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Friday, April 3, 2015

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Notes from Commissioner Gist

- 1. PARCC tests completed in R.I. passes 100,000; blog argues against parental refusal, esp. for Hispanic families, students**

All Rhode Island educators deserve congratulations on the successful implementation of the first phase of PARCC assessments. Some school districts have reported incidents of parental refusal, but in most schools and districts students participated in the PARCC assessments and tried to show their best work. We are not formally collecting data on participation at this time; we will have data on participation rates when we receive our PARCC results sometime in the fall. As of this morning, we had 101,545 PARCC tests completed (i.e., completed all testing sessions for the Performance Based Assessment) online; we have no count at this time of tests completed in the paper-pencil version. As we prepare for the End of Year assessments that will begin next month, I thought you might want to see an excellent opinion piece that the Foundation for Excellence in Education posted on its EdFly Blog. This piece is by Wendy Rivera, a Florida parent and the CEO of the Multicultural Education Alliance:

I'm a mom. And the happiness of my children, now and in the future as they go on to start careers and families of their own, is on my mind all the time. That is the American Dream. We all want a better life for our children and do everything in our power to make that happen.

This desire led me to become president & CEO of the Multicultural Education Alliance. After working with policy experts, teachers, principals, and parents, I have come to the belief that measuring what students know and holding our system accountable to meeting high standards is one of the most critical levers to improving the quality of education our children receive.

And I am not the only one.

There is a reason why the National Council of La Raza, America's largest Latino advocacy organization, supports annual testing in schools.

And why it is joined by the League of United Latin American Citizens, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund and more than a dozen other civil rights groups.

They know the legacy of a system that often considered the success of minority and low-income children optional. Reversing that requires that every child is held to the same rigorous academic standards, and that the progress of every child in attaining them is measured.

Whether Black or Hispanic, artist or mathematician, American-born or naturalized citizens, our children must possess the same knowledge and skills to be successful after high school. We cannot set one bar for some students and another for the rest. They all need to be proficient readers. They all need to understand math, science, and civics. They all need to think critically.

But how do parents know their children are gaining this knowledge? Yes, they can and should talk to teachers. But they also need reliable, objective information that allows them to compare their children's academic achievement with others in the state.

The source for this information is high-quality, standardized tests that measure what students should know.

This is why colleges use entrance exams, why the military uses entrance exams, and why so many professions require passage of board exams to obtain a license.

Tests tell me how much progress my children are making from one year to the next, and whether they are on track for graduation and college or a career.

There are those who argue tests are unfair, that they put too much pressure on schools and children. But Florida shows that when held accountable, schools that once failed children can improve results dramatically. What is unfair is not preparing our kids to be successful after high school.

For the past 15 years, Florida has been raising academic standards for all children, and each time, our students have risen to meet them. The results for Hispanic students have proven that more than any other group. Prior to testing and accountability, between 60 and 70 percent of Florida's minority and low-income fourth graders could not even read at a basic level, contributing to a dismal graduation rate of about 50 percent. Those numbers have improved dramatically:

- Florida's Hispanic students' graduation rate increased 28 percentage points, from 47 percent in 1999 to 75 percent in 2014.
- Florida has eliminated the gap between Hispanic students and white students taking and completing AP courses and exams, according to the 2014 *College Board, [10th Annual Report to the Nation](#)*.

- Our state's Hispanic students outscored or matched the statewide average for all students in 34 states on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in fourth-grade reading in 2013.
- Florida's Hispanic fourth-graders rank first in the nation in reading and fourth in the nation in math, according to the [*Nation's Report Card*](#).

Despite this progress, I hear many parents, a growing number Hispanic, saying we should “opt out” of all tests and accountability connected to them.

I agree there are too many tests. Many of these are required by local districts and are being scaled back. In addition, the state is reassessing its requirements.

You cannot opt out of college, military, and professional exams. We have to make sure our students are prepared when the stakes are truly high.

The good news is there is an alternative to “opting out.” The phrase we often hear now is “fewer tests but better tests.” That is a good approach. Parents need to know how their students are faring in the fundamental subjects, and they need to know how their schools are performing as well. I understand there are frustrations, and state legislators and school districts have gotten that message. But returning to a past when so many children were allowed to fail (out of sight, out of mind) is not the answer.

Hispanics have never shied away from hard work and accountability. Let's come together and fight for a better solution.

A link to this blog post is here:

<http://excelined.org/2015/03/30/there-is-an-alternative-to-opting-out/>

And a link to a Spanish-language version of the post is here:

<http://excelined.org/2015/03/31/hay-una-alternativa-a-la-exclusion/>

2. Career-Technical board convenes; RIPEC releases report on career-technical education

In keeping with the Career and Technical Education regulations of 2012, we have been working together with our partners in business and industry to ensure that our career-technical programs, centers, and schools provide students exposure to the world of work, offer students the opportunity to learn technical and career-based skills aligned with industry standards, and enable students to earn credentials that will prepare them for postsecondary education and training programs or for entry into challenging careers. These regulations emphasize the need for a strong connection between career-technical education and the workforce and business community. Our goal is to ensure that all students have access to high-quality career-technical education that can lead them to rewarding jobs and to challenging careers.

As you may be aware, legislation approved last year established a Rhode Island Board of Trustees on Career and Technical Education, which held its introductory meeting yesterday (April 2).

To initiate the meeting, the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (RIPEC) has prepared a report on career and technical education, which is available [here](#). Among the conclusions of the report:

Although the report finds that many of the elements needed for a high-quality CTE system are already in place in Rhode Island, including dedicated and talented staff and a number of excellent programs, there are also significant deficiencies that need to be addressed. Most notably, the state's CTE system is not currently aligned to the needs of employers and numerous program gaps and duplications exist. Inconsistent program descriptions and data limitations hampered RIPEC's ability to fully determine how effectively the current system serves students and employers. Therefore, the report concludes that the Board of Trustees should examine alternative methods of data collection as part of a deeper analysis of Rhode Island's CTE system that should also include postsecondary and adult education programs.

Our team at RIDE looks forward to working in partnership with this new Board of Trustees to make sure that all students have access to high-quality career & technical education and that our career-technical programs, centers, and schools prepare students for successful entry into challenging careers that meet the needs of our growing economy.

3. Newport student selected as Governor for a Day

Congratulations to Khatima Bulwer, an 11-year-old student at the Thompson Middle School, in Newport, whom Governor Raimondo has chosen to be Governor for a Day. Khatima is the winner of

Governor Raimondo's Women's History Month essay contest. In her essay, Khatima wrote: "Being a biracial kid myself, I know that many kids and adults judge people by what they look like instead of their character. I would make Rhode Island a more multicultural and friendly place for everyone." What a wonderful goal, Khatima! We're all looking forward to your day of service as our honorary Governor.

4. Senator Reed receives appreciation award for support for adult education

On behalf of the National Council of State Directors of Adult Education, the RIDE adult-education specialist, Philip Less, presented an award of appreciation to Sen. Jack Reed. Senator Reed took the lead in inserting language into the Educational Sciences Reform Act to strengthen commitment to research on adult education. Senator Reed also co-authored a letter (signed by 25 colleagues) that called for full funding for adult education. The council also commended Dr. Less and the RIDE team on their work keeping Senator Reed informed on adult-education issues.

From RIDE

Educators:

5. RIDE seeks input on equity plan for educator assignments

By June 1, RIDE will need to submit to the U.S. Department of Education an equity plan focused on how Rhode Island will ensure that students in low-income areas and students of color are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers. Given the importance of this work and the valuable insights that the larger educational

community can contribute, we are hosting a series of stakeholder meetings in the coming weeks.

Please help us get the word out about these upcoming stakeholder sessions, where we will share data and engage in discussions about potential root causes of inequities. More information about each session is included in each link.

Educator engagement sessions for educators:

- **Monday:** [April 6, 4 - 6 p.m. at the Paul Cuffee Lower School, Providence](#)
- **Thursday:** [April 9, 4 - 6 p.m. at the Knotty Oak Room at Coventry High School](#)

Stakeholder engagement sessions for community members and parents:

- **Tuesday:** [April 7, 6 - 8 p.m. at the Knotty Oak Room at Coventry High School](#)
- [April 14, 6 - 8 p.m. at Paul Cuffee Lower School, Providence](#)

If you have any questions about these sessions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Lauren Matlach, at lauren.matlach@ride.ri.gov, or Lisa Foehr, at

6. Online renewal available for educators with certification expiring August 31

Online certification renewal is available for My eCert users who have Full certificates (Initial or Professional) expiring on August 31, 2015. This year, teachers and administrators who hold an

Initial certificate may progress to a Professional certificate when they have one Developing rating or higher within their renewal cycle. Teachers and administrators who are currently employed and do not have any previous ratings or who have 1 or more Ineffective ratings must wait until August 1 to renew. All teachers and administrators who hold a Professional certificate will renew as a Professional certificate. All support professionals will renew as the current level of their certificate.

At this time, all Preliminary certificates (One-year Professional, and Temporary Initial) as well as Permits (Substitute) must be renewed via a paper application. Please note that, as of spring 2013, RIDE discontinued mailing paper copies of certificates to educators. All certificates are sent by email only. Educators are encouraged to maintain a current email address in My eCert.

Educators always have access to their certification information via eCert. We appreciate all you do to remind members of your team to review the expiration dates of their certificates and to renew on time.

Questions about certification renewal? Contact the certification office by email, at eqac@ride.ri.gov.

Assessments:

7. NECAP science testing scheduled to begin May 4; LEAs reminded to create testing schedule

The NECAP Science testing window is May 4 through May 28 this year, and RIDE staff members will once again be visiting a random selection of schools across the state to observe the administration

of the tests. Rather than collect test-scheduling information from every LEA, we will collect it only from selected schools this year.

As a reminder, although RIDE will not be collecting NECAP Science test schedules this year, each LEA is still responsible for creating the testing schedule for all of its schools so that each of the tested grades (4, 8, and 11) has the same testing schedule (e.g., all 4th graders in the district are taking the science test on the same day at the roughly the same time). You should take into consideration religious holidays, if any, and local events that may affect students' ability to participate. Although you may opt to schedule around these dates, it is important that you incorporate ample time to allow for make-up test sessions for those students who are absent for any reason (including absences for religious holidays) during regularly scheduled testing dates. Make-up testing may begin immediately following the scheduled administration of a test session. No student should be scheduled for a make-up session prior to the scheduled administration of that test session.

If you have any questions about scheduling, please contact Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley (kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov or 222-8494).

Data Collections and Data Quality:

8. LEAs asked to notify RIDE when completing data agreements regarding Renaissance Star assessment data

The Instructional Support System (ISS) has the capability to integrate Renaissance Star assessment data as part of the 360-degree view of the student. In the past, we have asked those LEAs that would like to integrate their Star assessments to complete

the data agreement with Renaissance. We would also like you to notify Greg Martin when you have submitted the data agreement to Renaissance so that we can monitor the progress of the data. If you have any questions or concerns about this request, please contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.Martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

9. SCED version 1.0 codes will be obsolete in eRIDE as of April 17

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 SCED codes will be invalid in eRIDE as of April 17. After this date, any version 1.0 code will be rejected, and a valid version 2.0 code will need to be entered. If you have any questions or concerns about this version update, please contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.Martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

10. RIDE advises LEAs to begin work on CTE and Program data collections

The CTE and Program collections are quickly approaching, and RIDE advises LEAs start working on these collections now to ensure that the data submission is timely and accurate.

11. CEIS Report due June 17 on funds expended for behavioral interventions for general-education students – *Action Item*

Any general-education students in grades K through 12 who received academic or behavioral interventions provided through Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS) funds from IDEA Part B must be counted and reported to RIDE.

This reporting is due by June 17, with a preliminary data submission on **June 5**; final reporting is due before the close of the school year while program staff are in school, in case RIDE has clarification requests.

LEAs that voluntarily chose to use CEIS funds must report student participation.

Further information on this reporting is available at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/EIS%20memo%20March%202015%20version%203.pdf>

Also, an informational PowerPoint on this reporting is viewable at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Students-and-Families-Great-Schools/Special-Education/Special-Education-Regulations/EIS-tracking-and-reporting.ppt>

Early Learning:

12. Early Care and Education Data System registration is open for all providers, including public schools

Exceed is pleased to announce the first release of the Early Care and Education Data System, an electronic tool that will allow early care and education providers in Rhode Island to:

- apply to BrightStars and for RIDE Comprehensive Early Childhood Education approval; and

- make it easy for families with young children to find high-quality programs within their communities through the Exceed early learning program search, at exceed.ri.gov.

During the week of February 23, the early childhood leaders from each school district received a letter requesting that they register on the Early Care and Education Data System. On March 18, early childhood leaders received a reminder email with the same information. As of Monday (March 30), no public schools had registered. A sample of the registration instructions and documents are available on the [Exceed website](#).

From the U.S. Department of Education

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

13. President Obama announces initiative to support excellence in STEM education

President Obama has announced a number of new steps to advance his [Educate to Innovate](#) campaign – an all-hands-on-deck effort to get more students inspired to excel and to provide the support they need to succeed in the STEM subjects ([fact sheet](#)):

- a \$150-million philanthropic effort to empower a diverse cadre of promising early career scientists to stay on track to become scientific leaders of tomorrow;
- the \$90million “Let Everyone Dream” initiative to expand STEM opportunities to under-represented youth;

- a \$25-million U.S. Department of Education competition (see [Ready to Learn Television](#)) to create science- and literacy-themed media that inspire students to explore;
- 120 colleges and universities committing to train 20,000 engineers to tackle the “grand challenges” of the 21st century; and
- the coalition of CEOs known as “Change the Equation” committing to expand effective STEM programs to an additional 1.5 million students this year. With these new commitments, the campaign has surpassed \$1 billion in financial and in-kind support for STEM.

14. Principals, teachers encouraged to celebrate college admissions

This May, First Lady Michelle Obama’s Reach Higher initiative is encouraging mayors, principals, and teachers to celebrate students in their community with a [College Signing Day Celebration](#). It has created a [toolkit](#), with resources and real examples of how to answer the First Lady’s call to action, and anyone can complete a [speaker request form](#). To show support, please take a photo in your college t-shirt and Instagram it, Facebook it, or Tweet it with the hashtag #ReachHigher.

15. Applicants sought for innovation grants in principal effectiveness, STEM, technology, social and emotional skills

The U.S. Department of Education is soliciting pre-applications for [Investing in Innovation](#) (i3) “Development” grants. Applicants will select from four areas of focus – improving principal effectiveness, increasing STEM

education, strengthening the use of technology, and addressing non-cognitive factors, such as behavioral and social and emotional skills – as well as projects that primarily serve rural communities. The U.S. Department of Education will be inviting applications for the other types of i3 grants – “Validation” and “Scale Up” – later this spring.

16. Students invited to participate in Healthy Lunchtime Recipe Challenge and Kids’ “State Dinner”

Please see this message from the White House, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture:

Can you imagine your recipe being featured in a cookbook? Or representing your home state at a [Kids’ “State Dinner”](#) at the White House this summer?

If so, First Lady Michelle Obama, the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and WGBH Boston invite you to enter the 4th annual Healthy Lunchtime Recipe Challenge & Kids’ “State Dinner.”

In order to be eligible, lunch recipe submissions should follow the [MyPlate](#) nutrition guidelines: Fruits and vegetables should make up about half of the recipe or dish, and it should also include whole grains, lean protein, and low-fat dairy. Submissions must include information about how and why they were created and be:

- healthy;
- creative;
- affordable;
- delicious; and

- original.

One recipe from each of the 50 states and territories will be chosen. And, the prize is priceless! As healthy food ambassadors for each state and U.S. territory, the winning chefs and a parent or guardian will be flown to Washington, D.C., where they will have the opportunity to attend the [Kids' "State Dinner,"](#) hosted by Mrs. Obama at the White House!

Good luck. We can't wait to see what you all cook up!

From other organizations

17. MIC3 announces the Month of the Military Child

Please see this message from the chair of the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission, Kate Wren Gavlak, and from Rosemarie K. Kraeger, Middletown Superintendent and Commission vice-chair:

April 2015 is the Month of the Military Child. During April, the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) along with many other organizations, nonprofits, and public entities will underscore the important role children play in our military communities. Our military children and families help sustain our fighting force, on whom we depend for the security and safety of our nation's families and communities. It is important to emphasize and recognize the role that military children play while their service-member parents are serving the nation. The MIC3 is committed to resolving the educational transition issues that are faced by these children and their families.

Across the nation, people are encouraged to **“Purple Up! For Military Kids.”** People are being encouraged to wear purple to show support for our military kids and to thank them for their strength and sacrifices. Please check for events in your area for celebrating during this month.

Military families move between postings on a regular basis. While a part of military life, reassignments and deployments can be difficult for the children of military families. The average military student faces transition challenges more than twice during high school, and most military children will attend six to nine different school systems in their lives, from kindergarten through 12th grade. The Interstate Compact seeks to make these transitions easier for the children of military families so they are afforded the same opportunities for educational success as other children and are not penalized or delayed in achieving their educational goals.

As part of the Interstate Compact, the Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission was established. All 50 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Compact and placed it in statute. These member states have formed or are forming their State Councils and inform their school districts of the terms of the Compact. Educational efforts for school personnel as well as military families are ongoing so they may work together to ensure the educational success of our military children.

Please take time this month to recognize the service of our military members and their families—and especially their children. They deserve our support!

More information is available at:

www.dodea.edu.

18. R.I. Small Business Journal, Met School seek nominations for Young Entrepreneur Awards

Please see this notice from The Rhode Island Small Business Journal and The Met School:

The Rhode Island Small Business Journal is looking for nominations for the first annual Rhode Island [Young Entrepreneur Awards](#).

The [Young Entrepreneur Awards](#) were created to highlight and celebrate the innovative work of high school students, college students, and recent alumni from Rhode Island. So many Rhode Island students and alum have already made a huge impact on our small business sector, despite their age. We decided that it is time to recognize them for their hard work, and to thank them for pushing the future of our state in the right direction. [Read the full press release here](#).

[Click here to nominate a Young Entrepreneur for their innovative work.](#)

19. RIASCD to hold annual conference for pre-service, beginning teachers

Please see this notice from the Rhode Island ASCD:

Rhode Island ASCD will host its annual Pre-Service and Beginning (identified as in the profession fewer than five years) Teacher Conference on Saturday, **April 11**, at Johnston High School, 345 Cherry Hill Rd. Participants will have the opportunity to attend workshop sessions on "hot topics" delivered by Rhode Island practitioners; hear a keynote presentation by David Moscarelli, Rhode Island Teacher of the Year; and network with other pre-service and beginning teachers. Breakfast is included. Please register at www.riascd.org.

20. NEIT offering free seminars for high-school educators

Please see this notice from the New England Institute of Technology:

New England Institute of Technology will offer an eight-week spring session of free Professional Development Seminars for high-school educators beginning **Monday** (April 6).

Classes will meet weekly, at the East Greenwich campus, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Space is limited in each seminar, so if you are interested in any of the seminars listed, please respond as soon as possible.

The following seminars will be offered:

Advanced Photoshop

Participants will learn more advanced compositing and workflow features in Photoshop. Demonstrations will include using the pen tool for accurate masking, editing photographs non-destructively in the camera RAW plugin,

compositing glass, and getting around Photoshop's 3D compositing and rendering environment. Attendees should have basic working knowledge of Photoshop.

This workshop will run on Thursdays, beginning April 9.

Offered by the Graphics, Multimedia and Web Design Technology Department

Class limit: 12

At Your Best: Optimizing Your Professional and Personal Effectiveness

Using the most recent ideas in management and positive psychology, this workshop offers an understanding of and a framework for you to develop and be your best self, and to be more effective in your work or career and life.

Effectiveness is your ability to be successful in creating desired results or outcomes. The workshop is applied, hands-on, and provides practical tools, which allow you to continue the development of your best self and effectiveness after the workshop.

This workshop will run on Thursdays, beginning April 9.

Offered by the Business Management Technology Department

Class limit: 20

Personal Cyber-Security

In today's world of interconnected digital devices, the security of one's personal information and communications is an ever-increasing concern. From computers to tablets to smart phones and wireless communications, participants will learn how to better protect their personal information and communications through a series of non-technical discussions and hands-on exercises. Participants will have achieved a greater understanding of the potential threats

lurking in the “digital shadows,” how to recognize them, and how to protect against them.

This workshop will run on Wednesdays, beginning April 8.

Offered by the Information Technology Department

Materials required: 1 gb USB thumb drive

Photoshop Web Design to HTML5 and CSS3

Participants will learn to design a web page interface using Adobe Photoshop CC and then build it using HTML5 and CSS3 code. Topics covered include using Photoshop to design a web interface, slicing elements of the design in Photoshop and coding HTML5 and CSS3 to build and develop the web page. Prior Photoshop knowledge is required.

This workshop will run on Mondays, beginning April 6.

Offered by the Information Technology Department

Class limit: 10

Using Video to Make a More Interactive Classroom

Participants will learn the basics of video/visual production - shooting/lighting, editing and graphics.

This workshop will run on Wednesdays, beginning April 8.

Offered by the Digital Media Production Technology Department

Materials required: headphones, SD card grade 10

Class limit: 8

To register for a seminar please forward the following information to my attention at trugg@neit.edu:

Name

High School

Phone

Email

Title of Professional Development Seminar you would like to attend.

Once I have received your registration information, you will receive an email with confirmation. If you are placed on a waiting list for a seminar, you will be notified of that as well.

If you have any questions in the meantime, please do not hesitate to email Tara Rugg, Coordinator of High School Programs, at trugg@neit.edu.

21. Applications open for Teaching in Taiwan program for 2015-16

Please see this message from Cynthia Huang, Director of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Boston:

In order to enhance the English immersion learning atmosphere in Taiwan, the Ministry of Education established the “Teaching in Taiwan” program to recruit qualified teachers to teach English in K-9 public schools in rural areas of Taiwan. The program grants teachers one round-trip airline ticket, a monthly salary, a housing stipend, health insurance, a performance bonus, etc. The application period is open through April 17. For further information and an application, see:

<https://sites.google.com/site/foreignenglishteachersintaiwan/>

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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