

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, October 18, 2013**

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Action Item Calendar

October 25: Technology assessment contacts due (see [below](#))
November 1: School committees review safety plans (see [below](#))

Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. Educators invited to Common Core conference on October 26

It has been truly inspiring over the past several years to meet regularly with a group of highly motivated and dedicated educators that has dubbed itself “Educators in Action.” This group is truly living up to its name this month, as the team has initiated and organized our first Common Core networking conference: “Cut to the Core.” The conference will take place on Saturday, **October 26**, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the New England Institute of Technology, 1 New England Tech Blvd., East Greenwich. The conference will include many hands-on workshops and interactive discussions, led by educators for educators, on a wide range of topics related to our ongoing transition to the Common Core State Standards, including sessions on dual language, technology, fine arts, civics, and science, as well as English language arts and

mathematics at each school level. There will also be plenty of time for networking. I'm looking forward to joining with many Rhode Island educators at this important conference. All educators at all grade levels are invited to this free event. More information is available on the RIDE website, [here](#), including a [flyer](#) and a [registration](#) page.

2. NECAP administration proceeding smoothly statewide

As we prepare to enter the third and final week of the October NECAP testing window, reports to date are that the administration of the NECAP assessments is proceeding smoothly, including the retake of the assessments for high-school seniors who have not yet met this component of the Diploma System. We will have the NECAP results available early next year, and all of us remain hopeful that a significant number of students statewide have benefitted from the additional support you and your team have provided and that these students will show improvement, particularly in mathematics. At RIDE, we will be developing reports showing which students participated in the mathematics-support opportunities and which students showed improvement. As you may know, the Board of Education has established an Ad Hoc Committee to consider issues relating to the Rhode Island Diploma System, and we will of course present our reports to this committee, which Vice-Chair Patrick A. Guida will head.

In addition, we will continue to communicate with you regarding guidance on other approved assessments through which students can satisfy this component of the Diploma System and on the waiver process for those students for whom assessments are an inadequate or inaccurate measure of achievement. I am pleased with how well the test administration is proceeding this month to date. Please keep me informed if any issues regarding

assessments arise in your schools, and I will be sure to share information with you on assessment results once we receive reports and validate the data.

From RIDE

Assessments:

3. Technology assessment to be administered to 8th graders; RIDE requests LEA contact names by October 25 – *Action Item*

Students must take the 21st Century Skills Assessment in technology once during their 8th-grade year. The majority of LEAs administer the assessment during a computer class, minimizing the impact on the rest of the school population. Other arrangements are made when a formal computer class is not available to students. With that understanding and to accommodate for unique situations, there are two testing windows, one in December to accommodate semester-one students and another one in May to accommodate semester-two students. Schools that have a year-long computer class will assess their students in May.

The testing windows for the current school year are:

- November 25 through December 24, 2013
- April 28 through May 23, 2014

Training sessions are offered in the fall. Webinars are available throughout the year. Training sessions are designed for those who administer, proctor, or coordinate the 21st Century Skills Assessment in technology for their 8th-grade students. During the

training, participants will learn details about the assessment, proctoring, setting up classes for administering the assessment, and reporting. Attendees are encouraged to bring class lists to the training session.

[Register here](#) to attend a training session on Wednesday, November 6. Both the morning and afternoon sessions will be held at the [Lippitt School in Warwick](#).

Send [Holly Walsh](#) the name and e-mail address of your school's 8th-grade 21st Century Skills Assessment in technology contact person no later than Friday, **October 25**. This information is critical to ensure that your school receives the necessary testing information.

Further information is available on the RIDE website at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/TechnologyAssessment>

Technology:

4. RIDE technology conference successful, course on digital learning open for registration

On Saturday, October 5, more than 700 teachers, administrators, and education professionals came together for the second Rhode Island Innovation Powered by Technology Conference, at the Rhode Island Convention Center. It was an exciting day of discovery and learning for all involved, during which we were able to hear from leading national thinkers and from many Rhode Island educators about how technology is changing education.

We encourage you to take a moment to read some of the tweets

and to view some of the pictures from the day on the [RIDE web site](#).

We are delighted that several Rhode Island educators are already participating in the Project 24 Digital Learning Transition MOOC-Ed (Massive Open Online Course for Educators) course that Governor Bob Wise spoke of at the conference. It is not too late to participate in this free professional development opportunity designed to help educators understand the potential of digital learning in K-12 schools, assess progress and set future goals for your school or district, and plan to achieve those goals. [Register for the MOOC-Ed here](#). The course will run until November 24. If you have questions about MOOC-Ed, please visit the [FAQ page](#).

There is a place in the MOOC-Ed Discussion Forum that is specifically designated for educators in our state to have a conversation. You will have access to this discussion forum upon registering. Holly Walsh will be facilitating a statewide discussion encouraging Rhode Island colleagues to add specific strands or questions to be discussed.

School Safety:

5. Superintendents must confirm that school committees have reviewed safety plans by November 1 – *Action Item*

In accordance with new state law (RIGL §16-21-25) each city, town, or regional department safety plan and all school emergency-response plans must be reviewed on an annual basis by the school committee and updated annually. These reviews and updates shall be completed by **November 1**.

Accordingly, you must log on to eRide and open the School Safety Plans Review module. Please affirm that your LEA school committee has complied with this new law by selecting the checkbox confirming that your LEA school committee has reviewed and updated school-safety and emergency plans for the current school year (2013-14) and by clicking the *submit* button. If you have any questions, please contact the RIDE helpdesk, at <https://support.ride.ri.gov/>.

From other organizations

6. Brown invites middle-school students to a day on campus

Please see this invitation from Christina H. Paxson, President of Brown University:

I am writing to invite your school district to be part of the 250th anniversary celebration of the founding of Brown University.

In March 1764, the “General Assembly of the Governor and Company of the English Colony of Rhode Island” gathered and passed a charter to establish the College of Rhode Island, which, in 1804, became Brown University. Two hundred-fifty years later, on March 7 – 8, 2014, Brown University will hold opening events to launch the celebration of the anniversary of its founding. Throughout the year-long celebration, we will emphasize the important and productive relationship that Brown, Providence, and Rhode Island enjoy, forged in the values of liberty of conscience and independent thought. We will also emphasize the enduring value to society of education and higher education,

and the significance of advancing knowledge through innovative teaching and research.

On Friday, March 7, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., we would like to welcome approximately 250-300 7th and 8th grade students, teachers, and chaperones from schools throughout Rhode Island for a day of academic exploration and discovery on the Brown campus. Brown faculty and students will provide programming that will span the liberal arts, contributing workshops in areas such as archaeology, art history, bat flight, and “Brainmapping.” There will be student performances, as well as an opportunity to experience the college campus. Please contact Community Liaison Jennifer Braga by **November 20**, at Jennifer_Braga@brown.edu or by phone, at 863-3717, to confirm your interest in having students from your school district participate and to share any comments or questions.

We know how busy teachers and administrators are, and we seek to make participation as feasible as possible. Brown will provide funding for substitute teachers as necessary, and for travel expenses incurred by the schools, though the schools are asked to arrange and manage transportation for students and teachers and any necessary chaperones, such as parents or school counselors. We will also provide participants with a breakfast snack upon arrival and lunch on campus.

In terms of student selection, schools will be asked to determine a selection process for participating students. Our goal is to include approximately 250 to 300 students statewide and therefore, based on the number of schools, we ask that you consider a group of five middle-school

students from each middle school in your school district. Additionally, we encourage you to consider students who would benefit most from such an experience, particularly students for whom visiting a college campus may be a welcome opportunity.

We hope that our opening activities will be the first of many opportunities Brown will offer over the course of the 250th celebration for educators and students to visit the campus and participate in academic and cultural events and programming. For example, though buses will depart by 2 p.m. on March 7, events will continue over the weekend. On Friday evening we will welcome the Rhode Island community to a “Celebrate 250” gathering that will include arts and performance groups from campus, Providence, and Rhode Island, as well as an Open House on Saturday, March 8, inviting residents to explore, enjoy, and learn about Brown’s shared history with the city and state, its culture, and its distinctive approach to a liberal arts education. There will be additional programming through Commencement in May 2015.

Brown is looking forward to marking this significant milestone in its history with the involvement of educational partners throughout the state. We are grateful to the help and support we have received from a number of educational leaders in our planning to date, including Executive Director of the R.I. Association of School Superintendents Tim Ryan, Executive Director of the R.I. Association of School Principals Patricia Hines, and Executive Director of the Rhode Island Middle Level Educators Bill Fasano.

7. Students, families invited to attend College Fair

The Newport County College Fair will be held on **Thursday** (October 24), from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., at Tiverton High School, 100 North Brayton Rd. High-school students and their families from *all* communities are invited to attend the college fair, which will be held in the gymnasium. More than 100 college-admissions representatives will be available to provide students with information about their institutions, the admission process, and selection criteria.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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