

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, April 26, 2013

Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. Commissioner to address General Assembly on the [state of public education](#)
2. Schools encouraged to [inform students](#) about Virtual Learning Math Modules, issues regarding Accuplacer assessment
3. Books available for those interested in participating in discussion group on [Cage-Busting Leadership](#)
4. Two Rhode Island schools named 2013 [Green Ribbon Schools](#)
5. R.I. Teacher of the Year, Principal of the Year attend [White House ceremony](#) honoring educators

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

Common Core:

6. RIDE offers additional professional-development session on [Mathematics](#) Common Core State Standards
7. RIDE posts link to guidance on selecting, developing [instructional materials](#) aligned to the Common Core

Assessments:

8. PARCC releases draft [Accommodations Manual](#) for public comment

Accountability:

9. RIDE to send [accountability data and classifications](#) to LEAs during week of May 13, post final reports on June 14

Educator evaluations:

10. [Evaluation-data reporting](#) spreadsheet for LEAs not fully implementing EPSS posted on RIDE website
11. All evaluators expected to complete [Module 2](#) online training - *Reminder*

Career and Technical Education:

12. RIDE announces funding opportunity for [career-preparation programs](#)

Educator recognition:

13. *Reminder:* RIDE seeking nominations for [Educator Talent Pool](#) – *Action Item*

Reports to RIDE:

14. 2013-14 School Year [calendar submissions](#) due **Wednesday**

From the U.S. Department of Education

15. U.S. Department of Education schedules conference calls on [Equitable Services](#) Implementation Plan

From other organizations

16. College consortium awarding \$400 fellowships to advance use of [Rhode Island DataHUB](#)
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Action Item Calendar

Today (April 26): Spring 2013 [testing schedules](#) due
Today (April 26): [Medicaid reimbursement](#) applications due
Wednesday (May 1): Calendar submissions due (see [below](#))
May 3: Educator Talent Pool nominations due (see [below](#))

Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. Commissioner to address General Assembly on the state of public education

Every year, I welcome the opportunity to report to the members of the General Assembly and to the public on the state of education in Rhode Island. I will deliver my annual State of Education address on Tuesday (April 30), at 5 p.m., in the House of Representatives chamber in the State House. This year, the theme of my address will be “Stepping Up for Success.” In

addition to honoring award-winning students and educators and reporting on recent accomplishments and issues still before us, I will recognize a number of schools where students, teachers, school leaders, and family members have “stepped up” to rally around students and to advance student achievement. I have invited all 2013 District Teachers of the Year and all 2012-13 Golden Apple Award winners to the event. I am sure that our elected officials and others in attendance will be impressed with some of the exciting work going on in our schools every day. I hope that you will be able to join me on Tuesday for this important occasion.

2. Schools encouraged to inform students about Virtual Learning Math Modules, issues regarding Accuplacer assessment

I am very pleased that so many teachers and school leaders across the state are focused on preparing our students for success beyond high school. In particular, I know that you and your teams of educators are working hard to provide instruction and support to the students in the Class of 2014 who have scored “substantially below proficient” on the NECAP assessments.

I want to remind all of you about the availability of free Virtual Learning Math Modules. To date nearly 2,600 students across the state have signed up for this opportunity. Even if you and your high-school teams are offering other programs and resources to support your students, your students and their families should be informed about the opportunity to sign up for the Virtual Learning Math Modules. Districts and schools are responsible for providing students with access to the Virtual Learning Math Modules during the school year and during the summer. For information on the Modules or to sign up for participation, students can go to our

[Virtual Learning](#) page and scroll down to “Statewide Initiatives/Virtual Learning Math Modules.”

Many of us have been hearing from parents who believe their children have made significant progress since the October NECAP test administration. Some parents would like their children to be able to take one of our other approved assessments this spring, at their expense, in order to attain a passing score and meet the statewide-assessment graduation requirement as soon as possible – in the event that the student does not show progress or achieve at the level of partially proficient or better when retaking the NECAP assessment.

The College Board Accuplacer is one approved test, and several testing sites in Rhode Island administer the Accuplacer. Right now, it appears that the CCRI testing centers are focusing on administering the test to students who will enroll in the fall, as CCRI uses the test to determine whether students need remedial coursework. We are working with CCRI and other testing centers to ensure that students in the Class of 2014 will be able to take the Accuplacer as soon as possible. Please also let your counselors know that CCRI does not accept Accuplacer results from high-school juniors for placement decisions, so some students who intend to enroll at CCRI may have to take the assessment again at a later date. Also please note that all grade-11 students who scored “substantially below proficient” on the 2012 NECAP assessments must take the assessment again in October 2013, regardless of their achievement level on the Accuplacer or other assessments.

For further information on the NECAP assessment requirements and on other approved assessments, including testing centers and

the cost for participation, click [here](#), and go to “RI Approved Test Availability.”

3. Books available for those interested in participating in discussion group on *Cage-Busting Leadership*

I want to remind you that I’m setting up a book-discussion group on Rick Hess’s *Cage-busting Leadership*, and I’m hoping to gather a team of about three participants from each interested LEA to participate. As I noted in last week’s Field Memo, that team should include you plus some combination of other leaders in your LEA, such as folks from your central-office staff, your school-district attorneys, teachers and parent leaders, or members of your school committee. To give you an idea about Rick Hess’s thinking, [here](#) is a link to a video of Rick talking about cage-busting leadership. [Here](#) is a link to a video of a panel discussion that Rick led on cage-busting leadership; I was honored to be one of the participants. [Here](#) is a recent article Rick published: “Be a cage-buster.” Just to remind you: If you are interested in participating in the discussion group, send the names of those on your team to my assistant, Dana Wilson (Dana.Wilson@ride.ri.gov) by Friday, **May 3**. We have books available for your team to read, and I believe that Rick will join us for our discussion this summer or fall — more details to follow.

4. Two Rhode Island schools named 2013 Green Ribbon Schools

On Monday (April 22), Education Secretary Arne Duncan recognized two Rhode Island schools – The Compass School and the Providence Career and Technical Academy – as U.S. Department of Education 2013 Green Ribbon Schools. The Green Ribbon Schools are honored “for their exemplary efforts to reduce

environmental impact and utility costs, promote better health, and ensure effective environmental education, including civics and green career pathways.” We should all be proud that of the among the 54 public schools that won Green Ribbon Awards, two are from Rhode Island! We are continuing to lead the way when it comes to high-quality standards for school construction and energy efficiency and excellent instruction in the environmental sciences. Congratulations to the Providence Public Schools, to the Providence Career and Technical Academy, and to The Compass School, one of our excellent charter public schools.

5. R.I. Teacher of the Year, Principal of the Year attend White House ceremony honoring educators

On Tuesday (April 23), our 2013 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year, Jessica Waters, a science teacher at the Beacon Charter High School for the Arts, attended the National Teacher of the Year ceremony, in the White House Rose Garden. Jessica has an inspiring life story. She is a high-school dropout who later earned her GED and an education degree from Rhode Island College. She is committed to being the teacher who inspires her students to stay in school – in her words, “that caring teacher who could make a difference in somebody’s life.” I know she has made a difference in the lives of many of her students. Susan Chin, of the Veazie Street School, in Providence, our current Elementary School Principal of the Year, also attended the ceremony, as a representative of America’s elementary-school principals. Susan was selected to attend the event along with the president of the National Association of Elementary School Principals. Congratulations to Jessica and Susan, who represented the excellent work of all Rhode Island educators at this ceremony!

From RIDE

Common Core:

6. RIDE offers additional professional-development session on Mathematics Common Core State Standards

We are pleased to announce that an additional session of the Mathematics Common Core State Standards (CCSS) workshop *Building Coherence in Fraction Instruction in Grades 3 – 5* will take place on Wednesday, May 29. This is an ideal opportunity for your staff to examine one of the major areas of focus in this grade span.

For registration information, please see:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx>

For questions regarding this Mathematics CCSS professional development, please contact Susan Pagliaro, at susan.pagliaro@ride.ri.gov, or Patricia Carnevale, at patricia.carnevale@ride.ri.gov.

7. RIDE posts link to guidance on selecting, developing instructional materials aligned to the Common Core

RIDE has posted a new resource for high-school materials aligned to the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics, the [High School Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics](#) (scroll down on page). The aim of the Publisher's Criteria is to provide clear and specific guidance for selecting or developing new instructional materials or for revising or supplementing existing materials.

Assessments:

8. PARCC releases draft Accommodations Manual for public comment

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) has released for public comment a draft of the full accommodations manual for the assessments currently being developed by the 22-state consortium.

The draft PARCC Accommodations Manual is a comprehensive policy document that will support local educators in the selection, administration and evaluation of accommodations for the assessment of students with disabilities and English learners on the PARCC End-of-Year, Performance-Based, and optional Mid-Year assessment components. The release of the manual is an important step in meeting PARCC's commitment to accessibility for all students, especially students with disabilities (SWDs) and English Learners (ELs).

The majority of the proposed accommodations policies are currently in use across PARCC states. What is different from many current state accommodations manuals is that the draft PARCC Accommodations Manual includes not only proposed participation and accommodations policies for SWDs and ELs but also information about tools that will be provided through PARCC's computer-based assessment-delivery system for all students to optimize their performance on the assessments (e.g., highlighters, enlarged font).

The public-review period allows for feedback from a wide group of stakeholders, including K-12 educators, parents, curriculum and assessment experts, and interest groups. Through **May 13**, the

draft PARCC Accommodations Manual and a feedback survey will be posted on the PARCC website for the public to provide feedback, along with a set of Frequently Asked Questions, at:

<http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-draft-accommodations-manual>

Accountability:

9. RIDE to send accountability data and classifications to LEAs during week of May 13, post final reports on June 14

RIDE has established the process and timeline planned for this year's release of the 2012-13 School Accountability results. This will be the second year that the accountability results are based on our new Accountability System. You will receive a disc with your LEA's data during the week of May 13, and you will have three weeks, or until the end of next month to share the information with your administrative team for review. All questions and data clean-up must be communicated to Mike Ferry, at michael.ferry@ride.ri.gov, by **May 31**. We will begin preparing the final data files and report cards for release on Friday, June 14. Please do not share publicly any of your draft accountability results. We have, in the past, found systemic errors when responding to individual questions that lead to changes in the final version of all files. We will post the final report cards and data on our website on June 14.

Educator evaluations:

10. Evaluation-data reporting spreadsheet for LEAs not fully implementing EPSS posted on RIDE website

For schools and districts not fully implementing the Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS), a reporting spreadsheet along with instructions is now available on the RIDE website. The spreadsheet allows LEAs to document the required evaluation component scores for all teachers and building administrators in a simple format that can then be uploaded to EPSS. The tool that will allow LEAs to upload their evaluation data spreadsheet to EPSS will go live the week of **May 13**. The evaluation-data upload tool will be accessible on an administrative page in the EPSS to the individuals who have been designed by the LEA as the EPSS “District Configuration Administrator.”

The evaluation reporting spreadsheet, along with the instructions, can be found on the RIDE website at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EdEval-TrainingResources-EoY>

11. All evaluators expected to complete Module 2 online training - *Reminder*

Module 2, an interactive, online training that prepares evaluators to score Student Learning Objectives and close out the evaluation process, can be accessed on the RIDE website. All evaluators, including evaluators in Innovation districts, Coventry, and The Learning Community, are expected to complete Module 2 prior to scoring Student Learning Objectives and end-of-year conferences. Three distinct Module 2 trainings have been developed to accommodate Rhode Island Model and non-Rhode Island Model LEAs and personnel evaluating teachers and personnel evaluating building administrators. During the training, each user is required to sign in to Survey Monkey, complete various calibration exercises, and sign out of Survey Monkey.

Evaluators can learn more on the RIDE website about Module 2 and can access the customized training that fits their role, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EducatorEvaluation/EducatorEvaluationTrainingResources.aspx>

Career and Technical Education:

12. RIDE announces funding opportunity for career-preparation programs

RIDE is soliciting letters of interest for a new funding opportunity for high schools that are committed to establishing a new, state-approvable career-preparation programs in any of three state priority sectors: (1) Information Technology, (2) Health Care/Medicine, or (3) Engineering/Pre-Engineering. Award sizes will range from \$20,000 to \$50,000 per applicant, with a cash match requirement.

CTE Categorical Fund Award	Local Match
\$0-20,000	5 percent
\$20,001-30,000	10 percent
\$30,001-50,000	20 percent

Eligibility for funding is limited by the following:

- In the current school year, the applicant must have offered two or more courses that:

- fall into any one of the three state priority sectors;
 - are topically related and could be built into a rigorous, non-duplicative sequence; and
 - maintained enrollment of not fewer than 12 students in each course.
- Applicants may not be previously approved as a career-preparation program.

Applicants will be responsible for the following deliverables due no later than June 2014:

- establishment and enrollment of no fewer than 12 students in each section of a full three-course, non-duplicative sequence;
- procuring or securing:
 - sufficient supplies, materials, space, and equipment to support a rigorous career-preparation program; and
 - an instructor who is properly trained for the proposed career-preparation program; and
- the submission of a career-preparation program application that aligns with the Rhode Island Career and Technical Education standards, which are posted at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/EducationPrograms/CareerTechnicalEducation.aspx>.

No high school may receive more than one award. If you have any questions or if your LEA is interested in this funding opportunity, meets the eligibility requirements, and is prepared to make the deliverable commitments, please contact Paul.McConnell@ride.ri.gov no later than **May 6**.

Educator recognition:

13. *Reminder: RIDE seeking nominations for Educator Talent Pool – Action Item*

RIDE maintains a file of distinguished teachers and principals. Throughout the year, these educators may be considered for membership on advisory boards and task forces, as well as for special recognition programs. This year, RIDE is asking each LEA to recommend up to 3 educators who represent educators relatively new to the profession (5 to 12 years in the profession) who demonstrate unusual instructional and inspiring presence that helps students, colleagues, and the community. Please click on the following link for more information:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/Recognition/default.aspx>

When you submit your recommendations, please include:

- Talent Pool Recommendation form;
- one-page narrative that addresses how each candidate meets the criteria; and
- resume of recommended educator.

Thank you for taking the time to make your recommendations.

Click on the following link to download the application:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/Recognition/Recognition_DOCS/Talent_Pool_Recommendation_2013-14.pdf

The above application and process information is located under the “Info” tab in the “RI Teacher of the Year” section on the page.

Please send the completed packet of information by **May 3** to Mary Keenan, at mary.keenan@ride.ri.gov.

Reports to RIDE:

**14. 2013-14 School Year calendar submissions due
Wednesday**

This is a reminder that it is once again time for LEA data managers to submit 2013-14 calendars to RIDE. Data managers have been advised that calendars must be submitted using the e-ride system no later than **Wednesday** (May 1). Please contact HelpDesk@ride.ri.gov for assistance with this matter.

From the U.S. Department of Education

**15. U.S. Department of Education schedules conference
calls on Equitable Services Implementation Plan**

The U.S. Department of Education’s Offices of Non-Public Education (ONPE), Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), and Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) will host three conference calls to discuss the ESEA and IDEA [Equitable](#)

[Services Implementation Plan](#) (ESIP) that the U.S. Department of Education announced on March 14.

Each conference call will include a brief overview of the ESIP and a description of specific actions that the U.S. Department of Education will take to assist state and local educational agencies meet their obligations under ESEA and IDEA, as well as help private-school officials to better understand the provisions of the laws. Following the overview, there will be time for questions and discussion. We have scheduled three calls in order to accommodate wide participation. Each call will last for 30 minutes and address the same content.

Conference Call Dates (select one):

- Monday (April 29) at 2:30 p.m.
- Tuesday (April 30) at 3:30 p.m.
- Thursday (May 2) at 11:30 a.m.

Conference Call Details:

- Dial-in number: (888) 989-7686
- Participant passcode: 4977118

Should you have any questions about this call, please contact ONPE, at (202) 401-1365 or onpe@ed.gov.

From other organizations

16. College consortium awarding \$400 fellowships to advance use of Rhode Island DataHUB

Please see this notice from the Rhode Island Campus Compact, the Association of Independent Colleges & Universities of Rhode Island, and the Providence Plan:

[Partnerships for Success](#), an initiative of Rhode Island Campus Compact, in partnership with [ProvPlan](#), is pleased to announce an exciting fellowship opportunity for high-school counselors, college-admissions professionals, college financial-aid professionals, and others invested in college success and access.

The goal of the fellowship program is to provide college-access and education professionals in Rhode Island an incentive to use the RI DataHUB, increase data-driven questions and decisions in their work, promote cross-collaboration and partnerships between schools and colleges, build new professional relationships, and ultimately enhance opportunities and outcomes for Rhode Island students. The fellowship program is funded through Rhode Island Campus Compact and the College Access Challenge Grant program, through the Office of Higher Education. Each Fellow who completes the program will receive a certificate of completion and a \$400 stipend. Up to 12 fellows will be selected to be on the fellowship team.

[Download application for more information.](#)

The application deadline is **May 15**.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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