

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, July 10, 2015**

Notes from Acting Commissioner Abbott

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Action Item Calendar

Today (July 10): [Educator-evaluation](#) reports due
Wednesday (July 15): [Special Education](#) Performance due
Wednesday (July 15): [Housing Aid](#) forms due
Wednesday (July 15): [Title IX](#) coordinators names
July 17: [Physical-restraint](#) reports due
July 17: [End-of-year](#) reports due
July 17: [Attendance](#), Discipline, TCS due
July 20: [Perkins](#) Accountability opens
July 31: Signed off [end-of-year](#) reports due

Notes from Acting Commissioner Abbott

1. Governor Raimondo selects N.Y. educator as next Commissioner

We at RIDE are very excited that Governor Raimondo has chosen Dr. Ken Wagner, currently the Senior Deputy Commissioner for Education Policy at the New York State Department of Education, to serve as our next Education Commissioner. The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education and the Board of Education are scheduled to vote on his nomination on Monday.

Several of us on the RIDE team have had the opportunity to meet with Ken, and we are confident that he will be a leader who is inclusive and who works in close partnership with all friends of education. He is eager to meet with you and your professional organization, and I am sure his outreach to you will be one of his top priorities. Ken has written a message of introduction, which we have posted on our website. Here's what Ken wrote:

Dear Rhode Island Students, Parents, and Educators:

On Wednesday, July 8th, Governor Gina Raimondo publicly announced my nomination for Rhode Island Commissioner of Education. The Board of Education will vote on it next week.

In the meantime, I just want to say how honored I am to be nominated and how excited I am for the opportunity to serve you and all of the people of Rhode Island.

I've been in the education field since the age of 18, when I was elected to the school board of my hometown in New York. I have served in numerous different roles at the school, district and state levels – from school psychologist to principal to my current role as the senior deputy commissioner in New York.

As a school psychologist, I am trained to listen and I look forward to putting that training to work on behalf of the people of Rhode Island by meeting and listening to teachers, families, principals, students and other key stakeholders.

I am especially encouraged to join this new team in Rhode Island. This administration understands that education is an investment in the future and is deeply committed to building the needed partnerships to be successful.

I'm deeply optimistic that our collective efforts will pay off for the children and families of Rhode Island and I look forward to the opportunity to serve.

Here's a link to a brief introduction to Ken Wagner:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/AdditionalInformation/News/ViewArticle/tabid/408/ArticleId/249/Dr-Ken-Wagner-A-Brief-Introduction.aspx>

2. U.S. Department of Education renews Rhode Island flexibility under Elementary and Secondary Education Act

I am pleased to let you know that yesterday the U.S. Department of Education approved our request for a three-year renewal of our flexibility under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This approval will allow us to continue to implement our current system of school accountability, classifications, and transformation.

As you are aware, using approved flexibility Rhode Island has implemented an accountability system through which we classify schools based on seven criteria: the percent of students at proficiency, the percent of students at distinction, participation on state assessments, progress toward closing achievement gaps, progress toward reaching 2017 targets, student growth (elementary and middle schools), overall school improvement (high schools), and graduation rates (high schools).

Under renewed flexibility, we will continue to use this accountability system. For the just-completed school year (2014-15), schools will retain their previous classification – except that we will re-evaluate schools in our highest classification, Commended Schools, based on their participation rates on state assessments and to ensure that no Commended School has significant achievement gaps. We also must assure the U.S. Department of Education that our lowest-achieving schools (Focus and Priority Schools)

that have not met our exit criteria for leaving intervention status “are prepared to implement more rigorous interventions” by the fall of 2016 or 2017 (depending on when they entered intervention status).

You may also recall that we have proposed to the U.S. Department of Education some changes to our criteria for determining school classifications, including changes to the current accountability system:

Proficiency: Schools would receive various amounts of credit for the percentage of students at each level of achievement, with additional credit for improving achievement levels of students facing additional learning challenges (students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students).

Closing Achievement Gaps: Schools would receive credit for closing the achievement gap between the lowest-achieving quartile in the school and the top 50 percent of student achievement in the school (or, if the school achievement as a whole is especially low, the top 50 percent of achievement in Rhode Island).

Growth: RIDE would hold schools accountable for the number of students with a growth percentile lower than 35 (i.e., 66 percent of students or more have made greater growth over the past academic year). Students below the 35th growth percentile are those most likely to lose academic ground over time.

These proposed changes are on hold until after we receive the 2015 PARCC assessment results. After analysis of the results, we may elect to resubmit to the U.S. Department of

Education a request for these or other changes in how we classify schools.

You can read our full approved flexibility request here:

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/esea-flexibility/flex-renewal/rirenewalreq2015.pdf>.

From RIDE

Assessments:

3. RIDE announces PARCC testing schedules for coming school year

During the coming school year, we will be transitioning to a new PARCC test design. This new design will be implemented beginning with the administration of the spring 2016 assessments.

As we previously announced, the spring 2016 PARCC assessments will be administered during a single testing window comprising 30 school days for computer-based testing and 15 school days for paper-based testing. In order to determine the PARCC testing window for Rhode Island, we conducted a survey of superintendents. Responses from the 30 of you who completed the survey indicated there was no clear consensus. As a result, we will offer some flexibility in an effort to meet the specific needs of all LEAs. For the spring 2016 testing window, you must choose one of the two options outlined below. *Note:* In September we will share a process for each LEA to confirm its respective testing window for each mode (e.g., computer or paper), as applicable.

Spring 2016 PARCC Administration:

Option 1:

- Computer-based testing (CBT): March 28 through May 13 (adjusted for 5 days of April vacation). Preliminary results will be returned to LEAs by June 15.
- Paper-based testing (PBT): April 4 through 29. Preliminary results depend on how quickly materials are returned.

Option 2:

- CBT: April 11 through May 27 (adjusted for 5 days of April vacation). Preliminary results will be returned to the LEAs by July 30.
- PBT: May 2 through 20. Preliminary results depend on how quickly materials are returned.

Fall Block PARCC administration for the coming school year:

The 2015 Fall Block tests will maintain the same design as the 2014 Fall Block administration (i.e., Performance-Based Assessment and End of Year Assessment); however, 2016 (and beyond) Fall Block tests will mirror the spring 2016 assessments.

Performance-Based Assessment:

- CBT: November 30, 2015 through December 18, 2015
- PBT: December 7 through 18, 2015

End-of-Year Assessment:

- CBT: January 11 through 29
- PBT: January 18 through 29

Multiple Pathways:

4. RIDE posts information on dual enrollment policies, data, reporting requirements

Governor Raimondo's Prepare RI Dual Enrollment fund, which was part of her Fiscal Year 2016 budget request, was approved by the General Assembly and signed into law. That means the cost of tuition and fees for dual- and concurrent-enrollment courses for all qualified students will be covered. Please see our dual enrollment web page, ride.ri.gov/dualenrollment, for more information, FAQs, an updated sample letter, and updated information sheets for students and families.

The Dual Enrollment regulations were approved by the Board of Education at the end of April. You are responsible for adopting local dual-enrollment policies (by June 30) and for following through with data collection and reporting, beginning this coming school year. Our web page is available to support you in meeting the requirements of statute and regulations; please reach out to Stephen Osborn if you have any questions about dual enrollment, at stephen.osborn@ride.ri.gov or 222-8485.

From other organizations

5. Rhode Island School Counselors Association seeking nominations for Counselor of the Year

Please see this message from the Rhode Island School Counselors Association:

The Rhode Island School Counselors Association is now inviting school counselors, administrators, teachers, and parents to nominate a 2016 Rhode Island School Counselor of the Year. All nominations are due on Friday, **September 4**. The winner will be announced at the Association's Annual Conference, on Monday, October 26. State-level State Counselors of the Year are eligible for national recognition. This past January, the National School Counselor of the Year was recognized at a White House ceremony. Nominations for the Rhode Island School Counselor of the Year, Rhode Island Administrators of the Year, and Rhode Island Advocate of the Year are available here:

www.risca.schoolcounselorawards.org.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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