Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, March 25, 2016

Notes from Commissioner Wagner

1. [State of Education](#) address scheduled for Wednesday

2. [PARCC](#) assessments begin in R.I. on Monday

3. Report: R.I. making progress toward closing [achievement gaps](#)

4. RIDE receives grant to build [assessment literacy](#) among educators

5. CCSSO releases report on [early learning](#)

6. Woonsocket career-technical center to launch [computer-science](#) pathway

7. Cranston student wins [financial-literacy](#) essay competition

8. Sharon Lee honored with 2016 [Champion Award](#) from NESSC

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

Health and Safety:

9. Annual [School Health Report](#) forms, template to be posted **Monday** (March 28)

Instruction:

10. Webinars on [computer science](#) scheduled for next week

11. Webinars scheduled on [dual and concurrent enrollment](#)

From other institutions and organizations

12. Educators invited to apply for new URI graduate program in [dual-language immersion](#)

13. Conference for teachers on [teaching *Hamlet*](#) scheduled for **April 16**

14. Student filmmakers invited to submit work to [Teen Film Festival](#); application deadline, **April 15**

Action Item Calendar

Thursday (March 31): [Textbook Data Collection – Due](#)
April 1 – Educator [Induction](#) Survey due
April 22 – [Student Advisory Council](#) selections due
June 20 – Reports on [interventions](#) due

Notes from Commissioner Wagner

1. **State of Education address scheduled for Wednesday**

On Wednesday I will deliver the annual State of Education Address before a joint session of the General Assembly. I will discuss a number of ways in which we can support our students, our schools, and our families, including skills development through advanced coursework, innovations in how we do schooling, and empowerment for schools and for families. We invite you to join us for this event: Wednesday, March 30, at 4:45 p.m., in the House Chamber at the State House.

2. PARCC assessments begin in R.I. on Monday

On Monday, the first window for Rhode Island 2016 PARCC testing opens. As you know, the PARCC tests this year will be considerably shorter than last year's assessments and students will take the tests during only one testing window (rather than the two testing windows required last year). You have been able to select from several options in scheduling your PARCC assessments, so only some schools will begin testing on Monday; others will begin next month or (for some paper-based assessments) in early May. Reports from states that have already begun PARCC testing indicate that everything is proceeding smoothly. Let's hope for smooth operations, high participation rates, and a low-key, low-stress testing process for the coming weeks.

3. Report: R.I. making progress toward closing achievement gaps

A report that Education Cities released this week, "Education Equality in America: Comparing the Achievement Gap across Schools, Cities, and States," features an Education Equality Index. The index shows that we are making progress in closing achievement gaps (between students in low-income families and all other students). Over the past five years, Rhode Island ranks 2nd in the country in the rate of progress toward narrowing these achievement gaps. The report shows that we rank 16th in the country (of the 34 ranked states) in the size of our achievement gaps. Let's continue making progress toward improving student

achievement while narrowing achievement gaps. You can access the report here:

http://www.educationequalityindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Education-Equality-in-America-v1-3.pdf

4. **RIDE receives grant to build assessment literacy among educators**

On Wednesday the Center for Innovation in Education and Next Generation Learning Challenges awarded us a $205,000 grant to launch the Performance Assessment for Learning Micro-Credential Project. Through this project, in partnership with the Center for Collaborative Education and the Center for Teaching Quality, we will develop an innovative model for building assessment literacy among Rhode Island educators. As part of the project we plan to hold a Performance Assessment for Learning Institute, open to all Rhode Island educators. We remain committed to using assessments to support teaching and learning and to working with schools and districts to develop assessment literacy and stakeholder understanding of assessments.

5. **CCSSO releases report on early learning**

Today, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) released Equity Starts Early: How Chiefs Will Build High-Quality Early Education, a report outlining five steps that, coupled with high-quality K-12 education, will contribute to strengthening student outcomes through college and careers.

The CCSSO states that the goal of this report is to recognize the successes states have made since state chiefs first publicly acknowledged the "quiet crisis" threatening the future of young children from families of need in 2009 and to recommend next steps

for states to improve access to high-quality early-childhood education for all children. The report outlines five strategies:

- engage families and communities in early learning;
- connect early-childhood programs and elementary schools;
- accelerate improvement and innovation in early-childhood programs;
- build a high-performing early-childhood workforce; and
- increase investment to provide high-quality, voluntary early-childhood education for all children.

For more information, you can download the [full report](#).

6. Woonsocket career-technical center to launch computer-science pathway

Two weeks ago, Governor Raimondo launched a computer-science initiative – CS4RI – with the goal of having every school in Rhode Island offering instruction in computer science by the December 2017. Some of our schools are ahead of the curve, such as the Woonsocket Area Career & Technical Center. The Valley Breeze newspaper reports that Woonsocket schools have made major investments in technology over the past two years, and, with support from the nonprofit organization Prepare to Lead the Way, the Woonsocket Area Career & Technical Center is ready to launch a three-year computer-science pathway this fall. The Woonsocket district is also developing a plan to offer instruction in computer science at the elementary-school level. Good work, Woonsocket!

7. Cranston student wins financial-literacy essay competition

Timothy Dietrich, a student at the Edward S. Rhodes School, in Cranston, is the Rhode Island winner in the SIFMA Foundation Fall 2015 InvestWrite Competition for elementary-school students. In the competition, students write essays that put their knowledge of financial literacy to the test. Timothy's teacher, James Gemma, administered the InvestWrite essay competition in his class. Congratulations to all on this award.

8. **Sharon Lee honored with 2016 Champion Award from NESSC**

The New England Secondary School Consortium has honored our former colleague Sharon Lee with a 2016 Champion Award for her unique contributions to the effort to raise graduation rates, lower dropout rates, and send more students on to college and postsecondary-certification programs in Rhode Island.

Sharon recently retired from her position as the director of our Office of Multiple Pathways. Her responsibilities at RIDE included supervision of adult basic education and general education development (GED), career and technical education, secondary education, Rhode Island graduation requirements, and virtual-learning education. Sharon worked at both the state and regional levels to provide all learners with access to high-quality personalized-learning environments so as to ensure that our graduates are ready for success. Congratulations, Sharon!

From RIDE

Health and Safety:

9. **Annual School Health Report forms, template to be posted Monday (March 28)**

The *Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs,* Section 2.5, require all LEAs and nonpublic-school authorities to submit to the Commissioner of Education and to the Director of Health on an annual basis a report pertaining to the school or district health program. The Annual School Health Report provides a standardized template to fulfill this reporting requirement and allows RIDE and the Department of Health to monitor school and district compliance with school health-related statutes, regulations, and protocols that ensure the health and safety of students and staff at all Rhode Island schools.

To ensure compliance with school health and safety statutes and regulations and to align with the beginning of each academic school year, this Annual School Health Report will apply to academic year 2016-17.

The Annual School Health Report template will be available through eRIDE on **Monday** (March 28). You will receive an e-mail notification from RIDE when the report is open for completion and submission via eRIDE.

For a preview of the Annual School Health Report and for assistance in understanding what will be required, please see the [Annual School Health Report Tutorial](#) and [Guidance/Q&A document](#).

Instruction:

10. **Webinars on computer science scheduled for next week**

Three webinars have been scheduled for teachers and school leaders interested in learning more about the upcoming computer-science opportunities – through CS4RI initiative – in our schools. Attendees will learn about the various options our partners are offering, about how to make decisions to expand computer-science opportunities within their

district or at their schools, and how to get involved with various professional-learning opportunities for educators across the state. More information can be found at http://CSS4RI.org. Register for the webinars through the links below:

Monday (March 28), from 3 to 4 p.m.
CS4RI - High School Opportunities

Tuesday (March 29), from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.
CS4RI - Middle School Opportunities

Wednesday (March 30), from 3 to 4 p.m.
CS4RI - Elementary School Opportunities

11.   Webinars scheduled on dual and concurrent enrollment

The Board of Education recently approved the concurrent-enrollment course list for the coming school year. To aid in your planning, we have scheduled webinars for district and school administrators and staff to address the School Year 2016-17 dual-and concurrent-enrollment opportunities. These webinars are intended to share information for the coming year, which will build on the current year's implementation of the new Dual and Concurrent Coursework Regulations and the launch of Governor Raimondo's PrepareRI fund.

Please join us for a webinar on one of the following dates:

- Monday, April 4 at 1 p.m. - Register Here.
- Monday, April 11 at 9:30 a.m. - Register Here.
- Thursday, April 14 at 11 a.m. - Register Here.

For more information about dual or concurrent enrollment, please visit ride.ri.gov/dualenrollment or email Steve Osborn, Chief of Accelerating School Performance, at Stephen.Osborn@ride.ri.gov.

From other institutions and organizations

12.   Educators invited to apply for new URI graduate program in dual-language immersion

The University of Rhode Island School of Education invites applications for a new online graduate program in TESOL/Dual Language Immersion. There are two tracks for this program: (1) teacher certification for public PK-12 educators working with ELLs in ESL education, amd (2) teacher certification for PK-12 educators teaching in Bilingual/Dual Language Immersion settings. Please contact the School of Education at 874-4068 for information. Application materials can be found at:

http://web.uri.edu/graduate-school/apply/.

13.   Conference for teachers on teaching *Hamlet* scheduled for April 16

The Play's the Thing: Teaching *Hamlet*, Page *and* Stage -- A conference for middle- and high-school teachers, will take place on Saturday, **April 16**, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., at the Granoff Center, Brown University.

Teaching Shakespeare's *Hamlet* so that students appreciate, enjoy, and understand this timeless masterwork is both a privilege and a challenge. Why should students have this opportunity? What is there in the story and situation of a lonely grieving son that has resonated through the ages? How can students most effectively encounter *Hamlet* in ways that bring its narrative, language and characters to life?

Three exemplary, experienced teachers will share their approaches to teaching this timeless play. In a series of fast-paced, on-your-feet workshops, we will address methods of approaching the text in ways that all students will find relevant and comprehensible.

Presenters will model the choices they make with both the text and their students in mind, focusing on the arc of the narrative and the rich, memorable—but admittedly unfamiliar—language. We will work with selections from the text, including its renowned soliloquys in a performance-based approach designed to bring *Hamlet*, its story, language, and characters to life.

Presenters:

> Theresa Fox: Nathan Bishop Middle School
> Steve Kidd: Moses Brown School and Sandra Feinstein Gamm Theater
> Eileen Landay: Brown University ArtsLiteracy Project
> Martha Douglas-Osmundson, Lincoln School and Shakespeare in the City

The conference is free, but space is limited. To register, go to: https://library.brown.edu/create/firstfolio. See "The play's the thing" under "Programming."

This conference is linked to "First Folio! The Book That Gave Us Shakespeare," a national traveling exhibition organized by the Folger Shakespeare Library, in Washington, D.C., to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. The First Folio will be on display at the Granoff Center, 154 Angell St., Brown University, April 11 through May 1. This exhibit is free and open to the public.

**14.	Student filmmakers invited to submit work to Teen Film Festival; application deadline, April 15**

Rhode Island students who are filmmakers can apply with a 5-minute (or less) film to be screened at the annual GiveMe5 Teen Film Festival, to be held Saturday, May 14, at 7 p.m., at the Odeum Theatre, in East Greenwich. The event is free and open to the public. All student filmmakers selected for the festival will also receive feedback on their work from a professional panel, including the Director of the R.I. Film and Television Office. The festival application deadline is **April 15**.

You can access the application here:

> http://www.arts.ri.gov/education/GiveMe5%20Festival%20Application%202016.pdf

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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