

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, June 28, 2013

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7. RIDE posts new [evaluation guidebooks](#) for support professionals and for non-Rhode Island Model LEAs

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8. [ASCD Northeast](#) announces annual conference to be held in December

Action Item Calendar

- Monday** (July 1): [Evaluation](#) surveys due
July 15: [Housing-aid reimbursement](#) forms due
July 15: [Restraint data](#) due
July 19: [Upload reports](#) (below) for submission
July 29: Submit [enrollment, attendance, suspension, TCS](#) reports
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Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. Fiscal 2014 budget maintains support for education

Despite the challenges of another year of difficult economic times in our state, the members of the General Assembly have once again shown their support for public education by approving a Fiscal Year 2014 budget that increases aid to education. The best news of all is that the approved budget accepts Governor Chafee's recommendation of full funding for Year 3 of the Funding formula for state aid to LEAs – including an additional \$2.4 million above the Governor's initial request to meet aid amounts identified by our latest data update (the result of increases in number of economically disadvantaged students). We will continue to gather

information about the budget and about bills before the General Assembly as the members wind up their session.

We have posted on our website our current calculations of state aid for each LEA, at:

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

2. Commissioner encourages review of ACLU report on race and school suspensions

As you may know, earlier this month the American Civil Liberties Union of Rhode Island issued a report, *Blacklisted*, on racial bias in school suspensions in Rhode Island. I want to assure you that we at the R.I. Department of Education are committed to helping our school leaders ensure that schools in Rhode Island are safe places for teaching and learning. I am concerned about the large number student suspensions in our schools, and in particular I am concerned about the observation in the report of disparities by race regarding student suspensions and disciplinary actions. Though this issue is not unique to Rhode Island – here is a link to a [study](#) from the University of Indiana on the issue of race and school discipline – we all need to be thinking about the entire issue of suspension from school, which in general is an unproductive way to deal with many discipline issues. Our responsibility as educators is to ensure that our schools are great places for teaching and learning and to explore how we can best improve school climate – including how we handle situations when students are struggling with behavior issues.

We willingly provided the ACLU with the data we collect on discipline and suspensions, and I appreciate that the ACLU has

analyzed the data. I plan to discuss with my team and with school leaders across the state any steps we might take to ensure equity and fairness regarding school discipline, and I certainly encourage you read the [report](#) and consider whether there are any actions you can take in your LEA to further ensure that all students receive equitable treatment and appropriate support.

3. Study cites Rhode Island charter public schools for excellence in student achievement

Last week I was thrilled to see that the 2013 National Charter School Study from the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO), based at Stanford University, found that Rhode Island charter public schools are among the highest-performing charters in the country – topping charters in all 25 states included in the study as measured by student growth (grade 4) in both mathematics and reading. This is good news, in that our charter public schools are meant to be vanguards that are leading the way toward greatness across the state. Many of our charters are truly models of excellence – and we have model schools in nearly every Rhode Island district as well. Our goal, of course, is to have excellence across the entire system of public education, and I believe we are well on our way toward achieving that goal. Congratulations to our high-performing charter-school students, teachers, families members, and school leaders on this recognition. You can read the executive summary of the study from CREDO [here](#), and you can access the full study [here](#).

4. Rhode Island charter leader receives award

In other good news this week about our charter public schools, we have learned that on Wednesday the Walton Family Foundation has named Mike Magee, of the Rhode Island Mayoral

Academies, as one of its 2013 Education Reformers to Watch. This award recognizes individuals who are “successfully empowering parents with the choice of high-quality, publicly funded educational options.” Mike will receive a \$10,000 grant, which he may direct to a nonprofit, education-reform organization of his choice. Congratulations, Mike, on your work toward transforming education in Rhode Island.

5. RIDE to release 2013 School Classifications on Tuesday

This is just a reminder that on **Tuesday** (July 2) at 10 a.m. RIDE will issue a news release announcing the 2013 School Classifications. For several weeks, you have had in hand the classification information on your schools, and I appreciate your honoring the embargo on public release of this information until Tuesday at 10 a.m.

From RIDE

Instruction:

6. At educators’ request, RIDE to facilitate standards-based grading advisory committee

In response to requests from Rhode Island educators asking for support on grading practices aligned to standards, RIDE is seeking to recruit interested teachers, principals, and LEA administrators to participate in the development of guidance and resources that will assist educators who are interested in implementing standards-based grading. This work is an extension of the Comprehensive Assessment System document that LEAs are using to align their local assessment and grading practices. Participants Interested participants will collaborate with RIDE specialists on an

advisory committee to share best practices and to provide feedback toward creating recordings, documents, presentations, and professional-development opportunities that reflect evidence-based research on best practices and to provide guidance on setting and implementing district- and school-level grading policies. The committee will meet once during the summer and on an as-needed basis throughout the coming school year.

The application is available at:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Instruction-and-Assessment-World-Class-Standards/Instructional-Resources/2013_Standards-Based_Grading_Committee_Application.pdf

Please contact Eric Park, at eric.park@ride.ri.gov or 222-4685, if you have any questions about this advisory committee.

Educator Evaluations:

7. RIDE posts new evaluation guidebooks for support professionals and for non-Rhode Island Model LEAs

Edition I of the *Rhode Island Model Support Professionals Evaluation and Support System Guidebook* is now available on the RIDE website. Thank you to all of the Rhode Island educators who helped shape this new system, including the support professionals work group, and to all of the educators who field-tested the system this spring. The Guidebook provides a comprehensive description of the new system and should be shared with support professionals and their evaluators in preparation for gradual implementation of the evaluations of the support professionals.

RIDE will also deliver hard copies of the Guidebook to participating LEAs over the summer, and an online training module will be available on the RIDE website next month.

In addition to the new support professionals guidebook, RIDE has posted a revised version of the *Measures of Student Learning Guidebook* for schools and districts implementing an alternative teacher evaluation and support system (i.e., Innovation Consortium districts, Coventry, The Learning Community, and Achievement First). The revised *Measures of Student Learning Guidebook* should be shared with all teachers and evaluators.

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

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

From other organizations

8. ASCD Northeast announces annual conference to be held in December

The Northeast ASCD Affiliates ask everyone to save the dates December 5 – 7 for the 17th Annual Conference: Learning and Leading: Excellence Matters. The conference will take place at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel. Speakers will include Tom Daccord, Laura Lipton, and Bea McGarvey, and conference will cover a range of topics, including Infusing Higher Order Thinking in the Common Core, Rethinking Teacher Evaluation, Teaching with Technology, Teaching Thinking Skills, Creating Innovators, and Schools of the Future. For more information, see:

<http://ascd.ca/ascd/on/northeast-ascd-affiliate-conference/>

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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