

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, July 12, 2013

Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. [Reports](#) discuss Rhode Island education in national context
2. [Summer Food Service](#) sites expand, thanks to support from school departments, other partners
3. Correction to list of Skills USA [career-technical](#) student awards

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

Assessments:

4. [PARCC](#) provides updates on non-summative assessment tools
5. RIDE develops guidance document on eligibility for [Alternate Assessment](#)

Finance and budget:

6. RIDE to provide support for planning Year 4 [Race to the Top](#) budgets

Training and webinars:

7. Space available in RIDE course for LEAs on construction, administration, scoring of [interim assessments](#)

Technology:

8. [Wireless Classroom Initiative](#) site surveys and proposals due on **August 1 – Action Item**

Educator Evaluations:

9. 2012-13 [evaluation data](#) is due **Monday** (July 15) – **Reminder**
10. Openings remain for [EPSS](#) summer workshops for teachers, administrators

Data:

11. Deadline to submit [personnel-assignment data](#) is **Monday – Action Item**

Action Item Calendar

- Monday** (July 15): [Housing-aid reimbursement](#) forms due
Monday (July 15): [Restraint data](#) due
Monday (July 15): [Evaluation data](#) due (see below)
Monday (July 15): [Personnel-assignment data](#) due (see below)
July 19: [Upload reports](#) (below) for submission
July 29: Submit [enrollment, attendance, suspension, TCS](#) reports
August 1: [Wireless Classroom Initiative](#) surveys due (see below)
-

Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. Reports discuss Rhode Island education in national context

Several reports about education and childhood well-being have come our way over the past week or so, and I thought you would be interested to taking a look at these documents.

The Kids Count 2013 Data Book is the annual state-by-state report from this organization on the well-being of children, ranking the states in a number of categories regarding services available to children. The data book ranks Rhode Island 26th overall, 31st in Economic Well-Being, 24th in Education. We certainly hope to move well above the national average in future years. New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts were the top three states in overall rankings.

The Education Trust issued a report, “Uneven at the Start,” that assesses proficiency levels and progress for each states based on results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or The Nation’s Report Card. Rhode Island notes that Rhode Island has achieved a “relatively strong track record for students overall,” showing consistent above-average performance and improvement; however, the report also notes that we have a much weaker track record than other states regarding the achievement levels for our Latino students.

Finally, the Council for Exceptional Students issued a position paper on the evaluation of special-education teachers. Although the report does not endorse any single evaluation model, it’s

notable that the report uses the Rhode Island Model evaluations as its first major example of significant work going on across the country on the evaluation of special-education teachers.

Here are links to the three reports:

2013 Data Book: State Trends in Child Well-Being

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/files/2013KIDSCOUNTDataBook.pdf>

Uneven at the Start: Differences in State Track Records Foreshadow Challenges and Opportunities for Common Core

http://www.edtrust.org/dc/publication/uneven_start

Position on Special Education Teacher Evaluation

http://www.cec.sped.org/~media/Files/Policy/CEC%20Professional%20Policies%20and%20Positions/Position_on_Special_Education_Teacher_Evaluation_Background.pdf

2. Summer Food Service sites expand, thanks to support from school departments, other partners

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services, Kevin Concannon, is on a two-day visit to Rhode Island, during which he is spending some time at a number of our Summer Food Service Program sites. I was with Under Secretary Concannon yesterday while he was visiting the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. Education Board Member Michael Bernstein joined me on this visit.

In Rhode Island, we know how important it is to keep children healthy, well rested, and well nourished – not just during the school year but throughout the year. As a result, we have made a

commitment to increasing participation in the Summer Food Service Program this summer. I told Under Secretary Concannon that a number of our school departments have stepped up to add new meal sites this summer and to serve more children in their communities. As a result of your efforts and of the work of our many partners, including the Food Bank, the New England Dairy Council, the Providence Mayor's Office, the Salvation Army, Sodexo, the United Way of Rhode Island, and the University of Rhode Island, we have 21 sponsor agencies and we have surpassed our goal of increasing the Summer Food Service sites in our state this year by more than 10 percent. Rhode Island is truly a living example of public and nonprofit agencies working together in the best interest of the children of our state.

3. Correction to list of Skills USA career-technical student awards

Andrew Vanner, one of the students I listed last week among those who scored in the top ten in his competition at the Skills USA National Leadership and Skills Conference, is a student at the East Providence Area Career and Technical Center. I identified his school incorrectly in last week's Field Memo.

From RIDE

Assessments

4. PARCC provides updates on non-summative assessment tools

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) has released information about the non-summative components of the PARCC assessment system. These

components are additional tools and resources for students, teachers, and parents to support student mastery of the knowledge and skills found in the Common Core State Standards, which the PARCC assessment will measure.

The four components are:

- The **Mid-Year Assessment**, which will provide students and educators the ability to work with constructed response and machine-scorable items for formative purposes (students' scores will not be part of their summative PARCC score). This optional assessment, accompanied by tools to support teachers in local scoring efforts, will be available for states and districts to use in the 2014-15 school year. You can find more information on this assessment [here](#).
- The **K-1 Formative Assessment Tools and the Diagnostic Assessments in Grades 2-8**, which are being developed to provide teachers with instructionally useful information about how well students have learned, or how prepared they are to learn, the key content and skills in the Common Core State Standards. The Invitation to Negotiate for both was released through the Florida Department of Education http://myflorida.com/apps/vbs/vbs_ad.view_ad?advertisement_key_num=107800. These tools will be field tested in the 2014-15 school year. States and LEAs will have the option to use the assessments in the 2015-16 school year. You can find more information on the formative and diagnostic assessments [here](#).
- The **Speaking and Listening Assessments**, which are an important piece to the assessment system and unique to PARCC. Because the ability for students to proficiently engage in speaking and listening activities is crucial for their long-term opportunities, PARCC is developing this

assessment to measure the extent to which students demonstrate an understanding of complex information, ideas, and evidence presented orally and to measure their ability to present complex information, ideas, and evidence effectively in speech. The procurement for this component will be released in summer 2013. You can find more information on the Speaking and Listening Assessments [here](#).

- The **Assessment Professional Development (PD) Modules**, which will be designed to support teachers, school leaders, and school-site testing coordinators as they transition to the PARCC assessments. The five different PD Modules will initially be ready for teachers and school administrators in June 2014, with additional updates to follow. You can find more information on these modules [here](#).

For updates to all of this work on PARCC, visit:

<http://www.parcconline.org/classroom>.

5. RIDE develops guidance document on eligibility for Alternate Assessment

RIDE has developed a guidance document to assist in decision-making regarding student eligibility for the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment (RIAA). The *2013-2014 Guidance on Eligibility for the RIAA* explains the criteria students must meet in order to participate in the RIAA, provides lists of possible evidence to inform these determinations, and includes student profiles to further illustrate how the criteria should be applied. To download this document, go to:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/Assessment/RhodeIslandAlternateAssessmentRIAA.aspx>

and click on the “Resources” tab.

Finance and budget:

6. RIDE to provide support for planning Year 4 Race to the Top budgets

We have all worked incredibly hard to implement our Race to the Top projects and programs across our state. As we approach Year 4 of the grant, we want to ensure that you have a solid budget plan for spending all of your funds in the final year of the grant. Our Race to the Top finance team has tracked current spending by LEAs. A majority of LEAs have a significant amount of funds to be spent by the end of the grant period, which is September 24, 2014. At your request, we will be providing additional support to LEAs in budget planning. We want to be sure that you have the flexibility you need to extend the work completed over the last three years within your LEA.

The team at RIDE prepared a set of one-page overviews of the major projects that we will put into action in Year 4. We posted these one-page overviews on the RIDE website [here](#), and we distributed the overviews to all participants at the last quarterly Collaborative Learning for Outcomes meeting. These one-pagers provide guidance on how you can use your funds.

Members of the RIDE Race to the Top team will contact you, either by telephone or e-mail, to schedule a follow-up call on the your LEA plan for spending in Year 4. We encourage you to have your business manager and Race to the Top lead on this call.

Team members will work with you to determine whether additional clarity is needed to plan out your budget, to answer any specific questions you may have, and to determine whether a meeting may be needed by your team to support budget planning. We will be ready to offer Race to the Top budget clinics starting the week of July 22 and running through August 30. If you and your team would like to schedule a budget clinic during this timeframe, contact the RIDE Finance Director, Mark Dunham: Mark.Dunham@ride.ri.gov .

If you have an immediate concern about your budget and the amount of funds spent, please contact David Alves, our Race to the Top Finance Office, at David.Alves@ride.ri.gov or 222-4271. If you have a particular question on a project, contact the leads identified on the one-pager; for general questions about our Race to the Top initiative, contact Mary-Beth Fafard, our Race to the Top Coordinator, at MaryBeth.Fafard@ride.ri.gov 222-8956.

Training and webinars:

7. Space available in RIDE course for LEAs on construction, administration, scoring of interim assessments

Space is available for two more LEA teams in the Assessment & Test Construction course that RIDE will offer this fall. The course is designed to help teams of two (consisting of and LEA leader and a content specialist) deepen their assessment literacy as they go through the process of creating, administering, and scoring an assessment using the Test Construction Tool in the Interim Assessment System. Priority will be given to teams that want to focus on Algebra I, Grade 6 mathematics, or Grades 5 and 6 English language arts. For more information or to apply to join the

course, please contact laura.kacewicz@ride.ri.gov by Friday, **July 19**.

Technology:

8. Wireless Classroom Initiative site surveys and proposals due on August 1 – Action Item

All LEAs are reminded of the **August 1** deadline for Wireless Classroom Initiative (WCI) site surveys and proposals to be received by RIDE. We encourage you to be in close contact with your vendors to ensure compliance with this deadline. More detail will be provided to IT Directors in an upcoming e-mail.

RIDE is now receiving WCI vendor proposals. It is critical that you use the online [WCI Vendor Engagement Form](#), accessible on the WCI page of the RIDE website, to keep us informed of the date of first contact, scheduled site visits, and other key vendor information so that we can keep the proposal process on track. Detailed instructions for next steps for LEAs and vendors are posted on the WCI page of the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/FundingFinance/SchoolDistrictFinancialData/WirelessClassroomInitiative>.

A reminder – Please email any questions you have on the Wireless Classroom Initiative to: wirelessinitiative@ride.ri.gov.

Educator Evaluations:

**9. 2012-13 evaluation data is due Monday (July 15) -
Reminder**

The deadline for submitting the required evaluation data for the 2012-13 school year is **Monday** (July 15). To help school and district leaders submit the required educator-evaluation data through the Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS), a number of resources are available on the RIDE website, including detailed End-of-Year How-to Guides and directions. Educators can access the educator-evaluation data closeout resources on the RIDE website, at:

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

10. Openings remain for EPSS summer workshops for teachers, administrators

Half-day, in-person Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS) workshops for teachers, building administrators, and district configuration administrators are being offered 14 times between through 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

Data:

**11. Deadline to submit personnel-assignment data is
Monday – *Action Item***

RIDE reminds all LEAs that the last date to submit the data in the Personnel Assignment Submission (PAS) in eRIDE is **Monday** (July 15). Please be sure to complete the submission by clicking the “Signoff and Submit Assignment Data” link in the PAS module. If you have questions about the data collection, please e-mail pdcc@ride.ri.gov

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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