

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, June 26, 2015**

**Notes from Acting Commissioner Abbott**

1. [General Assembly](#) goes into recess without passing charter legislation; approves Fiscal Year 2016 budget
2. Council receives final draft of 2015-2020 [strategic plan](#)
3. Council considers revised regulations on [calendar, school day](#)
4. Council rejects request to reopen consideration of [graduation requirements](#)
5. RIDE releases "close-out" report on [2010-2015 Strategic Plan](#) accomplishments
6. Five state finalists named for Presidential Award for [mathematics, science](#) teaching

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

***Legal:***

7. Acting Commissioner issues interim order regarding [out-of-state placements](#)

***Reports:***

8. New reports in InfoWorks show decline in [suspension rates](#)

***Data Collections and Data Quality:***

9. [End-of-year data](#) reporting due **July 17 – Action Item**
10. [Perkins](#) Accountability Sequencing will open **July 20**
11. Data collections scheduled by the [end of July](#) – **Action Item**
12. *Reminder:* Instructional Support System can integrate data from [local assessments](#)

***Educator Evaluations:***

13. *Reminder:* [Educator-evaluation data](#) reports due **July 10**, “cyclical process” must be noted when appropriate

***Assessments:***

14. RIDE announces [technology assessment](#) will not be administered in coming years

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

15. [Presidential Scholars](#) program to recognize outstanding students in career and technical education

**Tuesday** (June 30): [Dual-enrollment](#) polices completed  
**Tuesday** (June 30): [Preschool](#) Performance Report due  
**Tuesday** (June 30): Final [CTE](#) collection due  
**Tuesday** (June 30): Final [Special Ed Evaluations](#) due  
**Tuesday** (June 30): [Special Ed Evaluations](#) - Q4 due  
**Tuesday** (June 30): LEP Census due - [LEP Census](#)  
**Tuesday** (June 30): [Personnel Data Collection \(PDC\)](#) due  
**Wednesday** (July 1): [CRP](#) due  
July 3: [Personnel Assignments](#) Submission deadline  
July 10: [Educator-evaluation](#) reports due  
July 15: [Special Education](#) Performance Report due  
July 15: [Housing Aid](#) forms due  
July 17: [Physical-restraint](#) reports due  
July 17: End-of-year reports due (see [below](#))  
July 17: Attendance, Discipline, TCS due (see [below](#))  
July 20: Perkins Accountability opens (see [below](#))  
July 31: Signed off end-of-year reports due (see [below](#))

---

## **Notes from Acting Commissioner Abbott**

### **1. General Assembly goes into recess without passing charter legislation; approves Fiscal Year 2016 budget**

As you may be aware, last night the General Assembly made the unexpected decision to go into recess before reaching agreement on a number of pending bills. This decision affected bills concerning the authorization and expansion of charter public schools. As of now, these proposals are dead – although we are aware that the

General Assembly will go back into session in the fall to consider major legislation (highway tolls, Pawsox stadium) and may reconsider education bills at that time.

The two chambers did approve a Fiscal Year 2016 budget, which includes almost all of Governor Raimondo's recommendations for education funding, with the exception of a last-minute cut to the RIDE operating budget. Education funding in the budget includes:

- funding of the fifth year of the Funding Formula for education aid to local school communities, at \$35.5-million increase;
- full support for our plan to bring the number of state-funded prekindergarten classrooms to 60 by 2019, with \$1 million in additional funding for 2016;
- \$1.4 million to bring full-day kindergarten to all Rhode Island communities (7 school districts at this time do not offer universal full-day kindergarten);
- an additional \$20 million to rebuild and modernize school facilities, with a School Building Authority established within RIDE and a projected \$80 million in funding for Fiscal Year 2017; and
- \$1.3 million to pick up all tuition fees for students in dual enrollment or concurrent enrollment, enough funds to increase participation by 50 percent.

We expect Governor Raimondo to sign the budget today or early next week.

## **2. Council receives final draft of 2015-2020 strategic plan**

On Monday, the Ambassador Design Team presented to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education the final draft of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan for elementary and secondary education. The team set a goal of meeting regularly, working hard, and completing a plan to submit to you in June – and they have met their goal. The Design Team represents the diversity of Rhode Island, and I am especially pleased that the team includes four students in its membership. The plan the team has developed for consideration by the Council is more “student-centered” than any strategic plan we have worked with in the past.

This plan captures the voice of the community of Rhode Island. The design team based its work on input and feedback from 15,000 Rhode Islanders who participated in our surveys and community discussions. The plan is focused on equity and excellence, and it aligns with Governor Raimondo’s thinking and her goals on workforce development.

The six priorities that the plan establishes are: Teacher and Leader Support, Early Childhood Education, Personalized Learning Statewide, Globally Competent Graduates, Informed Instructional Decision-Making, and Student-Centered Resource Investment.

I am confident that the Council will recognize the excellence and aspirations of this strategic plan and will give it their blessing and approval. Additionally, I have encouraged the members of the design team to stay together in support of the plan they have developed and written – to stay on our case, to defend the plan, and to advocate for its success.

You can read the final draft of the plan here:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Board-of-Education/Strategic-Plan/2015-2020\\_RI-StrategicPlan-FINAL\\_DRAFT.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Board-of-Education/Strategic-Plan/2015-2020_RI-StrategicPlan-FINAL_DRAFT.pdf) .

### **3. Council considers revised regulations on calendar, school day**

On Monday, I presented to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education proposed revisions to the regulations on the school calendar and the length of the school day. As I noted to you in last week's Field Memo, these proposed revised regulations would eliminate the confusion and contradictions regarding delayed school openings and early dismissals. Instead, they say simply: a school "shall remain open for at least three hours in order to be considered a school day" – regardless of when the day starts or ends.

These revised regulations would also authorize the Commissioner "to shorten the school year for individual schools based on short term emergency closures of no more than five school days." This change obviates the need for school committees to petition the Council for emergency reductions – an operational area that we believe does not require review and discussion by a policy-making body.

The Council members had a number of questions about these proposed regulations. We will make some further revisions to the regulations, and will bring the regulations back to the Council for further discussion. The Council members are very supportive of the need for greater clarity and consistency regarding emergency closings, delayed openings, and early dismissal. I am confident that the Council will approve revised regulations by the start of the school year.

#### **4. Council rejects request to reopen consideration of graduation requirements**

As you may be aware, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education voted on Monday evening to reject a petition that would have required the Council to re-open discussion of the Secondary School Regulations, which the Council revised and approved less than six months ago. The petitioners raised the concern that the revised regulations allow LEAs to use standardized assessments as a graduation requirement beginning with the Class of 2017, at their own discretion. The regulations also state that all LEAs must use standardized assessments as a graduation requirement beginning with the Class of 2020.

The Council included in the regulations a statement ensuring that you have the autonomy to use assessments as a graduation requirement if you so choose in response to comments school superintendents made during public hearings on the regulations.

The Council members recognized that at some time they will need to revisit the issue of the use of assessments as graduation requirement, in particular to set cut scores for graduation eligibility on the new PARCC assessments. The Council, however, decided that now was not the time to reopen these discussions and voted 7 to 1 to deny the petition.

#### **5. RIDE releases “close-out” report on 2010-2015 Strategic Plan accomplishments**

As you may know, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education is reviewing the final draft of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan for public education. As we prepare for

transition to a new Strategic Plan, some members of the RIDE team have put together a “closeout” report on the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan, which guided our work over the past five years. This report highlights the many accomplishments that all of us, working in partnership with you and the others on your team, have achieved. Reading through this report, I am very confident that we have taken great strides toward improving the lives of thousands of children and toward improving the workforce quality and the economic prospects of our state. I believe the report highlights the contributions of the Board of Education, school leaders and teachers, elected officials, community and business leaders, parents and families, as well as the staff at RIDE – so read this report with ownership and with pride, as we continue our commitment to transforming education in Rhode Island.

We have posted the report on our website, at:

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

## **6. Five state finalists named for Presidential Award for mathematics, science teaching**

Congratulations to our five state finalists for the 2015 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. These awards are the highest honors in the country for teachers of mathematics and science (including computer science). Awardees serve as models for their colleagues, inspiration to their communities, and leaders in the improvement of mathematics and science education.



A national selection committee will review applications from the state finalists and will recommend up to two finalists in mathematics or science (including computer science) from each state. The White House will announce the results of this national selection process.

The finalists are:

*Mathematics:*

Kristen Jahnz – Cumberland High School

Marc Haskell – Saint Philomena School, Portsmouth

*Science:*

Anthony Borqueta – Barrington Middle School

Shannon Donovan – Scituate High School

David Upegui – Central Falls High School

Good luck to each of the finalists in pursuit of this high honor.

## **From RIDE**

### ***Legal:***

#### **7. Acting Commissioner issues interim order regarding out-of-state placements**

Following a Family Court order for out-of-state placement of child over the objection of the Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) and an LEA, DCYF sought an interim order to determine the financial responsibility of the LEA as the district of residence. Acting Commissioner Abbott determined that the LEA is the district of residence, and he found that, contrary to the court order, the DCYF delayed placement of the child. Acting Commissioner Abbott ordered

the child's out-of-state placement forthwith, and he ruled that funding-related requests shall not be heard by the Commissioner prior to the placement of a child unless RIDE is judicially ordered to conduct hearing:

[http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2015/005-15\\_DCYF\\_v\\_Warwick\\_01615.pdf](http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2015/005-15_DCYF_v_Warwick_01615.pdf)

### ***Reports:***

#### **8. New reports in InfoWorks show decline in suspension rates**

New charts in InfoWorks show the rate of suspensions, instead of raw numbers. Over the last three years, the statewide suspension rate in elementary schools has remained fairly flat; however, the middle-school suspension rate has dropped significantly and the high-school suspension rate has dropped even more significantly. Charts are available at:

<http://infoworks.ride.ri.gov/search/data?category=suspension&q=state%2Fri&year=2013>.

In addition, InfoWorks added a set of advanced reports regarding suspensions in Rhode Island schools. These reports allow comparisons on multiple related measures, including the types of infractions that resulted in suspensions, the type of suspension (in-school or out-of-school), the relationship between the number of students suspended and the number of suspensions, and rates of suspensions by race. The suspensions-by-race report shows that, although significant racial disparities persist, all racial groups have experienced a drop in rates over the past few years.

Advanced reports on suspension rates are available at:

<http://infoworks.ride.ri.gov/search/reports?q=suspension>.

### ***Data Collections and Data Quality:***

#### **9. End-of-year data reporting due July 17 – *Action Item***

The end-of-year data submissions will be used for reporting your enrollment and attendance data among other data. To facilitate the submission of your year-end data by the closing date, we suggest uploading one file for your entire LEA as a complete year-to-date upload in the following order: Enrollment, Attendance, Discipline, TCS-Course, TCS Section, TCS-Staff, TCS-Student. All collections will close on **July 17**.

Once you have finished uploading the enrollment and attendance data, please verify the student average daily membership (ADM) and average daily attendance (ADA) numbers, as these are critical for end-of-year reporting and they drive state aid. We calculate the ADM and ADA (state-calculated) based on your school calendar and daily absence records.

To ensure the quality of the data submitted, you will need to check duplicates and demographic differences in the Enrollment Census. You must also use the baseline numbers and previous years' reports for consistency checks to validate that the data are accurate. It is strongly recommended that your business managers and your

program and district administrators also review the reports before sign-off. We have updated our data-submission policy to disallow any modifications to the data once you have signed off. It is critical that you scrutinize your data before your final submission and sign-off.

Please review the following to accomplish the end-of-year reporting, which is a list of end-of-year reports that you must sign and fax (or scan and email) by Friday, **July 31**:

- Submission Report
- Absence Unexcused
- Absence Excused
- Absenteeism
- ADA – State-calculated
- ADM – State-calculated
- Early Dismissal
- Suspensions Report - Total
- Suspensions Report - Unique
- Tardy
- Truancy Report

If you have any questions about the end-of-year data reporting, please submit a help desk ticket, at <https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

## **10. Perkins Accountability Sequencing will open July 20**

Through data-optimization efforts at RIDE, the RICATS data collection has been integrated within other data collections. The Perkins Accountability Sequencing has been introduced as a way for schools to review and sign off on the sequencing of career-technical education (CTE\_ courses.

Using the Teacher-Course-Student (TCS) and Enrollment data collections, we have streamlined the data collections to compile the relevant data behind the scenes so as to minimize the workload of the your data staff; however, it is important for your staff to verify, update, and sign off on the sequencing of the courses and to verify that every course has a sequencing number. The Perkins Accountability Sequencing application will open on **July 20**.

If you have any questions about the Perkins Accountability Sequencing, please submit a help desk ticket, at:

<https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

#### **11. Data collections scheduled by the end of July – Action Item**

The following are some data-collection deadlines for June and July:

- **Tuesday** (June 30): Final [CTE collection](#) due
- **Tuesday** (June 30): Final [Special Ed Evaluations](#) due
- **Tuesday** (June 30): [Special Ed Evaluations](#) - Quarter 4 due
- **Tuesday** (June 30): LEP Census 2014-15 Data Due - [LEP Census](#)
- **Tuesday** (June 30): [Personnel Data Collection \(PDC\)](#) due
- July 17: End of Year data files (Enrollment, Attendance, Discipline, TCS) due
- July 20: Perkins Accountability Sequencing opens
- July 31: Signed off End of Year reports due

Information about upcoming data collections can be found on the [data collection calendar](#). Weekly collection webinars provide details regarding upcoming collections, along with a question-and-answer period.

**12. *Reminder: Instructional Support System can integrate data from local assessments***

The Instructional Support System has the capability of integrating local assessment data from LEAs. We have collaborated with Renaissance Learning to integrate the STAR assessment data, with minimal effort by LEAs. Contact your Renaissance representative and ask for the data-sharing agreement to start receiving STAR data in the Instructional Support System. When your Renaissance data agreement has been submitted, please notify Greg Martin so that we can monitor the progress of your data-sharing request.

If you have any questions concerning the integration of local assessments in the Instructional Support System, please contact Greg Martin, at [gregory.martin@ride.ri.gov](mailto:gregory.martin@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8495.

***Educator Evaluations:***

**13. *Reminder: Educator-evaluation data reports due July 10, “cyclical process” must be noted when appropriate***

All LEAs must submit educator evaluation data to RIDE by **July 10**. All documents and information pertaining to this process can be found on the RIDE website under the heading End of Year Information, at:

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

For Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS) users: *For all educators who were not evaluated this year because they were in the cyclical process, you must check the “Cyclical Process” box on the bottom of the Final Effectiveness Rating Report before you submit the report.*

For non-EPSS users: LEAs that do not use EPSS must submit a reporting spreadsheet to EPSS. This spreadsheet allows you to document the required evaluation data for all teachers, support professionals, and building administrators in a simple format that must be uploaded into EPSS. Individuals whom you have designated as the EPSS District Configuration Administrator can access the evaluation-data upload tool under the “Config Admin” tab in EPSS. All educators must be included on the spreadsheet; for teachers not evaluated this year because of the cyclical process, *you should indicate “Cyclical Process” in the column titled ReasonNoFERating.*

Please contact [lauren.matlach@ride.ri.gov](mailto:lauren.matlach@ride.ri.gov) with any questions or concerns about reporting educator-evaluation data.

### **Assessments:**

#### **14. RIDE announces technology assessment will not be administered in coming years**

The 2014-15 school year will be the final year that we will administer the 21st Century Skills Assessment. For more information about this technology assessment, please view the end-of-year webinar, at:

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

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

**15. Presidential Scholars program to recognize outstanding students in career and technical education**

Please see this message from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach:

On Tuesday, President Obama signed an Executive Order expanding the United States Presidential Scholars program to establish a new category of outstanding scholars in career and technical education (CTE).

The Presidential Scholars program is overseen by the Commission on Presidential Scholars and administered by staff at the U.S. Department of Education. This Commission, appointed by President Obama, selects honored scholars annually based on their academic success, artistic excellence, essays, school evaluations and transcripts, as well as evidence of community service, leadership, and demonstrated commitment to high ideals.

The Administration looks forward to partnering with nonpartisan, nonprofit organizations to cultivate and nominate the inaugural class of CTE Presidential Scholar nominees for the Commission to consider in 2016.

Next year, the White House will welcome the inaugural class of 20 CTE Presidential Scholars, who will be



selected by the Commission on Presidential Scholars based on outstanding scholarship and demonstrated ability in career and technical education.

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

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