

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo  
Friday, December 11, 2015**

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### **Action Item Calendar**

December 18: Student [exit data](#) calculation due

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### **Notes from Commissioner Wagner**

#### **1. RIDE to review Every Student Succeeds Act to determine effect on Rhode Island**

Yesterday President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act, which significantly revises the No Child Left Behind Act that has guided much of our work over the past 14 years. [Below](#), we have posted a message from the U.S. Department of Education that contains links to many resources explaining various aspects of this new law. Over the coming weeks and months, we will review the new law carefully to see how the law directly affects us in Rhode Island.

## **2. Council approves changes to allow for longer delayed school openings in inclement weather**

On Wednesday, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approved revisions to the Regulations Governing the School Calendar and the Length of the School Day. The main change in these revised regulations concerns “inclement weather.” The revised regulations state that “schools shall remain open and provide at least three hours of instructional time in order to be considered a school day.” Under the previous version of the regulations, you could delay the opening of school in inclement weather by only up to one hour; the revised regulations set no limit on the delayed opening as long as students receive at least three hours of instructional time. A copy of the new regulations is posted here:

<http://sos.ri.gov/documents/archives/regdocs/released/pdf/DESE/8221.pdf>

## **3. *Repeating from 12-7-15 Field Memo Alert:* Superintendents, heads of schools invited to conversation on a new vision for high schools**

We would like to invite you to join us for a conversation about a new vision for the high-school experience in Rhode Island. As you know, the Board of Education has approved an innovative and collaborative [Strategic Plan](#) for Public Education: 2015-2020. In the spirit of putting the values and tenets of this strategic plan into action, we have begun to envision how our secondary-school regulations and our diploma system can align with our vision for student success.

Because, as the head of an LEA, you are an important stakeholder in our on-going work and in the lives of our students, we want to gather your input on our secondary-school regulations and how we can best use the high-school years to prepare all students for success in college and careers. We invite you to be among the first to weigh in on re-imagining our high schools. This conversation will include an overview and discussion of our shared vision, targeted questions to help you share your unique perspective, and a general discussion on how we can move our ideas forward together. Please join us on **Wednesday** (December 16) from 9 to 11 a.m., here at RIDE (Room 501). Please confirm your attendance [here](#).

We look forward to engaging in this conversation with you.

**From RIDE**

***Legal:***

**4. Town found responsible for educational component of out-of-state residential treatment costs**

Under R.I.G.L. 16-64- 1.2 (c), the Town of Portsmouth was responsible for payment of its per-pupil special-education cost to support Student Doe's educational costs while she was placed at a residential treatment facility in Massachusetts. Student Doe was in DCYF custody and the R.I. Family Court ordered her placed at the Latham Center for treatment purposes. Her father's last known address, prior to moving from Rhode Island to Massachusetts, was the Town of Portsmouth. Portsmouth's financial responsibility terminated when Student Doe received a regular high-school diploma.

[http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2015/016-15\\_DCYF\\_v.\\_Portsmouth\\_S.D.\\_Residency\\_of\\_C.N.pdf](http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2015/016-15_DCYF_v._Portsmouth_S.D._Residency_of_C.N.pdf)

***Accountability:***

**5. School accountability data webinar, PowerPoint uploaded to District Exchange**

We are sorry if you were unable on short notice to join the School Accountability Data File Review webinar presentation that we held on Tuesday. We have uploaded to the Public Library of the District Exchange the webinar and the PowerPoint presentation. We have placed these in a new file: School Accountability 2015.

***Assessments:***

**6. LEAs asked to prepare for assessments for English Learners; webinar scheduled for Wednesday (December 16)**

As we move toward our January 11 through February 19 test window for ACCESS 2.0, please make sure that test coordinators, test administrators, and technology coordinators in your LEA have ample time to complete the training required for test administration. Checklists by roles can be found at <https://www.wida.us/assessment/access20-prep.aspx>, and a WIDA representative has estimated that completing the materials and modules in each checklist will take approximately 4 to 8 hours.

All items on each checklist will need to be completed before training certificates are updated to reflect your readiness for testing. District Test Coordinators have the ability to view which

items have been checked off on test-administrator and technology-coordinator checklists; *please work with your District Test Coordinators to ensure that time is provided for the training.*

Beginning Tuesday, (December 15), English Learner (EL) Coordinators will be able to enter accommodations for ELs with Disabilities in the WIDA AMS online. The WIDA ACCESS Accommodations Descriptions ([https://www.wida.us/assessment/WIDA\\_AccessAccDescriptions.pdf](https://www.wida.us/assessment/WIDA_AccessAccDescriptions.pdf)) and Guidelines ([https://www.wida.us/assessment/WIDA\\_AccessAccGuidelines.pdf](https://www.wida.us/assessment/WIDA_AccessAccGuidelines.pdf)) will support the efforts of EL Coordinators to document needed accommodations for ELs with IEPs or ELs with 504 plans. All accommodations will need to be entered before the student's date of testing. Batch-upload file specs are available in the WIDA AMS.

To date, we have offered two professional-development workshops to support ACCESS 2.0 preparation (on November 23 and December 4), and we shared a [Google doc with questions and answers raised at the workshops](#). Monthly [Q&A Webinars](#) to get answers on any remaining questions also occur on the first Wednesday of each month at 2 p.m. (a link to join will become active on the day of each webinar), and a [RI specific webinar](#) will be held on **Wednesday** (December 16) at 10 a.m. Additionally, English Language Learner (ELL) Directors were introduced to test preparation materials at our September ELL Director Retreat. For questions regarding ACCESS 2.0 preparation, please contact ELL Coordinator Jillian Belanger, at [Jillian.Belanger@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Jillian.Belanger@ride.ri.gov).

***Data Collection:***

## **7. LEAs reminded of data-security practices, need for accurate data**

The timelines and quality of data are critical components of data submissions. We ask that all LEAs take the time to review the accuracy all data before you submit data to RIDE. It is also important to submit data in a timely manner. Both of these components are crucial in having an accurate representation of each LEA for supporting technology systems and mandated reporting.

We would also like to remind LEAs of an important data-security practice. One of the most common lapses in data security that we see is with student-identifiable information. When sending data electronically, please do not include the student's name, SASID, or date of birth in that communication unless it is encrypted. This also includes attachments, screen shots, and images that contain student information.

## **8. Reminder: LEAs reminded to identify online or blended course sections in TCS data collection**

Upon reviewing the course and section data in the Teacher-Course-Student data collection, we note that some LEAs are not coding their online and hybrid courses properly – in particular regarding those sections of a course that are in a non-classroom setting. LEAs are undertaking wonderful blended-learning initiatives; however, if those sections of a course are not coded as an online or hybrid course, they will not be reported as such. The section file of the Teacher-Course-Student (TCS) collections has a field that identifies the setting in which the student is receiving instruction. This field should be updated to identify those sections that are online or hybrid sections of a course. The proper codes



can be found in the [data collection specification](#) or the [data dictionary](#). The [Virtual Learning Reporting Technical Assistance document](#) on the Virtual Learning: Innovative Leadership [Tools and Supports page](#) can assist with clarifying these data elements.

If you have any questions about coding the section setting, please submit a help desk ticket, at: <https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

### **9. *Reminder: Several data collections are open or due this month***

The following are the data-collection deadlines for December:

December 18: [Review Student Exit Data for Calculation of Cohort Graduation Rates - 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.

### ***Evaluations:***

#### **10. *Reminder: RIDE to host drop-in sessions to receive feedback on the performance descriptors used in all R.I. teacher-evaluation systems***

All Rhode Island public schools have implemented approved evaluation systems over the past 4 years. We've all learned a lot, and the time is right to take a step back and work together across the five approved models to develop a shared understanding of teaching performance regardless of the specific model being implemented . During the current school year, RIDE will work with

leaders from LEAs using all models toward generating a shared understanding of teaching performance at different levels . The first step is the revision of the current [performance level descriptors](#). Performance Level Descriptors, or PLDs, are model-neutral, general descriptions of performance intended to promote a common understanding and agreement among Rhode Island educators. All teachers, school administrators, and district administrators are invited to drop-in sessions (*regardless of model in use*) to provide feedback and suggest revisions on what Highly Effective, Effective, Developing, and Ineffective teaching practice looks like. The sessions will take place on:

- **Tuesday** (December 15), from 4 - 6 p.m., at Lincoln Middle School, 152 Jenckes Hill Rd.

Register at:

<http://www.eventbrite.com/e/performance-level-descriptor-pld-open-feedback-session-1-tickets-19827973001>

- **Wednesday, January 6**, from 4 - 6 p.m., at the West Bay Collaborative, 144 Bignall St., Warwick

Register at:

<http://www.eventbrite.com/e/performance-level-descriptor-pld-open-feedback-session-2-tickets-19828491552>

Feedback at the sessions will be used to inform revisions to the performance-level descriptors. The PLD revision process will not address changing model rubrics, SLOs, or current LEA processes. If you have any questions about these sessions, please do not

hesitate to reach out to Carrie Appel, at [carrie.appel@ride.ri.gov](mailto:carrie.appel@ride.ri.gov), or Lisa Foehr, at [lisa.foehr@ride.ri.gov](mailto:lisa.foehr@ride.ri.gov).

## From the U.S. Department of Education

### 11. President Obama signs Every Student Succeeds Act

Yesterday (December 10), in a South Court ceremony, President Obama [signed into law](#) the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA). The signing capped a remarkable week of Congressional activity, with the House (359-64) and Senate (85-12) overwhelmingly approving the bipartisan legislation to replace the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), the previous version of the ESEA that has been up for reauthorization since 2007.

The ESSA includes many of the key reforms the Administration has called on Congress to enact and encouraged states and school districts to adopt in exchange for waivers offering relief from more onerous provisions of NCLB. It helps ensure educational opportunity for all students by:

- holding all students to high academic standards that prepare them for success in college and careers;
- ensuring accountability by stipulating that when students fall behind, states redirect resources into what works to help them and their schools improve, with a particular focus on the very lowest-performing schools, high schools with high dropout rates, and schools with achievement gaps;
- empowering state and local decision-makers to develop their own strong systems for school improvement based upon evidence;

- reducing the burden of testing on students and teachers, making sure that tests do not crowd out teaching and learning, without sacrificing clear, annual information parents and educators need to know their children are learning;
- providing more children access to high-quality preschool; and
- establishing new resources for proven strategies that will spur reform and drive opportunity and better outcomes for America's students.

In further recognition of the ESEA's legacy as a civil rights law – upholding critical protections for disadvantaged students – the ESSA holds schools to account for the progress of all students, prescribing meaningful reforms to remedy under-performance in those schools failing to serve all students; maintains dedicated resources and supports for students with disabilities, English Learners, Native American students, homeless children, neglected and delinquent children, and migrant and seasonal farmworker children; and keeps states and districts on task with the work they began this year to ensure all students have equitable access to excellent educators.

There is much to be figured out as the nation moves to implement the new law, but the White House and the U.S. Department of Education have released a number of materials to help educate the public about the ESSA, including:

- a [White House fact sheet](#) on ESSA;
- a [White House report](#) on progress made in elementary and secondary education and how ESSA will cement that progress;

- Secretary Duncan’s blog post, “[Finally a Fix to No Child Left Behind](#)”;
- Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council Cecilia Munoz’s blog post “[What You Need to Know About the Fix to No Child Left Behind](#)” (with a side-by-side comparison of NCLB, ESEA flexibility, and ESSA);
- [excerpts](#) from the Secretary Duncan’s prepared remarks at the Learning Forward conference; and
- a Dear Colleague letter from both Secretary Duncan and incoming Acting Secretary King on ESSA.

Many of these materials are posted on the Department’s [ESEA web page](#), and additional materials will be posted as they become available. In the meantime, questions may be directed to [ESSA.questions@ed.gov](mailto:ESSA.questions@ed.gov).

## **12. U.S. Department of Education releases latest National Education Technology Plan, provide professional learning resources**

Yesterday (December 10), the U.S. Department of Education released the latest [National Education Technology Plan](#) and announced new commitments to support personalized professional learning for district leaders working to improve teaching and student achievement through the effective use of technology. Updated every five years, the plan is the flagship educational-technology policy document for the country. The latest plan outlines a vision of equity, active use, and collaborative leadership to make everywhere, all-the-time learning possible. While acknowledging the continuing need to provide greater equity of access to technology itself, the plan goes further to call upon all involved in American education to ensure equity of

access to transformational learning experiences enabled by technology.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Education celebrated the one-year anniversary of the [Future Ready initiative](#) with the announcement of new commitments, including the launch of 17 statewide Future Ready initiatives. Since the launch of Future Ready in 2014, more than 2,000 superintendents have signed the [pledge](#) and committed to foster and lead a culture of digital learning in their district and to share what they have learned with other districts.

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Technology unveiled a set of [professional learning resources](#) to help superintendents and their teams effectively lead the transition to digital learning. These resources include personalizable video playlists for district leaders that highlight exemplary, peer-based stories and practices from districts across the nation.

### **From other federal agencies**

#### **13. After-school, out-of-school programs eligible for youth-program awards**

The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, in partnership with other federal agencies, is seeking applications from after-school and out-of-school programs for the 2016 [National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards](#). Twelve applicants will receive \$10,000. The deadline for applications is **February 2**.

### **From other organizations**

**14. Heinemann Publishing seeks applicants for class of Heinemann Fellows to advance teaching profession**

Heinemann Publishing is seeking applicants to become part of its newest class of Heinemann Fellows, a small group of educators who exhibit exceptional promise for concentrated, enhanced pedagogy. This talented fellowship of individuals will pursue the shared goal of advancing the teaching profession. Any K-12 teacher or administrator is eligible, regardless of amount of experience or position held. Learn more at:

<http://www.heinemann.com/fellows/application/>

**15. Winter Standards Institute to be held in Boston in February**

The Standards Institute will hold its Winter Standards Institute from February 17 through 20, in Boston. The institute is an opportunity for a community of practitioners to think deeply about their work, get smarter about research and materials, and confront the challenges of meeting high standards with all students. Registration will open soon and will be accessible through the Institute website: [standardsinstitutes.org](http://standardsinstitutes.org).

**16. R.I. high-school students invited to participate in Clean Tech Competition**

The Clean Tech Competition is an international research-and-design challenge for 15-to-18 year-old pre-university students. This is a prestigious educational opportunity for students across the world that challenges students to be innovative while

encouraging their passion for the sciences, and invite the students in Rhode Island schools to participate in this year's competition.

Each year, the Clean Tech Competition encourages scientific understanding of real-world issues and the integration of environmentally responsible energy sources.

The 2016 Challenge, "[Making an Impact](#)," asks students to develop a clean-technology solution to the problems associated with plastics or the need for clean, cheap energy.

Teams consist of 1 to 3 students and are assisted by a team leader (i.e. parent, teacher, or mentor) to develop a written proposal.

There is no entry fee. Online registration opens Monday (December 14). First Round [Paper Submissions](#) are due March 18.

10 Finalist Teams are selected, given a \$200 stipend, and matched with a Mentor to help them prepare a [Prototype and presentation](#) for the Finalist Event. Finalists compete for the \$10,000 grand [prize](#) and "Continued Mentorship" at the 2016 Final event, which will take place on a cruise from Miami to the Dominican Republic.

See the official competition website, at [www.cleantechcompetition.org](http://www.cleantechcompetition.org)

We look forward to having students from Rhode Island in the Clean Tech Competition this year and in years to come.

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

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