

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, June 6, 2014**

**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

1. RIDE to release school [classifications](#) on **Monday**
2. Ponaganset High science teacher named 2015 Rhode Island [Teacher of the Year](#)
3. Education Board issues [commendations to seniors](#) who earned proficient with distinction in mathematics, reading
4. [CCRI, RIC, URI](#) endorse proficiency-based approaches to teaching, learning, graduation
5. Scituate High School wins national award for [energy education](#)
6. Four Rhode Island teachers to participate in [leadership academies](#) on earth science
7. Narragansett High School students present video at [Dare to Dream](#) conference

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

***Educator Recognition:***

8. Districts, schools, students invited to participate in [WaterFire](#) salute to Rhode Island educators

***Educator Evaluations:***

9. RIDE posts new [Rhode Island Model](#) Evaluation and Support System guidebooks

***School Supplies:***

10. URI offers surplus [chairs](#) to LEAs

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

11. President Obama, Secretary Duncan support My Brother's Keeper initiative to address [opportunity gaps](#)
12. LEAs encouraged to work with child-welfare agencies to ensure educational stability for children in [foster care](#)
13. U.S. Department of Education issues guidance on changes to laws on protecting [student privacy](#)

---

**Action Item Calendar**

- June 20: School [Health](#) Reports due
- June 20: [Roster verification](#) to be completed
- June 23: Academic or [Behavioral-intervention final](#) data due
- July 14: [Educator-evaluation data](#) due
- July 15: [Housing aid](#) forms due
- July 18: [UCOA](#) preliminary data due
- September 30: [UCOA FY 2014](#) data due

---

## **Notes from Commissioner Gist**

### **1. RIDE to release school classifications on Monday**

On Monday (June 9) at 9 a.m. we will release to the media the complete list of 2014 school-performance classifications. We will post this list, along with school, district, and state report cards, on the RIDE on the “School & District Report Cards” [page](#) and at:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/classification-summary.](http://www.ride.ri.gov/classification-summary)

Information on the classifications is embargoed until 9 a.m. on Monday; you may receive inquiries from the media after that deadline.

### **2. Ponaganset High science teacher named 2015 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year**

On Monday, Board of Education Chair Mancuso and I joined Governor Chafee for a visit to Ponaganset High School, at which Governor Chafee announced that a team of educators has selected David Moscarelli as the 2015 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year.

David Moscarelli has been a well-known and beloved teacher to literally a generation of Ponaganset students. On graduation from the University of Rhode Island in 1972, David came to Ponaganset as a science teacher – his first job out of college. He has been in

the high school ever since – 22 years – and he loves every minute of his work!

In his Teacher of the Year application, David confesses that he began his career as a science teacher while he was high-school senior and he volunteered to help his AP bio teacher set up dissections. He wrote:

While I was frankly unmotivated by the black-and-white textbook or the old, tired handouts ... the dissections were magic to me. ... Showing my peers how to cut open a dogfish shark or moving from table to table to point out fetal pig organs, I found myself thriving in the classroom.

David is especially proud of his work establishing the proficiency-based graduation requirements at Ponaganset, in particular the digital portfolio – now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year. As one of the first schools in the country to adopt a digital portfolio of student work, Ponaganset became a national leader. Visitors came to Ponaganset from near and far to see what was going on at the school, and now many schools around the country have digital portfolio systems similar to the one in use in Ponaganset.

As the instructional technology coordinator at Ponaganset High, David is committed to:

- using technology to provide individual student instruction and support, and
- providing professional development in digital technology for his colleagues at Ponaganset.

Of course, he is also committed to his students. As he puts it:

I strongly believe that I must support the learning of every individual. While this is easier said than done, I put an extensive number of resources on my class web pages: additional examples, stretch problems, interactive tools, relevant videos, articles, and web links. ... I can confidently challenge students to meet the high expectations I have of them.

Congratulations to Superintendent Barnes and his team, as well as to the 2015 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year, David Moscarelli, who now becomes our candidate for 2015 National Teacher of the Year.

### **3. Education Board issues commendations to seniors who earned proficient with distinction in mathematics, reading**

As we enter the graduation season and begin to recognize the accomplishments of the Class of 2014, I want to remind you that, under our Secondary School regulations, you are authorized “to recognize students who achieve above the minimum achievement level required for graduation.” The Board of Education has determined that students who scored at the level of “proficient with distinction” on both the mathematics and reading state assessments shall be awarded with a Board commendation. Board Chair Mancuso has written a commendation letter for each of these students, and we are in the process of distributing to all high schools her letters as well as commendation seals that can be affixed to the diplomas. Congratulations to the 234 members of the Class of 2014 who have earned this commendation from the Board!

#### **4. CCRI, RIC, URI endorse proficiency-based approaches to teaching, learning, graduation**

The New England Secondary School Consortium, of which Rhode Island is a member, announced on Tuesday that all public institutions of higher education in New England have officially endorsed “proficiency-based approaches to teaching, learning, and graduating.” In Rhode Island, the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and the University of Rhode Island, as well as the Board of Education, have signed the Collegiate Endorsement of Proficiency-Based Education and Graduation that the consortium developed and circulated. Here is an excerpt from a news release from the consortium:

All the public institutions of higher education in Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont have joined the New England Secondary School Consortium ([newenglandssc.org](http://newenglandssc.org)) and three private institutions to endorse educational approaches that can strengthen student preparation for college, modern careers, and adult life.

Over the past decade, the movement to adopt proficiency-based approaches to teaching, learning, and graduating has gained momentum in New England, and throughout the country, as more educators, parents, business leaders, and elected officials recognize that high educational standards and strong academic preparation are essential to success in today's world.

The Consortium’s Collegiate Endorsement of Proficiency-Based Education and Graduation has now been signed by 55 colleges and universities across New England, including the

public-university and community-college systems in five states and three private institutions in Maine. The full text of the endorsement is available on the New England Secondary School Consortium website:

[newenglandssc.org/resources/endorsement](http://newenglandssc.org/resources/endorsement).

The term “proficiency-based learning” refers to systems of instruction, assessment, grading, and academic reporting that require students to demonstrate they have attained the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education. The general goal of proficiency-based learning is to ensure that students are acquiring the knowledge and skills that are deemed to be essential to success in school, higher education, and modern careers.

## **5. Scituate High School wins national award for energy education**

We received word last week from the Office of Energy Resources that Scituate High School has won a National Energy Education Development (NEED) Project annual youth award as the national Senior Level School of the Year. Shannon Donovan, a science teacher at the high school and a former Rhode Island Teacher of the Year, led the NEED project, which included events to promote local agriculture and reduce the use of fuel for transportation, a “community night” at which students educated others about the science of energy, creation of a short film and making visits to local elementary schools to discuss agriculture and fuel conservation, and renovation of an outdoor classroom, including a boardwalk. Congratulations to Shannon and to the students at Scituate High School on this award! The NEED Project also recognized the Park View Middle School, in Cranston, as the

Rhode Island “overall state school of the year” and the Calcutt Middle School, in Central Falls, as the Rhode Island “junior school of the year.”

#### **6. Four Rhode Island teachers to participate in leadership academies on earth science**

Exxon Mobil Exploration and the American Geosciences Institute have announced that four Rhode Island teachers have been selected to participate in Leadership Academies for Earth Science this summer. Lisa DelBove and Jennifer Jendzejec, both of the Tiogue Elementary School, in Coventry, will join 22 other educators in the elementary-school academy. Raina Lupien, of Samuel Slater Junior High School, in Pawtucket, and Melissa Pereira, of Burrillville Middle School, will join 26 other educators in the middle-school academy. Congratulations to all on receiving this honor and on your commitment to excellent science education!

#### **7. Narragansett High School students present video at Dare to Dream conference**

Last month, at the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Student Leadership Dare to Dream Conference, which helps students “create a culture in which peer support and influence positively impacts the health, well-being, connectedness, and future aspirations of Rhode Island’s students with special needs and disabilities,” a group of students from Narragansett High School presented this powerful video, “Spread the Word to End the Word”:

[www.youtube.com/channel/UCh5zpaNlarpkcwwojG1qq1Q](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCh5zpaNlarpkcwwojG1qq1Q)

## From RIDE

### ***Educator Recognition:***

#### **8. Districts, schools, students invited to participate in WaterFire salute to Rhode Island educators**

Our 2014-15 Educator Recognition Celebration will be held on Saturday, September 27, at a WaterFire Providence event: a “Salute to Rhode Island Educators.” The evening will be an opportunity for educators, their families, and all Rhode Islanders to celebrate and honor our Rhode Island educators. Throughout the evening there will be areas where Rhode Island educators and their students can showcase their talents (for example: bands, ensembles, choirs, stage performers, artists, poets). Districts and individual schools and students are invited to participate and to represent their schools. If schools in your LEA are interested in participating in the WaterFire Salute to Rhode Island Educators, please contact Mary Keenan, at [mary.keenan@ride.ri.gov](mailto:mary.keenan@ride.ri.gov).

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

#### **9. RIDE posts new Rhode Island Model Evaluation and Support System guidebooks**

New Rhode Island Model Evaluation and Support System guidebooks for teachers, support professionals, and building administrators are now available as PDF documents on the RIDE website. The new guidebooks represent a comprehensive update and are intended to completely replace the old guidebooks and addenda. In addition to the PDF versions, RIDE will be delivering hard copies of the guidebooks to all participating LEAs over the

summer. A representative from the West Bay Collaborative will be contacting each district and charter public school to confirm delivery information for the guidebooks.

For schools and districts implementing an alternative teacher, support professional, or building administrator evaluation system, new *Measures of Student Learning* guidebooks are also available on the RIDE website as PDF documents; hard copies will not be delivered. RIDE encourages schools and districts implementing alternative evaluation systems to combine the new *Measures of Student Learning* guidebooks with their own evaluation materials.

We are excited to share these new resources with the field and would like to thank all of the Rhode Island educators who shared feedback. We remain committed to continuous improvement to all aspects of educator evaluation, and we hope you find these new resources helpful.

To download the new guidebooks, please go the RIDE website, at:

[www.ride.ri.gov/EdEval-RIModel-GuidesForms](http://www.ride.ri.gov/EdEval-RIModel-GuidesForms).

### ***School Supplies:***

#### **10. URI offers surplus chairs to LEAs**

The University of Rhode Island has at least 150 surplus tablet arm chairs and has offered to provide these chairs to Rhode Island schools. If you are interested in picking up any of these chairs for your schools, please contact Elliot Krieger, in the Commissioner's Office, at [Elliot.krieger@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Elliot.krieger@ride.ri.gov), by noon on Friday, **June 20**. Please let him know how many chairs you would like to claim. After June 20, we will let you know how many chairs have been

set aside for your schools, and we will provide you with information regarding the necessary forms and with contact information for collecting the chairs. You will be responsible for arranging to pick up the chairs.

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

#### **11. President Obama, Secretary Duncan support My Brother's Keeper initiative to address opportunity gaps**

Please see this message from the U.S. Department of Education:

Earlier this year, President Obama launched the My Brother's Keeper initiative to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential.

Through this initiative, the Administration is joining with cities and towns, businesses, and foundations who are taking important steps to connect young people to mentoring, support networks, and the skills they need to find a good job or go to college and work their way into the middle class.

The President is calling on Americans interested in getting involved in My Brother's Keeper to sign up as long-term mentors to young people at [WH.gov/mybrotherskeeper](http://WH.gov/mybrotherskeeper). This effort will engage Americans from all walks of life to sign up to develop sustained and direct mentoring relationships that will play vital roles in the lives of young people.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently sat down with 10 Hispanic young men in Denver for an honest conversation, and to discuss My Brother's Keeper. [Read about the visit and watch a video from the conversation.](#)

[Learn more about My Brother's Keeper](#) here.

**12. LEAs encouraged to work with child-welfare agencies to ensure educational stability for children in foster care**

Please see this joint letter from the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services:

As National Foster Care Month concludes, the Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS) would like to take the opportunity to discuss the crucial role we all play in supporting the well-being of students in foster care. We remain committed to the goal that through ongoing collaboration and cross-system coordination we can and will improve the educational outcomes and well-being of these students. To this end, we are writing to remind State educational agencies (SEAs) and State child welfare agencies (SCWAs) that SCWAs and local educational agencies (LEAs) are obligated to coordinate efforts to ensure the educational stability of students in foster care under the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Fostering Connections Act).

Of the approximately 400,000 children in foster care, 260,000 are school aged (5-18). Through the Fostering Connections Act, Congress has determined that children in foster care are entitled to educational stability, and that SCWAs and LEAs play key roles in ensuring the educational stability of children in foster care. In particular, the Fostering Connections Act requires that SCWAs receiving funds under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act include a plan for ensuring the educational stability of children in foster care as part of each child's case plan. Specifically, pursuant to section 475(1)(G) of the Fostering Connections Act, the plan must include:

an assurance that each placement of the child in foster care takes into account the appropriateness of the current educational setting and the proximity to the school in which the child was enrolled at the time of placement; and

an assurance that the SCWA has coordinated with the appropriate LEA(s) to ensure the child can remain in the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of each placement, or, if remaining in that school is not in the best interests of the child, assurances from the SCWA and LEA to enroll the child immediately in a new school, with all of his or her educational records provided to the school.

ED and HHS applaud the great strides many SCWAs and LEAs have made to implement the educational stability provisions of the Fostering Connections Act. Working in collaboration, educators and child welfare professionals across the country are building strong networks of support for these vulnerable

students. In many communities, collaboration between SCWAs and LEAs is already producing significant improvements in the educational outcomes and well-being of children in foster care, while also enhancing the schools in which these children are enrolled.

In spite of the outstanding efforts of many SCWAs and LEAs, it nonetheless has come to our attention that the coordination required by the Fostering Connections Act is not always occurring. In particular, we are aware that some LEAs have concluded that the Fostering Connections Act applies only to State and tribal child-welfare agencies receiving funds under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. As reflected in the requirements described above, however, while the educational stability requirements of the Fostering Connections Act apply most directly to SCWAs, compliance is contingent on routine coordination between these agencies and LEAs. Thus, we would like to take this opportunity to emphasize that the Fostering Connections Act imposes specific obligations on both SCWAs and LEAs, and that each play a vital role in helping to ensure educational stability for children in foster care.

To help ensure effective implementation of the educational stability requirements of the Fostering Connections Act, we ask that SEAs, in conjunction with SCWAs, remind LEAs of their obligations to collaborate and coordinate with SCWAs. To assist in this process, HHS and ED will be working with SCWAs, SEAs, and LEAs to provide technical assistance regarding the various agencies' responsibilities under the Fostering Connections Act and will coordinate on joint follow-up activities to ensure that both SCWAs and LEAs meet their obligations. Without the assistance of LEAs,

SCWAs are unable to meet their obligations under the Fostering Connections Act. If coordination and the required assurances are not obtained from LEAs, funding for SCWAs may be placed in jeopardy.

To assist State and local efforts in addressing the educational needs of children in foster care, ED and HHS have developed resources and guidance designed to support educators, child welfare professionals, and others in their work to improve the educational outcomes and well-being for students in foster care. A dedicated web page, Students in Foster Care, is now active on ED's website (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/foster-care/index.html>). This web page provides information on relevant laws, guidance, and technical assistance materials related to educational support for students in foster care.

The Students in Foster Care web page also includes newly released guidance on the implementation of the Uninterrupted Scholars Act amendment to Section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. § 1232g) (commonly known as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)). The new guidance provides ED's interpretation of the statutory changes made to FERPA and how these changes affect the confidentiality provisions in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In addition, HHS offers supporting resources on the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections Web site (<http://www.nrcpfc.org/is/education-and-child-welfare.html>). This site provides technical assistance and resource materials on addressing the education needs of children involved in the child welfare system, including information on data and information sharing; State

examples of child welfare/education collaborations; resources on early childhood education; K-12 education; postsecondary education; State reports and resources; and webcasts on various topics.

It is paramount that States and localities raise awareness of efforts and progress toward improving the educational outcomes and well-being for this vulnerable student population. We urge child-welfare and education agencies to work together this summer to develop policies and procedures that ensure both educational stability and the appropriate, immediate enrollment of all school-aged children in foster care in the upcoming school year.

Should you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact JooYeun Chang, Associate Commissioner of the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, at [JooYeun.Chang@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:JooYeun.Chang@acf.hhs.gov).

Sincerely,

Deborah S. Delisle  
Assistant Secretary  
Department of Education

Mark H. Greenberg  
Acting Assistant Secretary  
Administration for Children and Families

**13. U.S. Department of Education issues guidance on changes to laws on protecting student privacy**

Please see this letter from the U.S. Department of Education Chief Privacy Officer and the Acting Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Programs

We write to notify you of the new [guidance document](#) on the Uninterrupted Scholars Act (USA) (Public Law 112-278), which was signed into law by President Barack Obama on January 14, 2013, and which amends Section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. § 1232g) (commonly known as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)). These amendments to FERPA also affect the confidentiality provisions in 20 U.S.C. § 1417(c), which apply to Parts B and C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) under the circumstances set forth in the USA and the guidance. The Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO) in the U.S. Department of Education (Department) administers FERPA, and the Department's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) administers Parts B and C of the IDEA. Accordingly, FPCO and OSERS are issuing the guidance to provide State educational agencies, local educational agencies, schools, State lead agencies, early intervention service programs and providers, State and local child welfare agencies, tribal organizations, parents and eligible students and children with disabilities, and other interested parties with information to implement the changes made by the USA to FERPA.

The USA amends FERPA in two ways. First, the USA amends FERPA to permit educational agencies and institutions to disclose a student's education records, without parental consent, to a caseworker or other representative of a State or local child welfare agency or tribal organization

authorized to access a student's case plan “when such agency or organization is legally responsible, in accordance with State or tribal law, for the care and protection of the student.” Second, the USA also allows educational agencies and institutions to disclose a student’s education records pursuant to a judicial order without requiring additional notice to the parent by the educational agency or institution in specified types of judicial proceedings in which a parent is involved. These changes to FERPA (and, consequently, to the confidentiality provisions applicable to Parts B and C of the IDEA) help in improving educational and developmental outcomes for children in foster care by providing those agencies that are legally responsible for such children access to specific information that is maintained by those agencies that provide early intervention or educational services to such children.

The U.S. Department of Education has not yet amended the FERPA regulations, codified at 34 CFR Part 99, or the IDEA regulations, codified at 34 CFR Parts 300 and 303, to incorporate the provisions of the USA. However, over the last year, the Department has collaborated with the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide information, including joint webinars and other presentations, regarding how the FERPA amendments may help child welfare agencies meet certain Federal child welfare requirements. Additionally, the Department has held conferences for, and made presentations to, the IDEA communities regarding the impact of the USA.

The guidance is a question and answer document that consists of four sections: (1) General requirements related

to the Uninterrupted Scholars Act; (2) State educational agency and the Uninterrupted Scholars Act; (3) Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Uninterrupted Scholars Act; and (4) Scenarios. The first section explains how the USA amends FERPA and its interplay with other FERPA requirements. The second section addresses re-disclosure by a State educational agency, on behalf of its local school districts, of the education records of students in foster care placement to the students' child welfare agency. The third section provides direction regarding the impact of the USA on the IDEA, specifically the confidentiality of information provisions in Part B and Part C respectively. The final section includes several scenarios to enhance the understanding and implementation of the USA.

We encourage you to continue building interagency collaboration at the local and state levels between education, early intervention, and child welfare agencies to ensure continued access to services for children in foster care. We also urge child welfare and educational agencies and institutions to work together this summer to develop policies and procedures that permit the disclosure of the education records of students in foster care placement to the students' child welfare agency in the upcoming school year. Thank you for your continued efforts to ensure successful early intervention and educational outcomes for all children.

Sincerely,

Kathleen M. Styles  
Chief Privacy Officer  
Privacy, Information, and Records Management Services

Michael K. Yudin  
Acting Assistant Secretary  
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Programs

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

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