

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo  
Friday, September 20, 2013**

**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

***Educator Recognition:***

1. Rhode Island celebrates [educator excellence](#)

***Events:***

2. Last chance to [register](#) for Innovation Powered by Technology Conference

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

***Common Core:***

3. RIDE develops survey on Common Core and [special education](#), to be completed by **October 4 – Action Item**

***School Safety:***

4. Legislation on [emergency drills](#) establishes new specifications on type, manner, and frequency

***RI Diploma System:***

5. RIDE provides Diploma System follow-up [technical assistance](#)

***Data and Reports:***

6. RIDE updates [Discipline Data Collection](#)
7. RIDE releases [report](#) on first year of implementation of Educator Evaluation System

***Surveyworks:***

8. [SurveyWorks](#)' School Information Request Form
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**Action Item Calendar**

**Today** (September 20): Course Coding updates dues

**Monday** (September 23): [RITEAF forms](#) due

October 4: Common Core [survey](#) due

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**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

***Educator Recognition:***

**1. Rhode Island celebrates educator excellence**

On Thursday, September 26, 2013, Governor Chafee will join me in recognizing Rhode Island educators for their outstanding service and dedication to the education profession and Rhode Island students.

Please join us as we recognize the following educators:

- 2014 State Teacher of the Year
- 2013 Rhode Island National Milken Foundation Educator
- Rhode Island Superintendent of the Year
- Rhode Island Principals of the Year
- Rhode Island Support Professionals of the Year
- Announcing the 2013-2014 District Teachers of the Year
- Presidential Award Winners for Mathematics and Science Teaching
- Amgen Winner in Science and Technology

- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certified Educators

The celebration will take place at Orchard Farms Elementary School, 1555 Scituate Avenue, Cranston from 4:00-6.00 p.m.

***Events:***

**2. Last chance to register for Innovation Powered by Technology Conference**

I hope that you are planning on attending our upcoming [Innovation Powered by Technology Conference](#) to be held on Saturday, Oct. 5th at the Rhode Island Convention Center. The response has been enthusiastic and slots are rapidly filling up. I want to make sure that you bring your teams to hear from the digital learning leaders from across our state and across the country.

I was thrilled to learn that you will be meeting with Morrisville Superintendent Mark Edwards the day before the conference. He is one of several national innovators who will be sharing ideas, strategies and resources with you and your team.

We expect that 700 educators, school leaders, students, parents and interested members of the public will be in attendance. Additionally, we also have a host of exhibitors, sponsors and start-up companies joining us for the day.

The 2013 Innovation Powered by Technology Conference will take place Saturday, October 5, 2013, at the Rhode Island Convention Center and is free to all participants.

**[REGISTER HERE!](#)**

## From RIDE

### ***Common Core:***

- 3. RIDE develops survey on Common Core and special education, to be completed by October 4 – *Action Item***

RIDE has developed a survey entitled *Common Core and PARCC for Students with Disabilities* to determine the readiness of special education personnel to implement Common Core State Standards and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers (PARCC) assessments for students with disabilities in your schools. There is a twenty-question survey that is intended to be taken by special education personnel, including administrators, special education teachers, and related service personnel. We will be analyzing the results to determine how to support special education personnel during the transition to Common Core.

Please forward this link to special education administrators, special education staff members, and related service personnel. Please have everyone complete the survey by **October 4**. Below you will find the link to share and to take the survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YVSGDXB>

### ***School Safety:***

- 4. Legislation on emergency drills establishes new specifications on type, manner, and frequency**

The Rhode Island fire-safety statutes have been amended. Although the total number of safety drills has not changed, the amendment provides greater detail and specifications regarding the type, manner, and frequency of these drills. The principal of each school is responsible for the successful implementation of this statute.

In accordance with state law (§16-21-4, §16-21-5), all schools (public and nonpublic) in Rhode Island are required to perform 15 emergency drills that include fire, lockdown, and evacuation drills. At least one drill shall be conducted each month, and at least one out of every four must be obstructed drills. As part of the required 15 emergency drills, each school must conduct two evacuation drills and two lockdown drills. One lockdown drill shall occur in September and one in January.

RIDE no longer accepts hard copies of fire-drill reports. All emergency-drill information must be entered in eRIDE following completion of each drill.

You can access the amended “Health and Safety of Pupils” legislation at the Rhode Island General Assembly website, at:

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText13/SenateText13/SO014Aaa.pdf>

### ***RI Diploma System:***

#### **5. RIDE provides Diploma System follow-up technical assistance**

The Office of Multiple Pathways is responding to several requests from schools and districts to review aspects of their diploma system by offering technical assistance. The office will reach out to districts to set up meetings with school teams, and we would encourage anyone who has an interest in meeting with our team to contact [Lauren McCarthy](#). While it is not the office’s intention to meet with every school during this round of technical assistance, please let us know about those schools that feel there is a need.

### ***Data and Reports:***

#### **6. RIDE updates Discipline Data Collection**

Over the past few years, RIDE has worked with the Data Team and the Data Governance Board to improve the discipline data collection. In that time, we have made several revisions to the data collection codes and definitions

to align better with federal reporting guidelines and with state and federal laws. We are now eliminating the “other” and “unknown” codes which had been maintained during this transition to catch any records that may not have fit existing codes. This change will be effective retroactively to the start of the school year. Updated discipline data collection specifications are available at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Information-and-Accountability-User-Friendly-Data/Data-Resources/Data-Collections/Discipline-Collection-2013-14.pdf>

Please inform your data managers that RIDE staff from the Office of Data, Analysis and Research will be working with them to make any necessary changes to existing data and to your student information systems.

## **7. RIDE releases report on first year of implementation of Educator Evaluation System**

The full implementation of educator evaluations last year represented one of the most significant education initiatives ever launched at the state level in Rhode Island. Based on the belief that implementing fair, accurate, and meaningful educator evaluations will provide feedback to help improve teaching and learning, the state’s renewed focus on improving its educator evaluation systems began in spring 2009 with the adoption of the Rhode Island Educator Evaluation System Standards by the Rhode Island Board of Regents. Last year we focused on the enormous task of refining and putting into action new teacher and building administrator evaluation systems statewide. We knew that it would not be perfect on day one, which is why we committed to improving the design and process based on feedback from the field.

We have been encouraged by our experience, yet the final ratings also show that we still have work to do to make sure that the systems offer teachers and building administrators the accurate and useful feedback they deserve, while also providing schools and districts information to help them make strategic decisions to advance teaching and learning.

In the coming year, we will continue to listen carefully to educators in the field to learn what's working and what we can do better. We value the diverse viewpoints in the feedback we have collected along the way. All of us understand that our schools – and our children – represent the future of Rhode Island.

To read the report, visit our website at:

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

***Surveyworks:***

**8. SurveyWorks' School Information Request Form**

On September 19, the SurveyWorks' team sent out a final request to site coordinators to complete a school information request form. The form is integral to the implementation process and must be completed by site coordinators as soon as possible. Site coordinators should visit the SurveyWorks' Toolkit ([surveyworks.ride.ri.gov/toolkit.html](http://surveyworks.ride.ri.gov/toolkit.html)) to download supporting materials and to review the SurveyWorks timeline. Coordinators serving for the first time must register for a webinar in preparation for the parental opt-out period, which begins on September 30. If you have any questions, contact SurveyWorks at (877) 787-5725 or [surveyworks@wested.org](mailto:surveyworks@wested.org). Thank you again for your continued support of SurveyWorks.

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

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