

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, May 3, 2013**

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**Action Item Calendar**

- Today** (May 3): Educator Talent Pool nominations due (see [below](#))  
May 24: Asset Protection Plans due (see [below](#))  
June 3: Preliminary EIS data report due (see [below](#))  
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**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

1. RIDE develops, posts overviews of Year 4 Race to the Top plans, projects

I know we all are proud that we are finishing Year 3 of our Race to the Top implementation. We have all worked incredibly hard to implement many new projects and programs across our state. As we approach Year 4 of the grant, I want to thank you for your work in supporting the principles we jointly committed to in our Race to the Top application and in your LEA Scope of Work. Although our work is challenging at times, I am pleased that over the past three years we have continued our partnership and that you have provided valuable feedback on how we can improve our implementation.

Together, we have moved forward in:

- transitioning to the Common Core State Standards;
- developing and aligning curriculum in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies;
- implementing educator-evaluation models;
- supporting beginning-teacher induction;
- using the new interim assessments;
- engaging in professional development regarding formative assessment and data use;
- exploring the newly designed instructional-management system; and
- transforming our lowest-achieving schools.

To continue the commitments we made in our partnership agreement and to ensure clarity of expectations regarding our joint initiatives, the team at RIDE has prepared a set of one-page overviews of the major projects that we will put into action in Year 4. We have posted these one-page overviews on the RIDE website [here](#). We want these one-page overviews to be a helpful

tool as you begin planning for Year 4 of Race to the Top. The first page of the overviews provides contacts for each project.

I encourage you to review each of the one-pagers so that you can understand the choices you need to make to ensure continued implementation in your LEA. The RIDE team will be available to answer any questions you may have about these overviews at assistant-superintendent meeting this month and at each quarterly Collaborative Learning for Outcomes meeting scheduled for this month as well.

## **2. Commissioner delivers annual State of Education address**

I was pleased at the great turnout and the positive reception for the annual State of Education address, which I delivered to the General Assembly on Tuesday (April 30). As I noted to you last week, my goal was to outline for the legislators our major accomplishments of the past year and the challenges that still lie before us. My theme was “Stepping Up for Success,” and I highlighted the many ways in which our school leaders, teachers, families, and students themselves are stepping up to meet these challenges. In particular, I noted how schools across the state are rallying around the high-school students who need additional support in mathematics in order to meet the state-assessment graduation requirement, including “communication with families, summer programs, math tutorials, after-school classes, virtual-learning programs, and of course great classroom instruction.” I also emphasized the importance of a wide-ranging and engaging curriculum: “It’s about math, it’s about reading and writing, it’s about science, and it’s also about the arts, technology, history, civics, modern and ancient languages, career-and-technical education, and the other rich opportunities our schools provide our students.” Finally, I was particularly pleased to call out to

award winning and high-achieving students and educators, students and educators from 12 schools that made significant improvement this year, and the leaders of the 5 districts that participated in the PISA Pilot program. Thank you for supporting our work toward transforming education in Rhode Island! A copy of the address is on our website on [this page](#).

### **3. Teacher, students receive awards and honors**

We received great news this week about several Rhode Island teachers and students. First, David Upegui, a science teacher at Central Falls Senior High School, is one of nine winners of a 2013 Amgen Award for Science Teaching Excellence, which “recognizes extraordinary contributions by educators across the United States, Puerto Rico, and Canada who are elevating the level of science literacy through creativity in the classroom and motivation of students.” I have visited David’s classroom, and I have seen how David inspires his students to learn, holds high expectations for their achievement, and leads them toward success. He will proudly represent the excellent teachers across our state.

Katie Heenan, a 4<sup>th</sup>-grader in the Raymond C. LaPerche School, in Smithfield, is the state winner this year in the annual Doodle 4 Google contest for young artists. She was selected from among 130,000 nationwide entries. We’re now rooting for Katie to become the national winner; to see her design and to vote for her entry, click [here](#).

Sophie Nerone, a freshman at the Met at East Bay (Newport), is one of 12 nationwide winners of a 2013 Young Naturalist Award, a research-based competition from the American Museum of Natural History, to “promote participation and communication in

science.” Her award-winning project is called “Floating Docks Provide Footing for Marine Exotic Species.”

Congratulations, to Sophie, to Katie, and to David Upegui!

#### **4. RIDE to issue award for excellence in data quality**

One of the priorities in our strategic plan for transforming education in Rhode Island is to develop user-friendly data systems – and we are making great progress toward meeting this objective! Every day, school leaders, teachers, and support staff at all levels work tirelessly to collect, maintain, and support data-submission efforts in all schools and districts. To recognize the important work going on across the state toward building and maintaining data quality, we are pleased to announce the launch of the Rhode Island Data Quality Award Program. This award will recognize the commitment and effort you and your team members make to ensure that our educators and the public at large have access to high-quality data and that we use data for wise decision-making to improve teaching and learning.

Through May 22, RIDE will accept nominations for individuals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership and commitment to excellence in data quality. Early next month, I will present the first Data Quality Award at a special ceremony honoring the recipient.

You can find the nomination forms on our website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/DataQualityAward>.

For more information about the award program, please contact Lee Rabbit, at [lee.rabbit@ride.ri.gov](mailto:lee.rabbit@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8495.

**5. *Reminder:* Schools encouraged to inform students about Virtual Learning Math Modules, issues regarding Accuplacer assessment**

As I noted to you last week, 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 you again 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. I believe that the most direct route to graduation for students who have not yet met the state-assessment graduation requirement is to show progress when they retake the NECAP assessment in their senior year. Some parents, however, 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 state-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.

It may be advisable for grade-11 students to take the Accuplacer in their senior year rather than at present. CCRI and some other postsecondary schools do not accept Accuplacer results from high-school juniors for placement decisions, so some students who intend to enroll at CCRI or elsewhere 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. Please let your counselors know about these issues before they encourage students to take the Accuplacer this spring.

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.”

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

I want to remind you again 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." Rick will speak about "cage-busting leadership" tomorrow (May 4), at the Rhode Island Association of School Committees annual meeting, so some members of our team may have a chance to hear Rick discussing his research and his views.

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](mailto:Dana.Wilson@ride.ri.gov)) **today** (May 3), or Monday at the latest. 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.

**From RIDE**

***School Facilities:***

**7. LEAs must file Asset Protection Plans electronically by **May 24 – Action Item****

LEAs are required to provide annual asset-protection plans pursuant to the School Construction Regulations. Last year we began collecting the Asset Protection Plans occurs electronically to improve accuracy and to make it easier for you to complete the forms.

To submit your plans electronically, business managers or other authorized users should log in to eRIDE. Once you log in to eRIDE, you should see an Asset Protection Plan icon located at the bottom of your screen. For your convenience, a user manual has been provided at the bottom of the website.

If you do not have an eRIDE account or if you are unable to access the Asset Protection Plan link, please e-mail Joseph da Silva, at [Joseph.daSilva@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Joseph.daSilva@ride.ri.gov).

Asset Protection Plans for the current Fiscal Year (2013) are due by **May 24**.

**8. Informational workshop on Green Ribbon Schools scheduled for May 14**

The U.S. Department of Education launched the Green Ribbon Schools program in 2011 as the first comprehensive federal program addressing the environmental impact, health, and education in our schools. This year, 64 schools and 14 districts were selected, and among them were two Rhode Island schools: Providence Career and Technical Academy and The Compass School (a charter public school in Kingston) received the Green Ribbon honor.

Join us for an informative workshop about the Green Ribbon Schools initiative and award program:

Tuesday, May 14, from 4 – 5:30 p.m.

Education Center, Roger Williams Park Zoo, Providence

Jim Elder, Director of the Campaign for Environmental Literacy, will speak about the mission of the initiative, how the program is evolving, and what recruitment approaches have been successful in other states. Joseph da Silva, RIDE School Construction Coordinator, will provide some practical information on the application process and he will discuss the importance and benefits of the program.

To register for the workshop, please email Jeanine Silversmith, at [jeaninesilversmith@gmail.com](mailto:jeaninesilversmith@gmail.com), by Friday, **May 10**. This is a free workshop open to teachers, administrators, health-care providers, PTO representatives, informal educators, and community members. Space is limited, so please RSVP soon!

### ***Assessments:***

#### **9. Educators sought for participation in NECAP Science test development**

RIDE is offering an opportunity for classroom teachers and other educators to participate in the development process of the NECAP Science Assessment for grades 4, 8, and 11. The NECAP Teacher Committees are essential to the work of creating a valid and reliable assessment system. Many of your teachers have participated in these committees and have learned a lot – not only from the process but also from the teachers representing New Hampshire and Vermont.

Please encourage teachers to apply to represent our students as members of one of the Test Development Committees described below. Applications can be found on the RIDE website, at:

[www.ride.ri.gov/NECAP-Test-Development](http://www.ride.ri.gov/NECAP-Test-Development)

The Bias & Sensitivity Review Committee will convene for one day, **July 31**, in Stowe, Vermont.

To prepare assessment items for field-testing, all NECAP test items are reviewed to ensure that they are free from language or content that may negatively affect the test performance of a specific group of students. This work is done by a team made up of four educators from each state (Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont), for a total of 12 educators being selected to serve on the Bias & Sensitivity Review Committee. These educators either represent a specific group (e.g., racial, ethnic, or religious groups; rural or urban interests; individuals with disabilities; recent immigrants; English-language learners) or have direct experience working with students from these groups.

To qualify, educators should meet the following criteria:

- have current and direct experience teaching or working with students;
- offer a unique perspective on one or more specific student groups;
- be willing to work intensively with a team of educators for two consecutive days; and
- have experience with the Science GSEs for their grade span.

The Item Review Committee will convene on two days, **July 31 and August 1**, in Stowe, Vermont.

Each year, as part of preparing assessment items for field-testing, NECAP science items and the inquiry tasks are reviewed for alignment to the appropriate science assessment target, Depth of Knowledge level, student accessibility, and instructional relevance. This work is done by three content-area teams of 12 educators, with four teachers each from Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont on each team. The Item Review Committees meet once a year.

To qualify, educators should meet the following criteria:

- have advanced knowledge and experience with the Grade Span Expectations;
- have experience teaching at the relevant grade cluster; and
- be willing to work intensively on a team for two or more consecutive days.

The deadline for Applications is 4 p.m. on **May 31**. Applications are available on line, at:

[www.ride.ri.gov/NECAP-Test-Development](http://www.ride.ri.gov/NECAP-Test-Development)

If you have questions about NECAP Science test development, please contact any of the following RIDE staff members:

- Jennifer Golenia: 222-8406, [Jennifer.Golenia@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Golenia@ride.ri.gov);
- Peter McLaren: 222-8454, [Peter.McLaren@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Peter.McLaren@ride.ri.gov); or
- Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley: 222-8494, [Kevon.Tucker-Seeley@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Kevon.Tucker-Seeley@ride.ri.gov).

## **10. PARCC releases assessment blueprints and test specifications**

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) has released assessment blueprints and test specifications for both the English language arts/literacy and mathematics assessments, set to debut in 2014-15. These blueprints and test specifications will help educators better prepare students for the new online assessments that are aligned to the Common Core State Standards and designed to measure college and career readiness.

The English language arts/literacy blueprints provide useful information to better understand the design of the assessments themselves, including ELA/literacy rubrics to guide thinking about classroom rubric use, ELA/literacy passage-selection guidelines, and worksheets to guide text selection for instruction.

The mathematics evidence tables help readers further understand the integration of mathematical practices and content. They also provide greater detail about how standards can be combined, highlighting one of the most critical advances of the standards—their coherence.

Also, the documents in both content areas provide greater insight into the planned reporting categories for the PARCC summative assessments.

For more information on the assessment blueprints and test specifications, including narrated overview PowerPoints and an FAQ document, visit:

<http://www.parcconline.org/assessment-blueprints-test-specs>.

## **11. Assessment reports available to educators through IMS**

As you may have noticed, reports on assessments are now available through the Instructional Management System (IMS). Reports are currently available for NECAP, ACCESS for ELLs, the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment (RIAA), and the Fixed Form Interim Assessments. Please note that although we are making these reports available to educators, we are continuing to review and make improvements to the reports. Documents to guide users through the Interim Assessment reports and the ACCESS reports are available, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/IMS-IAC-Training-Info>.

Similar guides for the NECAP and RIAA reports are under development. If you find errors in data or if you have feedback on the reports, please e-mail your comments to Jasmine Rezendes, at [jasmine.rezendes@ride.ri.gov](mailto:jasmine.rezendes@ride.ri.gov).

Please note that curriculum must be linked to courses for classroom-level data to be available. If you have questions regarding linking curriculum, please contact Kate Schulz, at [kate.schulz@ride.ri.gov](mailto:kate.schulz@ride.ri.gov), or Laura Kacewicz at [Laura.kacewicz@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Laura.kacewicz@ride.ri.gov).

Please also note that the reports are based on the roster year. Educators can see their current students and how they performed on assessments that were administered in the current year or in

previous years. For example, if you are examining ACCESS performance you can see your current students' performance on the school year 2011-12 ACCESS assessment.

The *Student Profile* report includes assessment data for all statewide assessments. This report was not custom-developed for Rhode Island and is still in need of some changes that will be made at the beginning of the summer.

### ***Data Collection and Quality:***

#### **12. LEAs must report data on students receiving Early Intervening Services by June 25 – *Action Item***

Any general-education students, grades K-12, who received direct interventions and students who benefitted from Early Intervening Services (EIS)-funded professional development to staff must be reported in the enrollment census. The EIS services in question would be found in the approved Fiscal Year 2013 Consolidated Resource Plan IDEA Part B application on the EIS plan as well as in the budget, under UCOA program code 14. Please note that:

- this reporting is due by June 25, with a preliminary data submission on June 3, before the close of the school year, while program staff are in school for clarification requests;
- LEAs that voluntarily chose to use CEIS funds *must report* student participation; and
- data collected are subsequently reported to OSEP along with the total funds spent on CEIS.

For additional information, please see the EIS memo and PowerPoint, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/SpecialEducation/SpecialEducationRegulations.aspx>

***Early-childhood education:***

**13. RIDE seeks qualified vendors to expand Rhode Island Pre-Kindergarten Program**

RIDE has announced the availability of funds and is requesting Letters of Interest from qualified vendors to expand the Rhode Island Pre-Kindergarten Program, with the goal of building and sustaining the expansion of a diverse delivery system of high-quality, state-funded prekindergarten programs across the state. Eligible organizations or entities include licensed child-care centers, Head Start programs, public schools, and nonpublic schools able to operate a classroom meeting RIDE Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program Approval Standards in the following Rhode Island communities: Bristol, Burrillville, Central Falls, Cranston, East Providence, Johnston, Middletown, Providence, Pawtucket, Newport, North Providence, Warren, Warwick, Westerly, West Warwick, and Woonsocket.

The award of grant funds is contingent upon the inclusion of the anticipated Rhode Island Pre-Kindergarten Program funds in the Fiscal Year 2014 state budget. The Rhode Island Funding Formula for aid to education includes an expansion plan for the Rhode Island Pre-Kindergarten Program, increasing the state investment each year for 10 years by up to \$10 million per year.

The 2013-14 State Pre-Kindergarten Application is available at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/EarlyChildhoodEducation/Programs.aspx>

## 2013-14 State Pre-Kindergarten Application Timeline:

**Wednesday (May 8):** Questions due

**May 13:** Questions and answers posted

**May 31:** Applications due

**July 8:** Projected announcement of selected 2013-14 state pre-kindergarten programs.

### ***Educator Certification:***

#### **14. RIDE launches portal to provide public access to certification status, credentials**

RIDE is pleased to announce the launch of the Educator Verification portal. This portal - <http://ecert.ride.ri.gov/public> - replaces the Public Access section of previous certification system. This portal will allow users to search for and verify the work assignments of and status of credentials held by Rhode Island educators, administrators, and support professionals. As previously announced, in February RIDE ceased the printing of educator certificates. A brief tutorial on using the search tool is available, at:

[www.ride.ri.gov/Certification](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Certification).

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

#### **15. End-of-Year Conference *Meeting in a Box* available for principals**

The End-of-Year Conference (EOYC) *Meeting in a Box* is a new resource for principals to help them clarify expectations for

closing out the evaluation process with teachers. The EOYC *Meeting in a Box* includes a PowerPoint with embedded presenter notes that walks through how a final effectiveness rating is calculated and provides recommendations for how teachers can present their Student Learning Objective results clearly and succinctly. The PowerPoint was designed to be used after the principal has completed the online Module 2 training, and it can be used as is or adapted to better meet specific school contexts.

The End-of-Year Conference *Meeting in a Box* can be found on the RIDE website, at:

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

#### **16. Narrated PowerPoint to provide detailed overview of the Support Professionals Evaluation and Support System**

The Rhode Island Model Support Professionals Evaluation and Support System is in the final stages of development and scheduled to be gradually implemented statewide during the next school year, in preparation for full implementation during the 2014-15 school year. As part of the design process, RIDE has been convening a support professionals work group made up of eight support professionals from across the state, including, a reading specialist, school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, school nurse-teacher, speech and language pathologist, library-media specialist, and reading specialist. The support professionals work group meets bi-monthly and is charged with providing input and feedback on the design of the system.

To help educators begin to learn about the Rhode Island Model Support Professionals Evaluation and Support System, RIDE has

posted a narrated PowerPoint presentation that includes an introduction to the process for assessing support professionals' professional practice, professional foundations, and impact on student learning.

Educators can access the Rhode Island Model Support Professionals Evaluation and Support System narrated PowerPoint on the RIDE website. at:

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

#### **17. RIDE shares, posts data from the educator-evaluation surveys**

This past winter, 4,123 teachers, 373 principals, and 57 central-office administrators completed a survey on educator evaluation. RIDE has conducted a thorough analysis of the survey data, and we shared our findings with LEA leaders through a series of regional meetings over past two months. The findings from the surveys will inform ongoing improvements to the design and implementation of educator evaluations in Rhode Island, and we are extremely grateful for all of the meaningful feedback.

The results for each of the surveys conducted can now be found on the RIDE website, at:

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

***Legal:***

**18. LEAs reminded of requirements regarding school withdrawal under Compulsory Attendance Law**

This is a reminder that your LEA must adhere to the requirements of the Rhode Island Compulsory Attendance Law, RIGL 16-19-1, in making determinations about students withdrawing from school. The law requires students to be in continuous enrollment until they are 18 or unless there is an alternative learning program or plan that supports students in further academic or technical opportunities that lead to a high-school diploma or its equivalent or to another recognized credential. District superintendents and charter-public-school directors are responsible for signing a student's alternative learning plan, according to the guidance that we have provided. For additional information see the [Diploma System](#) page on our website.

It is important to note that if a student goes to a GED testing center to request testing, they will *not* be allowed to participate in GED testing until they are 18; however, if a student is participating in a GED program as part of a signed alternative program agreement, he or she may participate in GED testing once he or she has successfully completed the curriculum and practice tests.

***Educator recognition:***

**19. *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](http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/Recognition/Recognition%20DOCS/Talent%20Pool%20Recommendation%202013-14.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 **today** (May 3) to Mary Keenan, at [mary.keenan@ride.ri.gov](mailto:mary.keenan@ride.ri.gov).

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

**20. Schools urged to participate in food programs during summer months**

Please see this letter from Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Agriculture Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack:

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to urge you to take action on an important issue affecting children in your community. Childhood food insecurity remains at unacceptable levels across the country and children are most acutely at risk in the summer when they do not have access to school meals. The nation's principals have a lead role in caring for students and helping them achieve and excel during the school year. Your leadership can help to ensure that those same children do not go hungry in your community this summer. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) operates summer meal programs to address this problem, and we are requesting your help to make access to and participation in summer meals a priority.

The USDA Summer Meal Programs available to schools include the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) as well as the Seamless Summer Option in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). These programs operate as a partnership among the federal government, state agencies, and local organizations to serve free meals to children age 18 years and younger. USDA provides reimbursement for meals, state agencies administer the program, and local organizations, including schools, nonprofits, parks and recreation departments, libraries, and faith-based groups, serve the meals.

In 2012, about 2.5-million children received summer meals through the SFSP. And while an additional 1-million children received meals through the NSLP Seamless Summer program, the combined 3.5-million children served in the summer months through these two programs is far fewer than the 21-million children who receive free or reduced-price lunches through the National School Lunch Program during the school year. This means that during the summer we are not reaching the vast majority of children who rely on school meals to meet their nutritional needs. You can help change this by:

*Providing children in your community with meals at your school this summer.* Local schools are the best sites for summer feeding efforts. Children and parents are familiar with local schools and schools are known for providing nutritious food in a safe environment. Even if your school will not be offering summer programming, if it is located in a low-income area it can be a summer feeding site and fill that important meal gap for your students this summer so that they are ready to learn when they return to school in the fall.

*Asking teachers and staff in your school to share information about nearby summer meal sites, whether the sites are at your school or at other locations in your community.* Principals can find local feeding sites by calling (866) 3-HUNGRY or (877) 8-HAMBRE or visiting [www.whyhunger.org/findfood](http://www.whyhunger.org/findfood). Schools communicate regularly and effectively with the families of children in your community. You can help reach out and connect these families with summer meals before the school year

ends and continue to make a difference in the lives of your students even after the school year ends.

You can learn more about the USDA Summer Meal Programs by visiting:

[www.summerfood.usda.gov](http://www.summerfood.usda.gov).

These programs need champions. Please help us feed more children in your community when school is not in session by being a champion for summer meals. Thank you, as always, for your dedication and commitment to our children.

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

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