

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, June 7, 2013**

**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

1. Commissioner thanks Board, Governor for support and for [contract](#) renewal
2. RIDE to postpone release of 2013 [School Classifications](#)
3. Schools respond to summer-reading challenge; Commissioner considering developing [summer-math challenge](#)
4. Teachers, educators receive [awards](#), recognitions

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

***Webinars and training:***

5. RIDE posts [EXCEED RTI](#) End-of-Year Processing informational webinar
6. RIDE schedules voluntary [EPSS](#) summer workshops for teachers, administrators

***Grants:***

7. RIDE to award grants to LEAs for [homeless-education programs](#)

***Assessments:***

8. RIDE posts information on this year's fixed-form assessments, test construction, and upcoming [interim assessments](#)

***Evaluations:***

9. Teacher, building administrator, central-office [surveys on educator evaluations](#) posted, due **July 1 – Action Item**

***Data submissions:***

10. Deadline for roster verifications extended to **Tuesday** (June 11)

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**Action Item Calendar**

- Monday** (June 10): [Title I](#) Local Performance Report due  
**Monday** (June 10): [Preliminary Title I](#) eRIDE report due  
**Monday** (June 10): [Preliminary homeless](#) data due  
**Tuesday** (June 11): Roster-verification deadline (see below)  
June 25: [EIS data](#) report due  
June 25: [Final Title I](#) eRIDE report due  
June 25: [Final homeless](#) data due  
June 25: Principal roster-verification deadline (see below)  
July 1: Evaluation surveys due (see [below](#))  
July 15: [Housing-aid reimbursement](#) forms due

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## Notes from Commissioner Gist

### 1. Commissioner thanks Board, Governor for support and for contract renewal

I am very grateful to the Board of Education for its confidence in me and for renewing my contract. We have taken on a lot of challenges and we have achieved many accomplishments over the last four years, and it is important to me that teachers, and those who represent them, know that I am fully aware that we have to do this work together.

I have heard the message from teachers very clearly: We need to do more to work together, we at RIDE need to make changes based on the feedback that we hear from the field, and we need to make sure that people are aware of the changes we have made based on feedback from the field – because we *have* been listening. I do believe that the teachers of Rhode Island and I are actually in agreement on most issues – we differ only in how to carry out our initiatives. We agree that teachers should be respected, we agree that teachers should not be tied up in paperwork, and we agree that all educators – including me – should be held accountable. Ultimately, what we all want is a great education system for our children.

I am open to growing, and I am grateful that the Board of Education has given me some feedback, which I will use to improve. I appreciate that Governor Chafee, Chair Mancuso, and the majority of the members of the Board are committed to

working together to transform education in Rhode Island and to serve the best interest of Rhode Island students.

## **2. RIDE to postpone release 2013 School Classifications**

Last month RIDE sent you the data on the 2013 classification of the schools in your LEA. Our plan had been to release the 2013 School Classifications on June 14. I want you to know that we have postponed the release of classifications by two weeks, to Friday, June 28. I ask you to please honor our news embargo and do not release information about your school classifications until we have released the statewide results on June 28, at 10 a.m.

Under our Accountability System, each school will be placed in one of six classifications: Commended, Leading, Typical, Warning, Focus, or Priority. The Focus and Priority Schools are subject to state intervention and must develop plans, subject to the Commissioner's approval, to turn around school performance.

These classifications will be our second round of classifications under the Accountability System that the U.S. Department of Education approved last year. Our Accountability System enables us to:

- focus on achievement gaps;
- diagnose school performance by identifying specific shortcomings and achievements at each school;
- provide each school with the specific support or intervention needed to improve student achievement and to close achievement gaps; and
- provide these schools with the ability to select interventions that respond to their context and their needs.

Our goal is to use the information we derive from our Accountability System to keep the public informed about our progress and to continue accelerating all schools toward greatness.

### **3. Schools respond to summer-reading challenge; Commissioner considering developing summer-math challenge**

I am pleased that a number of principals across the state have taken up my call for a Summer Reading Challenge, which I see as a way to inspire students to complete their goals for summer reading through fun and competition in a statewide initiative. We have been working with the School Librarians of Rhode Island and the R.I. Office of Library & Information Services to design a successful challenge. To celebrate the success of the schools in which students meet their summer-reading goals, I will skydive with the principal (or a librarian or teacher in the school), and we will invite the students to enjoy this exciting event. I am sure that this program will be a big success and will inspire students to dive into reading this summer.

Inspired by this summer-reading challenge, Pat Dulac, the East Greenwich Public Schools Mathematics Department Chair, reached out to me recently and asked if I would also issue a summer-math challenge. I think that's a great idea, and that has led to some conversations about how we might design a math challenge for next summer. I would like to work with the Rhode Island mathematics teachers and their professional association to figure out the best way to keep students engaged in mathematics over the summer months – perhaps through a problem per week, based on grade level. We also might look to summer-math

challenges that other states or local school districts have used successfully. Meanwhile, if your schools do have summer-math goals for students at various grade levels, I would encourage you and your team to consider inspiring students through a fun summer-math challenge program – and please share with me any thoughts or experiences you may have in this area.

#### **4. Teachers, educators receive awards, recognitions**

On Wednesday, the Rhode Island League of Women Voters presented its Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Awards to Soljane Quiles, of the Highlander Charter School (1<sup>st</sup> place); Edward Inman, of the Western Hills Middle School, in Cranston (2<sup>nd</sup> place); and Natalie O’Brien, of North Smithfield High School (honorable mention). This award recognizes teachers who have put into action a civics project that teaches students to be better citizens or voters. Congratulations to the award-winning teachers!

Yesterday, I went to Mount Hope High School to present our first RIDE Data Quality Award to Frank Fales, the data manager for the Bristol Warren schools. This award recognizes the commitment and effort of an outstanding individual to ensure that our educators and the public at large have access to high-quality data. Since 1996, Frank has been “the guardian” of student information systems for the district, where, in the words of one of his colleagues, he “stands a man who has dedicated his professional life to improving education in Bristol Warren and the state.” Congratulations, Frank, on this well-deserved honor!

**From RIDE**

***Webinars and training:***

## **5. RIDE posts EXCEED RTI End-of-Year Processing informational webinar**

RIDE has posted an informational webinar on year-end processing for LEAs using EXCEED RTI (Response to Intervention). Any LEA currently using EXCEED RTI must perform end-of-year processing between the last day of school and July 1. Follow the link below, and select “EXCEED End-of-Year Processing Webinar”:

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

If you have questions about the end-of-year processing for EXCEED RTI, please contact Lindsay Wepman, at 222-8254 or [lindsay.wepman@ride.ri.gov](mailto:lindsay.wepman@ride.ri.gov).

## **6. RIDE schedules voluntary EPSS summer workshops for teachers, administrators**

To help teachers, building administrators, and district configuration administrators in Rhode Island Model districts, half-day, in-person Educator Performance Support System (EPSS) workshops for teachers, building administrators, and district configuration administrators are being offered 14 times between July 8 and August 20, at the Pawtucket Administration Building, 286 Main St. The workshops are designed to prepare participants to use the EPSS effectively and will include hands-on practice in the system. The workshops will be relevant for both new and existing users in LEAs implementing the Rhode Island Model. Non-Rhode Island Model districts are encouraged to contact RIDE to schedule model-specific EPSS trainings.

A two-page *EPSS Summer 2013 Training Flyer*, which includes registration links, is available on the RIDE website. at:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Performance-and-Support-System-EPSS/EPSS/EPSS\\_Summer\\_2013\\_Training\\_Flyer.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Performance-and-Support-System-EPSS/EPSS/EPSS_Summer_2013_Training_Flyer.pdf)

**Grants:**

**7. RIDE to award grants to LEAs for homeless-education programs**

The purpose of 2013-14 McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Grant Programs Request for Proposals is to solicit applications from LEAs for the development and implementation or continuation of programs to provide supplementary educational and related services to homeless children and youth.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act authorizes the RIDE to award grants to promote the enrollment, attendance, and success of homeless children and youth in school. All Rhode Island LEAs with homeless students enrolled are eligible to apply. This program is 100 percent federally funded. Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis. The amount of individual grants awarded will be contingent upon the need of the LEA for assistance and the quality of the application submitted. RIDE will award McKinney-Vento sub-grants on a competitive basis, using the following criteria:

- the number of children and youth experiencing homelessness (a priority criterion);
- educational needs and support service needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness;

- the quality of the proposed program, including how the proposed use of funds will facilitate identification, enrollment, retention, and educational success of children and youth experiencing homelessness; and
- the extent to which the program coordinates with local services providers and area family homeless shelters.

The 2013-14 McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Grant Programs RFP is being sent directly to all LEA homeless liaisons today (June 7).

The total amount of funds targeted for homeless education programs in Rhode Island for 2013-14 is approximately \$218,662. Applicants may apply for one grant award with a *maximum* funding request of \$44,000. The deadline for proposals is **July 13**.

***Assessments:***

**8. RIDE posts information on this year's fixed-form assessments, test construction, and upcoming interim assessments**

This year, 19 LEAs and 69 schools participated in the Rhode Island Fixed-Form Assessments in Mathematics and English Language Arts in grades 3 through 11. The majority of these tests were taken online, with 92 percent administered online and the remaining 8 percent on paper. For more information on the fixed-form assessments and test-construction tool development and participation for the current school year and for a preview of the system enhancements for the upcoming year, please see the Interim Assessments Year in Review and 2013-2014 Preview, at:

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

If you have any questions on this matter, please contact Jessica Brown ([jessica.brown@ride.ri.gov](mailto:jessica.brown@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8253).

***Evaluations:***

**9. Teacher, building administrator, central-office surveys on educator evaluations posted, due July 1 – *Action Item***

RIDE has developed online surveys for teachers, building administrators, and central-office administrators to help collect feedback on the new teacher and building-administrator evaluation and support systems being implemented in Rhode Island. This is a follow-up to the mid-year survey that was distributed in January. Feedback collected through the surveys will help RIDE identify the successes and challenges of implementation and will guide continued improvements. All survey responses are confidential and will be shared only in the aggregate.

The deadline for completing the surveys is Monday, **July 1**, and we are asking you to send the corresponding survey links to your teachers, building administrators, and central-office administrators. The surveys are evaluation-system agnostic and they are appropriate for all Rhode Island teachers, building administrators, and central-office administrators.

The surveys are available at:

Teacher Survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2013EOYTeacher>

Building Administrator Survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2013EOYBA>

Central Office Administrator Survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2013EOYCentral>

***Data submissions:***

**10. Deadline for roster verifications extended to Tuesday (June 11)**

All educators who are contributing educators in English language arts (ELA) or mathematics should have verified their rosters during this past week. For educators who did not yet verify their rosters, the deadline has been extended through **Tuesday** (June 11). The principal period (stage 3) of roster verification will now begin on Wednesday (June 12) and continue through Tuesday, June 25.

To review and sign off on rosters, users must log in at RIDEmap (<https://ridemap.ride.ri.gov>) and click on the EPSS link. Please make sure that the teachers in your LEA are aware that they must verify their rosters if they are an ELA or math contributing educator to students in grades 3 through 7. Questions regarding roster verification can be submitted by entering a helpdesk ticket, at:

<https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

Below are date reminders as well as links to user guides and a teacher video:

Stage 2 -Teacher Roster Verification and Sign-Off: through Tuesday (June 11)

Stage 3 - Principal Schoolwide Roster Review and Sign-off:  
Wednesday, June 12 through Tuesday, June 25

Roster Verification User Guide for Principals

[http://www.eride.ri.gov/RosterVerification/UserGuide\\_Principal.pdf](http://www.eride.ri.gov/RosterVerification/UserGuide_Principal.pdf)

Roster Verification User Guide for Teachers

[http://www.eride.ri.gov/RosterVerification/UserGuide\\_Teacher.pdf](http://www.eride.ri.gov/RosterVerification/UserGuide_Teacher.pdf)

Roster Verification Teacher Video

[https://www.eride.ri.gov/RosterVerification/TeacherTrainingVideo/RV\\_Teachers.html](https://www.eride.ri.gov/RosterVerification/TeacherTrainingVideo/RV_Teachers.html)

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

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