

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo  
Friday, July 19, 2013**

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**Action Item Calendar**

**Today** (July 19): [Upload reports](#) (due July 29) for submission  
July 29: Submit [enrollment, attendance, suspension, TCS](#) reports  
August 1: [Wireless Classroom Initiative](#) surveys due

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**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

- 1. Districts, nonprofits stepping up to provide summer mathematics instruction, support**

I am very proud that, all across the state, schools and nonprofit agencies are stepping up to provide instruction and support in mathematics, designed to help high-school students in the Class of 2014 improve their knowledge of and skills in mathematics and to earn a high-school diploma. There are many excellent examples of this on-going work, but to mention just a few:

For the past several months, the RIDE team and the team at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) have worked with folks from Cranston, Providence, and Warwick to develop the Summer Success Program, a CCRI-RIDE partnership that provides students with up to 3 transferrable College Success credits, a CCRI math course, and two Accuplacer testing opportunities. The program is now in its second week, serving about 100 students.

In the northern tier of the state, the Northern Rhode Island Summer Pathways to Graduation, a partnership among 10 school districts, the Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance, and Rhode Island College, will begin next month, providing free daily instruction.

Cumberland Mayor Dan McKee's Office of Children, Youth, and Learning is offering a program, Math Intensive: Algebra...and the Real World, for Cumberland high-school students, with extended Saturday learning to continue in September.

The Virtual Learning [Math Modules](#), a web-based instructional program that RIDE has developed, is designed to address individual students' skills gaps. About 2,800 students in the Class of 2014 have registered to use this

instructional program to improve their mathematics knowledge and skills.

I am extremely hopeful that these and other programs will provide students with the instruction and support they need to show improvement and to take another step toward earning a meaningful high-school diploma next year. We have been speaking to the media about these and other programs, so you may receive inquiries from local reporters interested in learning about our summer mathematics initiatives.

## **2. Cranston student wins Healthy Lunchtime Challenge**

Congratulations to Samantha Mastrati, a student at the Western Hills Middle School, in Cranston, whose recipe for Italian Garden Salsa with Crunchy Chicken Tenders made her one of the winners in the Epicurious 2013 Healthy Lunchtime Challenge, part of the White House Let's Move initiative. As one of the winners of the challenge, Samantha attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Kid's State Dinner at the White House last week. I'm sure the event was a wonderful experience for Samantha and for her mother, Gail Mastrati, communications director at the Department of Environmental Management.

## **3. Tablet classroom arm chairs available for schools**

***Note: Chairs have been claimed.***

The Buildings Department here at the Shepard Building has informed us that they have on hand about 200 extra tablet classroom arm chairs with wire brackets beneath the seats. If you need some or all of these chairs for one of your schools, please contact me and I will get you in touch with the Buildings Department to figure out the logistics.

## From RIDE

### ***Legal:***

#### **4. RIDE posts three recent decisions**

RIDE has posted these recent Commissioner's decisions on school finances, graduation, and residency:

Finances: District withheld tuition payments to charter public school because of alleged discriminatory practices relative to special-education students. Commissioner appointed a Special Visitor. Decision was appealed on July 8.

[http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2013/013-13\\_Kingston\\_Hill\\_Academy\\_v.\\_Chariho\\_R.S.\\_061013.pdf](http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2013/013-13_Kingston_Hill_Academy_v._Chariho_R.S._061013.pdf)

Graduation: Student who is ineligible to graduate may not participate in graduation ceremonies, in accordance with school's policy.

[http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2013/016-13\\_Student\\_A.\\_DOE\\_v.\\_Wm.\\_M.\\_Davies\\_Jr.\\_C\\_and\\_THS%2061713.pdf](http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2013/016-13_Student_A._DOE_v._Wm._M._Davies_Jr._C_and_THS%2061713.pdf)

Residency: Interim Protective Order requiring that district provide ESY services is denied. Petitioners have failed to establish residency.

[http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2013/017-13 Residency of W. DOE II 070213.pdf](http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2013/017-13%20Residency%20of%20W.%20DOE%20II%20070213.pdf)

**PARCC:**

## **5. RIDE to help LEAs update PARCC Technology Readiness Tools**

On August 3, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) will release the newest iteration of the Technology Readiness Tool. For this release, the tool will require *all* fields completed to pass validation. The validations will ensure the most accurate inventory of test readiness.

LEAs will receive spreadsheets showing their current inventories for review by IT Directors and Test Readiness Coordinators. RIDE requests that any devices that are deemed “inappropriate” for testing be removed from the inventory (spreadsheet). For convenience, RIDE has highlighted the questionable records on the spreadsheets, and we ask you to review all of these highlighted records and to remove all questionable records from the spreadsheet.

Once you have completed the review and revision, you can return the spreadsheets to Jaime Viti, at [jaime.viti@ride.ri.gov](mailto:jaime.viti@ride.ri.gov), who will upload the inventories.

For more information on the Technology Readiness Tool validations, please read:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Instruction-and-Assessment-World-Class->

[Standards/Assessment/PARCC/August Implementation of TRT v3-0.pdf](#)

You can send any questions on the Technology Readiness Tool to Mike Ferry, at [Michael.ferry@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Michael.ferry@ride.ri.gov), or to Jaime Viti, at [Jaime.viti@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Jaime.viti@ride.ri.gov).

## **6. PARCC releases Local Considerations Document**

PARCC has developed a Local Considerations Document to help you prepare for transition to the PARCC assessments, which is intended as a supplement to the *Technology Readiness Tool User's Guide*. This document specifically addresses some of the considerations and local decisions that district and school staff may need to include in their transition planning or in their determinations of local readiness for the online delivery of statewide or other online assessments. You can access this document at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Instruction-and-Assessment-World-Class-Standards/Assessment/PARCC/TRT Key Local Considerations.pdf>

You can send any questions about the document to Mike Ferry, at [Michael.ferry@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Michael.ferry@ride.ri.gov), or to Jaime Viti, at [Jaime.viti@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Jaime.viti@ride.ri.gov).

### ***Induction:***

## **7. LEAs reminded to submit names of beginning teachers, training available for induction-coach candidates**

As the 2013-14 school year is just around the corner, it is important to plan on how to best meet the needs of your beginning teachers. RIDE will continue to assign an induction coach to up to 180 beginning teachers during the coming school year. In order to assist us with assigning coaches, it is important that you enter information into our database as soon as an appointment of a beginning teacher is made. If you have uncommitted Race to the Top funds, Title II funds, or other LEA funds available, you can request a trained induction coach to be assigned to your additional first-year or second-year teacher. The approximate cost of this support is \$6,800 per teacher.

Again this year we would like to offer you an option to build coaching capacity in your LEA. We have made available a limited number of spaces in our New Teacher Center Training for LEAs to send teachers, such as mentors, teacher leaders, and instructional coaches, to attend full induction-coach training. Interested candidates will need to go through the rigorous interview process to ensure that they have the skills and characteristics required to be an effective coach, and the candidates must be available to attend 2 days of training in the summer and 6 full days of training during the school year, as well as 6 full-day forums during the school year. All LEA coaches must be assigned to coach a minimum of one in LEA teacher to practice the skills and tool use taught in the state training. The coaches may practice their skills by supporting a second-year teacher or an educator on an improvement plan. Having other faculty members trained in the skills and strategies needed to successfully support teachers will allow LEAs and RIDE to build even more capacity. Applications are posted on the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent->

[Educators/Induction/2013 Induction Coaches Application.docx](#) .

Applications must be submitted by Friday, **August 2**. We look forward to working together to support our beginning teachers and to increase teacher effectiveness.

As always, if you have any questions or feedback about the induction program, do not hesitate to contact Hilda Potrzeba, at [hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov](mailto:hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8891.

***Educator Evaluations:***

**8. EPSS for 2012-13 school year closes out today (July 19) -  
*Reminder***

At the end of the day **today** (July 19), the 2012-13 evaluation cycle in the Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS) will be closed through an automated process. Any forms that were not completed will be automatically finalized at this time. Teachers and administrators will maintain access to their own records when the system re-opens on **Monday** (July 22), but they will no longer be editable by the educator or by any assigned evaluators. Evaluation forms for the coming (2013-14) school year will go live in the EPSS during the first week of August, and priority will be given to LEAs that have already confirmed their intent to use the system.

For additional information about the EPSS closeout and the transition to the 2013-14 school year, please see the two-page overview on the RIDE website, at:

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

***Certification:***

**9. RIDE launches new web portal – My eCert – for managing certification**

RIDE is excited to announce the launch of My eCert - the educator-certification portal. My eCert is a secure, user-friendly system that all educators will access via the statewide portal called RIDEMap:

<https://ridemap.ride.ri.gov/default.aspx>.

Educators can view, download, and print their certificates in My eCert. In the spring, RIDE discontinued mailing paper copies of certificates to educators. All certificates are now sent by e-mail only. Educators are urged to make sure they maintain a current e-mail address in My eCert.

More information on My eCert is available at:

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

**From the U.S. Department of Education**

**10. U.S. Department of Education seeks peer reviews for Race to the Top – District grant competition**

The U.S. Department of Education has announced a second Race to the Top - District grant competition and is looking for qualified individuals to serve as peer reviewers. This competition will build

on the success of past Race to the Top competitions and support bold, locally directed improvements in learning and teaching that will directly improve student achievement and educator effectiveness.

More specifically, the Race to the Top - District grant competition will reward those LEAs that have the leadership and vision to implement the strategies, structures, and systems of support to move beyond one-size-fits-all models of schooling, which have struggled to produce excellence and equity for all children, to personalized, student-focused approaches to learning and teaching that will use collaborative, data-based strategies and 21<sup>st</sup>-century tools to deliver instruction and supports tailored to the needs and goals of each student, with the goal of enabling all students to graduate college- and career-ready.

*Reviewer Qualifications:*

In order to ensure a successful competition, we are seeking qualified individuals with expertise in some or all of the following areas to serve as peer reviewers:

- four core educational assurances (college- and career-ready standards and assessments, data systems and data use, great teachers and leaders, and school turnaround);
- personalized learning environments;
- district reform and school-level operations;
- educating students in rural areas;
- application review and evaluation; and
- serving high-needs students.

*Availability:*

Generally, U.S. Department of Education staff will need to be able to contact reviewers during normal business hours throughout the review period. We anticipate that reviewers will need to commit to the following review process:

- reviewers will need to be available for a two-day, in-person training session in Washington, D.C., in October;
- reviewers will be expected to read, score, provide comments on, and discuss by phone approximately three Race to the Top - district applications during an off-site review beginning in mid-October and lasting through mid-November; and
- reviewers may be invited to participate in an in-person panel review in Washington, D.C., in mid- to late November.

*Further information:*

As with other Federal grant competitions, reviewers will receive compensation for their time and effort, contingent upon satisfactory completion of the review requirements and consistent with the required schedule. Travel costs to the events in Washington, D.C., will also be covered.

*If interested:*

To be considered to serve as a peer reviewer for the Race to the Top - District program, please go to the following link to submit your resume or curriculum vitae, a personal biography of fewer than 250 words, and a completed Peer Reviewer Questionnaire as soon as possible and no later than **August 4**:

<http://www.mikousa.com/surveys/index.php?sid=85845&lang=en>.

We will vet reviewers for relevant conflict(s) of interest. Please note, at the end of the review process, the name and a short bio of each peer reviewer will be posted on the Race to the Top - District website. We will not associate the names of peer reviewers with the applications they reviewed.

*Program information:*

For more information about the Race to the Top - District competition, go to:

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-district/index.html>.

Please direct all questions on this matter to the Race to the Top Peer Review inbox, at [RTTDLogistics@mikogroup.com](mailto:RTTDLogistics@mikogroup.com).

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

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