

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, April 11, 2014

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2. RIDE participates in [settlement agreement](#) with U.S. Department of Justice regarding students, adults with disabilities
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Action Item Calendar

- April 25: [NECAP Science](#) testing schedules due
April 28: Selection of [induction model](#) due
May 30: District [Teacher of the Year](#) nominations due
June 20: School Health Reports due (see [below](#))
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Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. RIDE prepares ESEA Flexibility Request renewal application

As you may know, RIDE is engaged in the process of applying for a renewal of the ESEA Flexibility Request, which the U.S. Department of Education initially approved in May 2012. This approved request allowed us to implement our current system of school accountability. Under our previous system, we classified schools based almost entirely on the percentage of students who attained proficiency on state assessments. The current system includes many additional measures, including progress toward goals, growth over time, percent of students attaining proficiency with distinction, closing achievement gaps, and graduation rates. Our current system also provides schools identified for intervention with the autonomy to select interventions that respond to their context and their needs.

To earn approval for our renewal request, we need to make some revisions to our classification system, largely because of the transition from NECAP to PARCC assessments. This transition requires us to rethink how we can measure progress toward goals and annual growth as factors within our accountability system.

Over the past month, we have discussed our renewal request in several forums, and we will continue our outreach efforts over the course of the next several weeks. We will draw on what we've heard and learned from teachers, school leaders, parents, and community organizations as we work to complete our renewal request.

2. RIDE participates in settlement agreement with U.S. Department of Justice regarding students, adults with disabilities

RIDE was glad to be a part of the news conference on Tuesday regarding the settlement agreement that Rhode Island has signed with the U.S. Department of Justice. We will continue to work with you and your team to ensure that students with intellectual or developmental disabilities and their family members are involved in designing educational plans. Our shared goals are to see that students with intellectual or developmental disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment, as appropriate for their educational needs, and that these students receive the necessary instruction and support to prepare them for careers that will be challenging and fulfilling, for further career preparation and training during their adulthood, and to live as independently as possible.

3. NECAP retest results to be ready this month

We have received some good news: The results of the 2014 NECAP retest will be available this month, which is sooner than we had anticipated. We will let you know when you will be able to access the scores from your LEA through our e-ride system. I am pleased that Measured Progress and our assessment team have worked to expedite this process.

From RIDE

Assessments:

4. NECAP Science testing to begin on May 5

The NECAP Science testing window this year is **May 5 – 22**. All testing—including accommodations and make-up testing—*must* be completed by May 22. In planning your assessment schedule, you should take into consideration religious holidays and local events that may affect students' ability to participate. It is important that you allow ample time for make-up test sessions for those students who are absent for any reason (including absences for religious holidays) during regularly scheduled testing dates.

Principals and test coordinators are ultimately responsible for ensuring that all eligible students are tested. Therefore, you and your staff members must:

- ensure that parents and guardians are aware of the purpose of the assessment and that they have access to your NECAP testing schedule in advance so that they can plan accordingly;
- strongly discourage parents and guardians from planning any vacations or other activities that would prevent their children from testing with their peers during scheduled test-administration days;
- ensure that parents and guardians are aware that their children must make up any testing they missed while absent and that all make-up testing must be completed no later than May 22; and
- encourage parents and guardians to contact the principal, test coordinator, or teacher if their children will be absent during testing so that schools can arrange for make-up testing.

During the testing period, please encourage students to get plenty of rest, to eat a good breakfast on the day of testing, and to

perform at their very best so that we all can take pride in the accomplishments of our students and their teachers!

Health and Safety:

5. Annual School Health Report forms to be posted Monday, due June 20 – Action Item

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 the school years 2013-14 and 2014-15. All future annual reports must be submitted prior to each school year.

The Annual School Health Report template will be available through eRIDE on Monday (April 14). You will receive an e-mail notification from RIDE when the report is open for completion and submission via eRIDE. The reports are due on **June 20**.

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](#).

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge:

6. Exceed website launched; schools, programs eligible to apply to participate in BrightStars

The Exceed [website](#) has launched! Exceed is the new name for the Rhode Island cross-departmental initiative to implement the work of the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant. The name conveys the commitment of all of those in our early learning community who are working to help ensure that all of our young children have the opportunity to soar. Exceed is one of the key initiatives supporting the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan of the Rhode Island Early Learning Council, which was formed in 2010 to advise on the development of sustainable, high-quality systems of early-childhood education and care in Rhode Island.

Educators in our public schools can support outcomes for young children by understanding the quality of their early-childhood classrooms and by developing and implementing best practices. BrightStars is the first step. Last month, 11 public-school early-childhood programs applied to BrightStars. These applicants will have access to grants of up to \$30,000, and they will have access to technical assistance to improve the quality of their programs. All early-childhood programs in public schools are eligible to join BrightStars.

If you would like more information or if you would like someone to come and speak with your team about Exceed, please contact Melissa Emidy, at Melissa.emidy@ride.ri.gov or 222-8165.

From the U.S. Department of Education

7. Grants available for school counseling, turnaround-school leaders

The U.S. Department of Education is currently seeking applications for the [Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program](#) and the [Turnaround School Leaders Program](#). The school-counseling program provides funding to districts to establish or expand school-counseling programs, with special consideration given to applicants that can: demonstrate the greatest need for counseling services in the schools to be served, propose the most innovative and promising approaches, and show the greatest potential for replication and dissemination. Applications are due **April 28**. The school-leadership program supports projects to develop and implement or enhance and implement a critical-leadership pipeline that selects, prepares, places, supports, and retains school leaders for School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools or SIG-eligible schools. Applications are due **May 23**.

8. U.S. Department of Education posts materials on parent, community engagement

The U.S. Department of Education is proud to release a framework for schools and their broader communities to build parent and community engagement. Across the nation, less than a quarter of residents are 18 years old or younger, and everyone has a responsibility for helping schools succeed. The [Dual Capacity framework](#) – a process used to teach staff to effectively engage parents and for parents to work successfully with the schools to increase student achievement – provides a model that schools and districts can use to build the type of effective community

engagement that will make schools the center of communities ([web page](#), with blog post, frequently asked questions, and video).

From other state agencies

9. Governor's Workforce Board to issue grants for partnerships between employers and education providers

Please see this message from the Governor's Workforce Board:

The Governor's Workforce Board is pleased to issue a Request for Proposals for a second round of funding of up to \$1.75 million to support innovative partnerships between employers and education and training providers that will provide work-readiness, skills training, experiential learning, and career pathways to address the workforce needs of Rhode Island employers and increase the employability of students, out-of-school youth, and unemployed adults. Awards are anticipated to range from \$80,000 to \$200,000.

Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to attend a bidders' conference on **Wednesday** (April 16), from 10 - 11:30 a.m., at the Department of Labor & Training, 1511 Pontiac Avenue, Cranston. Pre-register by contacting Amelia Roberts, at 462-8864 or Amelia.Roberts@dlt.ri.gov.

For a copy of the Request for Proposals, click below:

- [MS Word Version](#)
- [Pdf Version](#)

For a copy of an Excel version of the required Outcome Targets form, [click here](#).

From other organizations

10. Brown University math institute to run math day camp for high-school girls

Please see this message from Brown University, and feel free to share this message with high-school mathematics teachers:

The Brown University Institute for Computational and Experimental Research in Mathematics ([ICERM](#)) has scheduled GirlsGetMath, a math day camp for 25 Providence-area high-school girls.

This five-day, non-residential mathematics program is open girls who will have just completed either grade 9 or grade 10 by July.

[GirlsGetMath](#) will encourage these young women to explore, and will invite them to excel in, the mathematical sciences. Accomplished professional women, enthusiastic about serving as career models as well as scientific mentors, will lead the program. Potential topics include: cryptography, the mathematics of voting, image processing, prime numbers and factoring, and fractals.

The goals of the program are:

- to show high-school girls that the study of mathematics can be exciting, beautiful, and useful;

- to build confidence in students' mathematical knowledge through engaging and expert mathematical instruction;
- to introduce high-school students to a variety of career opportunities in which sophisticated mathematical ability plays a key role;
- to emphasize the strategic role mathematics plays for success in STEM careers;
- to provide the participants with a support group and expert mentors who are successful undergraduates, graduate students, and professionals from the STEM workforce; and
- to have a positive influence on the way students view their mathematical interest and ability.

Tuition is \$100 (lunch included). Generous financial aid is available.

The program website and application details can be found here:

<http://icerm.brown.edu/girlsgetmath2014/>

Application deadline: **May 15**

The selection committee will review all applications after the May 15 deadline. Accepted students without 100-percent financial aid will receive information on how to pay the tuition in their acceptance letter.

11. Rhode Island Bar Association develops lessons, schedules essay contest to mark Rhode Island Law Day

The Rhode Island Bar Association notes that the 2014 Rhode Island Law Day will take place on May 2. The association has developed some topics for schools to use to meet the educational goals for Law Day. For information on classroom-program lessons and on the Rhode Island Law Day essay contest, go to:

<https://www.ribar.com/For%20the%20Public/Law%20Related%20Education/2014lawday.aspx>

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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