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Friday, February 20, 2015

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Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. **PARCC testing begins in some partner states, R.I. to begin March 16**

Some of our partner states in the PARCC consortium have begun administering the first PARCC online assessments, and the early reports are that the process is proceeding smoothly. In Ohio, students have begun more than 100,000 PARCC assessments. There have been reports of a few minor glitches, some of them having to do with the assessment itself (e.g., an issue with a read-aloud portion of the mathematics assessment for students needing that accommodation). Other issues have been local, such as delays in logging into the system. The Pearson Call Center and the PARCC consortium have been able to resolve all of these issues. The good news for us is that the Ohio testing is something of a trial run, and we would expect Pearson to resolve all of the system-wide issues by the time we begin our assessments on March 16.

I have written a commentary on PARCC for the Providence Journal, which I expect the Journal to publish on Sunday. Here is what I have submitted:

> In Rhode Island, we have successfully administered state assessments in mathematics, reading, writing, and science for many years. Assessments play a vital role in the instructional process. They provide information to parents and families about the progress their children are making in school, they provide teachers with information about what support their students may need, and they provide all of us with information about how well our schools are making progress.

Because our new assessments, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, or PARCC, are aligned with our current learning standards, participation by all students helps school leaders understand whether classroom instruction is lining up with what students need to know. Teachers and schools will improve instruction based on this information.

In addition, participation in high-quality annual assessments enables all of us to see whether schools and districts are doing all they can to help students succeed. Parents and students deserve to know to what extent schools are meeting students' needs and where schools need to improve.

PARCC assessments began this week (February 17) in some partner states. We will begin PARCC assessments in Rhode Island next month, and by the end of March about 5 million students nationwide will participate in PARCC. Rhode Islanders should be proud that we have joined with other leading states, including Maryland, Massachusetts, and New Jersey, to develop this high-quality set of assessments. For the first time, Rhode Island communities will be able to compare their results with results from similar communities in these and other high-performing states.

PARCC assessment results will be useful for informing instruction and determining student progress, but this year's assessments will give us only a baseline. This year's results will not be used to determine eligibility for graduation until 2017 at the earliest, nor will we use this year's results to identify low-performing schools or for educator evaluations. While there may be no perfect moment at which to begin a

new assessment, we need to begin somewhere in order to set a starting point from which we can measure future progress.

PARCC assessments are designed to measure whether students have attained proficiency on the Common Core State Standards, which Rhode Island adopted more than *four years ago.* Thousands of educators have participated in professional development preparing them for transition to the Common Core. We are now in the 3rd year of full implementation of the Common Core in *all* of our schools. Clearly, our teachers and students should be – and are – ready for PARCC assessments.

Depending on their grade level, students will take the PARCC assessments in 8 or 9 sessions spread out over the next three months. The testing time per session ranges from one hour to 90 minutes (although students will have extra time to complete the work, if needed). The total scheduled PARCC testing time is at most 11 ¼ hours (for some high-school students), which amounts to roughly 1 percent of the total instructional time (990 hours) in the school year.

The PARCC assessments are well aligned with what students are expected to know and be able to do at each grade level. For example, the PARCC literacy tests require students to read passages of a text and answer questions about what they've read, drawing specific examples from the text. This kind of work takes place, and should take place, every day in our classrooms. Students who master this kind of reading, writing, and thinking will do well in class – and on the assessments.

We expect all students to participate in state assessments, just as they participate in all other aspects of public education once they enroll in school.

If you are a parent who has questions or concerns about our state assessments, I encourage you to discuss your concerns with your child's teachers or with the principal of your child's school. I am confident that you will recognize the importance and benefits of annual assessments and that, when you have the information you need, you will understand the benefits of participation in PARCC.

In the end, we all want the best possible education for all of our children. The results of state assessments help us meet this goal. Assessments provide parents with valuable information about student and school progress; assessments also provide teachers with information they need to improve teaching and learning.

2. **First edition of Rhode Island Blended Chronicle available**

The Blended Chronicle quarterly e-publication is dedicated to documenting and sharing experiences and raising awareness of the blended-learning educational movement occurring in Rhode Island. The theme of how technology is changing and improving the educational landscape for both students and adults is woven throughout the articles found in the first edition.

[The Blended Chronicle](#) is posted on the RIDE website, along with other resources supporting blended learning. The Blended Chronicle is made possible through contributions from educators across the state. We are eagerly seeking educators, consultants, parents, and policy-makers engaged in work around blended

learning to contribute to the Blended Chronicle. Public schools in Rhode Island are making amazing strides in the digital transition, and we want to showcase the groundbreaking work. Contact Holly Walsh (holly.walsh@ride.ri.gov) for more information about the Blended Chronicle.

3. High schools to hold elections for student advisory council

Current state law requires that high schools hold elections for members of a student advisory council, whose chairperson will serve as a nonvoting member of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. Next week, I will send this communication to all high-school principals:

> As we work together to make important decisions about transforming education in Rhode Island, it is important to all of us that the voice of students is always a part of the process. To ensure that the voice of students is heard at the highest levels, current state law calls for the establishment of a student advisory council to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. The legislation (RIGL 16-60-2[c]) states that the student advisory council shall consist of one elected high-school student representative from each public secondary school in Rhode Island.
>
> According to the law, each public secondary school shall hold elections for its representative no earlier than March 1 and no later than the end of the second full week in April (this year, April 17). Each high school shall select one representative, and that student must be enrolled as a student in grade 9, 10, or 11. Members of the student advisory council will serve from the May 1 of the year they are elected until the last day of April of the following year.

I encourage you to begin the election process in your school as soon as possible. By April 24, please forward the name of the individual who will represent your high school on the student advisory council to Angela Teixeira (angela.teixeira@ride.ri.gov), in the Commissioner's Office at RIDE. Once we receive the names of all of the students on the student advisory council, we will plan for an organizational meeting in May.

Finally, the law also stipulates that, before June 1, the student advisory council shall elect a chairperson from among its members. During the week of April 27, we will seek the names of those who wish to be considered for the position of chairperson. The chairperson will serve as an ex officio and nonvoting member of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education for a term of one year, beginning on June 1.

Please feel free to call Angela Teixeira, at 222-8435, if you have questions or would like additional information about the student advisory council.

4. **High-school students receive Prudential Spirit of Community Awards**

Congratulations to Kayleigh Lapre, of Cumberland High School, winner of a Prudential Spirit of Community Award for her "outstanding acts of volunteerism." Among her many volunteer activities, Kayleigh collected more than 1,700 pairs of jeans and donated them to children in homeless shelters across the country. Kayleigh will receive a $1,000 award and a trip to Washington, D.C., with award-winners from the others states. Congratulations

also to Grace D'Antuono, of North Kingstown High School, who was selected as a "distinguished finalist" for her fundraising work on behalf of the American Cancer Society. Kayleigh and Grace are great examples of students who represent generosity, community involvement, and caring for others – values important to our schools and our society.

From RIDE

Instructional Support System:

5. **LEAs can link local assessment data to the Instructional Support System**

We are pleased to announce the availability of local assessment data within the RIDE statewide Instructional Support System. This capability offers real-time aggregated data alongside the other data metrics within the system to provide a more complete view of student achievement. This optional capability is currently available for the STAR assessment data from Renaissance Learning. Renaissance Learning securely transfers all data to the Instructional Support System, allowing quick analysis of data and offering insights into student learning

If you would like to integrate your STAR data into the Instructional Support System, you need to complete a data-sharing agreement with Renaissance Learning. To complete the data-sharing agreement, please email or call Renaissance Learning (support@renaissance.com or 800-388-4204) and indicate that you would like to begin sharing your STAR data in the Instructional Support System. A data-sharing agreement will be deployed and available on your Renaissance Place site. Once you've authorized

the data-sharing agreement, it will signal Renaissance to securely connect your STAR data with the Instructional Support System.

Information regarding the integration of other local-assessment vendors will be released in the near future. If you have any questions or concerns about the local-assessment integration, please contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

Professional Development:

6. **RIDE posts new professional development resources for mathematics educators**

RIDE is pleased to announce the posting of several new mathematics professional development (PD) modules on our website. Elementary-school educators will benefit from updated fraction modules that are now presented in a tech-based, interactive format. Middle-school and high-school teachers can investigate the notion of function as developed in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) or dig deeply into explorations with reflections, rotations, translations, and dilations. All educators can benefit from PD installments addressing the use of PARCC tools to develop and vet assessment materials. Follow this link and click on the "Educators" tab to access each of the modules listed below:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/Mathematics/CommonCoreStateStandardsforMathematics.aspx

- CCSS Interactive Professional Development Fraction Modules:

Connecting the Standards for Mathematical Practice to Fraction Instruction
Implementing the Fraction Content Standards
Number Line Use with Fractions
- Functions and the Common Core: Implications for Planning and Teaching
- Formalizing the Concept of Transformations in High School Geometry
- Using PARCC Tools to Develop Assessments in:
Grades 3 – 5
Grades 6 – 8
High School

Assessments: Alternate

7. Testing window set for NCSC alternate assessments; RIDE to update LEAs on registration process

The test window for the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) Alternate Assessment in ELA and mathematics is March 30 through May 15. All students eligible for alternate assessment in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11 will take the NCSC alternate assessments in ELA and mathematics. The NCSC replaces the Rhode Island Alternate Assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics.

RIDE will be speaking with LEA data managers next week on the District Data Manager's call on March 3 about the process for registering students and teachers for this assessment and about how RIDE will support that effort. Student registration for NCSC will begin in early March.

8. LEAs to receive alternate-assessment student details for review

Districts have been doing a great job at getting ready for the PARCC testing, however, we also need to start thinking about the alternate assessment for students with severe learning disabilities. The school details will be prepopulated in the testing site. The student details will be pulled from eRIDE and distributed to LEAs for review. Once the student data files are accurate, you can then upload the files, along with the teacher information, to the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) testing site.

Assessments: PARCC

9. **LEAs urged to perform infrastructure trials**

Infrastructure trials are an important milestone in determining the technology readiness for the PARCC assessment. It has been determined that those LEAs that have performed infrastructure trials have had significantly fewer issues during the testing block than those LEAs that did not do an infrastructure trial. It is highly recommended that you perform at least one infrastructure trial. Pearson, the testing vendor for PARCC, has documentation regarding how to configure [Windows and Mac PCs](), along with [mobile devices and Chromebooks](). It is important to run an infrastructure trial, even if you have run one in the past, as the technology for PARCC testing is constantly being updated and enhanced. All of Pearson's documentation for the PARCC testing can be found at http://parcc.pearson.com/technology-setup/.

10.   LEAs reminded to maintain, update student records

You must maintain your Student Information System at the local level, along with the Performance Based Assessment (PBA) and the End of Year (EOY) assessment blocks in PearsonAccessNext. We have released documentation on how to maintain student registration information within PearsonAccessNext. This documentation, along with all of the RIDE-generated technology documentation, can be found on the [RideMap District Exchange public PARCC Toolkit folder](#).

It is important that you export your student data from PearsonAccessNext to verify that you have the most accurate information about your students. You can import this data into excel to update any student information and then import it into PearsonAccessNext to make the updates. If you do not follow this process, you could overwrite any updates that you or users in your LEA may have made to student records. You could also overwrite any updates to critical warnings, and that would need to be corrected. Always use the most recent export files for file maintenance; do not use the original spreadsheets used for the initial student upload.

As you may know, we have been running scripts to resolve critical warnings within the PBA and EOY assessment blocks. The scripts update only student records that have no value associated with the warning so as not to overwrite your LEA's student data. However, if the correct process of maintaining student records is not followed, these critical warnings are reintroduced into PearsonAccessNext and will need to be corrected again. The scripts correct 95 percent of the critical warnings; the rest have been placed in your LEA document folder on [District Exchange](#). These critical warnings need to be cleared by your test coordinator.

11. LEAs asked to review results of RIDE validation of student records

We are currently in the process of validating PARCC data against the data collected within eRIDE. This process is to ensure that the accountability reporting has the most accurate data possible and that the LEas are provided with a precise representation of their student population. This validation is based on version 2.0 of the SCED codes and is one of the reasons for getting this software updated.

We have completed the first validation on the math tests, and the results of this validation can be found in your document folder on District Exchange. The math validation looked at the number of students within the school assigned to the eRIDE SCED code for Algebra I, Geometry and Integrated Math; it then counted the number of equivalent mathematics courses associated with the school within PearsonAccessNext. We also did a logic test on the grade level at which these tests are to be administered. The results for this validation is an excel file within your LEA-level document folder on District Exchange. The last four columns tell you if a school has any irregularities and what those irregularities may be, based on the column. The items marked in red are where the numbers do not match and where you need to update the PearsonAccessNext student registration or the student's SIS with the proper course identifier. Those records in yellow are where there was a value in eRIDE, but no value in PARCC. This could occur because students are not required to take a PARCC test, such as 12th graders. These records need to be verified and updated.

12. RIDE to take snapshot of student registrations on March 14

On March 14, we will take a snapshot of your student registrations that will be used for accountability; this date has been moved back from the March 6 so as to reduce the number of data reviews for the LEAs. This snapshot will be used to validate and clean the data for accountability reporting. It is critical that you ensure that your student registration data is as accurate as possible by **March 1**4, especially the resolution of duplicates.

13.   **Process for ordering additional PARCC materials opens March 3**

As students are enrolled in LEAs or as the needs of a student change, you may need to order additional paper material. This can be accomplished during the Additional Order window that starts on **March 3**. In the [PARCC toolkit on District Exchange](), you will find the Pearson and RIDE instructions regarding the process for ordering additional material during this window.

14.   **Procedure in place for resolving issues regarding PARCC testing**

Please call the Pearson call center first with any issues regarding PearsonAccessNext or PARCC testing. When you call, write down and keep track of the ticket number they assign to your incident. We have been working with the call center management to improve the experience and quality of the interaction with the call center agents. If you believe any incidents that are not resolved by the call center need to be escalated, contact to Greg Martin, at [Gregory.martin@ride.ri.gov]() . There is a process in place for Pearson to review these escalated incidents.

### 15.	Contact established for questions about PARCC technology preparedness

If you have any questions or concerns about PARCC technology preparedness, please contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

### 16.	PARCC seeks schools to participate in field test of literacy tasks

The PARCC consortium is looking for schools to participate in a spring 2015 field test of tasks for the English language arts/literacy (ELA/L) performance-based assessments in grades 3 through 11. The purpose of the field test is to examine the quality of newly developed performance-based tasks to help determine whether they should be included on PARCC assessments in the next school year. For the other PARCC assessment components, field-test items are embedded in the tests students are already taking. Because the ELA/L performance-based assessment (PBA) requires longer written responses from students, this separate field test is being conducted.

Three types of performance-based tasks will be field tested in spring 2015: narrative writing, research simulation, and literary analysis. Each student participating in the PARCC ELA/L PBA field test will take *one* task, which will require approximately 60 to 90 minutes, depending on grade level and task type. During the registration process, schools will sign up to administer a particular grade level and task type. Information about the unit time for each task type is listed in the table below. Schools may administer the ELA/L field test any time between May 4 and June 5.

Schools and districts that are interested in participating in the ELA/L PBA field test should complete the interest survey linked here:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PARCC_ELA_FT.

The survey asks which grade levels and tasks schools are interested in field testing.

Please note these three registration deadlines for the field test:

- The deadline for registration for paper-based assessments is **March 13**.
- The deadline for online registration in order to receive printed computer-based manuals is also **March 13**.
- The deadline for online computer-based assessment registration (print computer-based manuals from PDFs in Avocet) is **April 2**4.

Data Quality:

17.   LEAs reminded to update to SCED version 2.0

We have been monitoring the School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) version 2.0 migration in our Teacher-Course-Student data, and we still see some LEAs with version 1.0 codes coming in. These version 1.0 codes are integrated with the Instructional Support System, among other systems and resources that rely on the version 2.0 codes. LEAs are asked to update to SCED 2.0. If you have any questions or concerns about this version update, please contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

Data Collections:

18. Funding Formula collection data due March 16 – *Action Item*

Funding Formula Data will be pulled on Monday, March 16, at 9 a.m. Please make sure your LEAs calendar is up to date, including adjustments for snow days. The following fields in the Enrollment Census will be used for the funding formula: enroll_type, enroll_date, exit_date, lunch, and distCode_res. All duplicates need to be addressed.

Please review the Outside Enrollment file download (the second-to-last report in the Report Types dropdown) to ensure that your outplaced students are showing up correctly. For information on this report, please review the [Enrollment Census FAQ document](). If you see records in your file that you believe are incorrect, or if there are missing records, please make sure you contact the other LEAs to resolve discrepancies.

Once the review of the data is complete, the following reports will need to be reviewed, signed, and submitted to RIDE: Snapshot, Submission, and State Calculated ADM. Due to the nature of these data, the reports will need to be pulled during a specific timeframe on the March 16 that we will set at a later date. The [Calculating ADM document]() explains how the Average Daily Membership is calculated for the reports.

If you have any questions about Funding formula data, please enter a helpdesk ticket, at https://support.ride.ri.gov.

From the U.S. Department of Education

19. U.S. Department of Education provides resources on preventing teen dating violence

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

February is [National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month](#). Learning how to spot the signs of an abusive relationship can make a dramatic impact on the lives of teens suffering from dating violence – and could also save lives.

According to the [Centers for Disease and Control Prevention](#) (CDC), teen dating violence includes the physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional violence that may occur within a relationship. In many cases, teens in abusive relationships experience severe psychological conflict which can lead to changes in their behavior. Some [warning signs](#) to watch out for include increased levels of aggression, isolation from family and friends, and erratic mood swings. If you suspect a teen is experiencing an abusive relationship or are unsure of the warning signs, the [National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline](#) will offer immediate and confidential support.

The U.S. Department of Education, its federal partners, and a growing number of schools nationwide are committed to increasing awareness of teen dating violence by educating the public about healthy relationships. We recognize that the real work of preventing teen dating violence and sexual assault happens at the local level, in schools, in homes, and in community centers across the nation. Schools must clearly communicate that they will not tolerate violence of

any kind, will respond to any students who report it, and will hold offenders accountable.

We remain dedicated to vigorously enforcing compliance with [Title IX](#) and the [Clery Act](#) – laws that make our schools safer. The following resources provide more information to support schools and communities in their efforts to create safe, healthy learning environments and identify, investigate, and remedy sexual assault, domestic violence and teen dating violence:

- [Not Alone](#)
- [1 Is 2 Many](#)
- [A Fact Sheet for Schools – Teen Dating Violence in the United States](#)
- [Sexual Harassment Resources](#)
- [Letter from the Education Secretary on Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention](#)
- [Get Smart, Get Help, Get Safe](#)
- [ED Policy Briefing – Protecting Students from Teen Dating Violence and Sexual Assault](#)
- [Office for Civil Rights' Dear Colleague Letter on Sexual Violence](#)

20.   **Information available on E-Rate support, Every Kid in a Park initiative, Women's History Month, School Meals Day**

Please see these notices from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach:

In a blog post and video, Education Secretary Arne Duncan urged all local superintendents and technology directors to get their schools and libraries "up to speed" by requesting E-Rate support for internal Wi-Fi network upgrades. The U.S. Department of Education has prepared an Infrastructure Guide to help leaders navigate the many decisions required to deliver cutting-edge connectivity to students, although schools and libraries have final say when they submit an application to the Universal Service Administrative Company for approval. (Note: The deadline for requests is February 26, while the deadline for applications is March 26.)

President Obama is committed to giving every child the chance to explore America's great outdoors and unique history. That is why he has launched the Every Kid in a Park initiative (fact sheet), calling on federal agencies to help get all children to visit and enjoy the outdoors and inspire a new generation of Americans to experience the country's public lands and waters. Starting in September, every fourth-grader in the nation will receive a pass for free admission to all of America's federal lands and waters – for them and their families – for a full year.

March is Women's History Month. Need help planning education activities? The Federal Registry for Educational Excellence (FREE) website offers free teaching and learning resources from federal agencies.

Schools around the world are encouraged to celebrate International School Meals Day on March 5 by promoting healthy eating and learning, using the theme "Celebrating Culture Through Food."

From other organizations

21.   Registration open for conference on Whole Child Education in Action

Please see this message from Learning First Alliance/Rhode Island:

The statewide Learning First Alliance/Rhode Island conference on Saturday, March 14 (from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.), at Johnston High School, will feature 29 workshops demonstrating best practice in classrooms, schools, districts, and communities in Rhode Island. Conference strands will be organized around threads that demonstrate how schools, parents, and communities work together to see that children and youth are healthy, safe, supported, engaged, and challenged. The workshops will showcase ways that is happening in Rhode Island.

The target audience for this conference will include teachers, administrators, policy-makers, school-committee members, counselors, community leaders, higher-education practitioners, and others.

Register for this conference at www.lfari.org.

22.   Highlander Institute Blended Learning Conference scheduled for March 7

Please see this notice from the Highlander Institute:

The Highland Institute's 4th Annual Blended Learning Conference will be held on Saturday, March 7, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. The conference will convene local, regional, and

national experts sharing their models, products, and insights to support innovative classroom practices around blended learning and technology integration. The conference will be held at the URI Providence Feinstein Campus, 80 Washington St. For more information and to register visit:

https://www.eventbright.com/e/3015-blended-learning-technology-conference-tickets-14877106827

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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