the Educator Recognition page of the RIDE website. District Teacher of the Year Profile Sheets are due by **May 1**.

This year, 31 teachers from across Rhode Island represented their individual LEAs as District Teachers of the Year. Each District Teacher of the Year (DTOY) also had the opportunity to take part in WaterFire: A Salute to Rhode Island Educators, to participate in leadership professional development, to collaborate with DTOYs from across Rhode Island, and to apply to represent all Rhode Island educators as the 2016 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year.

Please visit our Educator Recognition page or click on the following link to download the 2015-16 District Teacher of the Year Profile Sheet:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/DTOY\\_2016\\_Application](http://www.ride.ri.gov/DTOY_2016_Application)

If you have any questions regarding the District Teacher of the Year program, please contact Mary Keenan, at [mary.keenan@ride.ri.gov](mailto:mary.keenan@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8497.

## ***School Finance:***

### **17. RIDE updates calculations of education aid, posts local aid payment rates for Fiscal Year 2016**

As part of the funding-formula law, state education aid is based on data from one year prior to the year in which the state distributes the aid. Therefore, Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 aid is based on enrollment and free- or reduced-price lunch data from FY 2015. To fulfill this mandate, we collected data on student enrollments and free- or reduced-price lunch status from the beginning of the current school year through last month. This data is then annualized to reflect a full year. We also adjusted the calculations to account for the results of the charter-public-school lotteries held last month. Remember that the funding formula spreads all changes over the remaining years of the transition: 3 years for those LEAs with an increase in state funding and 6 years for those LEAs with a reduction in state funding. We have forwarded this data to the Governor's Office and to the General Assembly for their consideration. No changes will go into effect until the General Assembly passes, and Governor Raimondo signs, the annual appropriations bill.

In addition, RIDE has posted the FY 2016 local-aid payment rates for students attending charter public schools, the William M. Davies, Jr. Career & Technical High School (Davies), the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center (The Met), and the Anchor Learning Academy (Recovery High School). Please note that FY 2016 is the final year of the five-year transition plan for the local payment rates for charter public schools, Davies, and The Met; therefore, the rates will be the same for charters, Davies, and The Met.

The updated formula information and local aid payment rates are posted on our website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/FundingFinance/FundingSources/StateEducationAid.aspx>

If you have any questions about the aid calculations or local payment rates, please contact Kristen Cole, at 222-4681 or [kristen.cole@ride.ri.gov](mailto:kristen.cole@ride.ri.gov).

## **From the U.S. Department of Education**

### **18. U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights releases Title IX guidance**

The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) today released a [guidance package](#) emphasizing the responsibility of school districts, colleges, and universities to designate a Title IX coordinator. The package also contains an overview of the law's requirements in several key areas, including athletics, single-sex education, sex-based harassment, and discipline.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in all education programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance.

The guidance package released today includes three documents:

- a [Dear Colleague Letter](#) to school districts, colleges, and universities reminding them of their obligation to designate a Title IX coordinator;
- a [letter](#) to Title IX coordinators that provides them more information about their important role; and
- a [Title IX resource guide](#) that includes an overview of Title IX requirements in several key areas, including recruitment, admissions and counseling; financial assistance; athletics;

sex-based harassment; treatment of pregnant and parenting students; and discipline—all topics that frequently confront schools and their Title IX coordinators.

Since the issuance of Title IX regulations in 1975, school districts, colleges, and universities receiving federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education have been required to designate at least one employee to coordinate the recipient's compliance with Title IX.

More information about Title IX and other OCR guidance documents on Title IX issues [can be found here](#).

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

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