

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, April 17, 2015

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Action Item Calendar

April 24: [Student advisory council](#) elections

April 27: School calendars due (see [below](#))

April 28: Early learning surveys due (see [below](#))

April 29: School for the Deaf survey due (see [below](#))

June 5: Preliminary [CEIS data](#) due

June 17: [CEIS Report](#) due

Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. RIDE issues report on Professional Learning Community mini-grants

One of the highlights among the initiatives that our Race to the Top federal grant supported was the Professional Learning Community mini-grants. Over the last two years of the grant, we used some of our Race to the Top funds to support groups of educators working together to develop and implement programs to advance student achievement. Schools, school districts, or partnerships among districts applied for mini-grants in any of three areas: using the Common Core State Standards, closing achievement gaps, or creating innovative approaches to building effective parent-teacher partnerships. Ultimately, we awarded 12 Professional Learning Community mini-grants, each of produced results. We have just completed a brief report on these

Professional Learning Communities, which includes a summary of the accomplishments of each of 12 grant recipients. The report is on our website, here:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/RTTT/PLCMiniGrants_FinalReport_4.15.15.pdf

2. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT releases 2015 Factbook

On Monday, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT released its 2015 Factbook, a comprehensive profile of the well-being of children in Rhode Island. The book includes 71 indicators, many of them focused on education. It's good to see that a number of the indicators show the progress we are making, particularly regarding providing access to high-quality early learning programs to Rhode Island children. For example, one indicator shows that as of January there were 669 licensed early care and education programs with BrightStars ratings – more than three times the number of programs with BrightStars ratings from a year ago. There were 306 children enrolled in state-funded pre-kindergarten programs, compared with 108 enrolled three years ago. As to kindergarten enrollment, 81 percent of Rhode Island kindergartners are in full-day programs (and 100 percent of kindergartners in the four core cities). A decade ago, slightly more than 40 percent of kindergartners (and about 80 percent in the core cities) were in full-day programs. The Factbook is available online here:

<http://www.rikidscount.org/DataPublications/RIKidsCountFactbook.aspx>

From RIDE

Surveys:

3. Superintendents, early-childhood leadership asked to take survey on sustaining programs; responses due April 28 – *Action Item*

Exceed is collecting stakeholder input for a project that will inform a sustainability plan for Rhode Island early childhood projects funded through the federal Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT–ELC) grant. We are asking that you and your early childhood education leadership take this [short survey by April 28](#). We are eagerly seeking your perspective on the RTT–ELC projects and the effect they have had on programs, teachers, children, and families.

4. Rhode Island School for the Deaf requests superintendents' participation in brief survey by April 29

As part of its planning for improved services to school districts and to building the capacity of Rhode Island to better serve deaf and hard-of-hearing students statewide, the Rhode Island School for the Deaf is undergoing a comprehensive self-study across all departments. The school asks that by **April 29** you complete this brief survey about your experiences with the Rhode Island School for the Deaf:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RISDeafSup>

Data quality and submissions:

5. School calendars to be submitted to RIDE by April 27 – *Action Item*

This is a reminder that it is time for your data managers to submit 2015-16 calendars to RIDE. Data managers will be advised that calendars must be submitted using the e-ride system no later than Monday, **April 27**; RIDE no longer accepts hard copies of calendars. Please contact Mario Goncalves, at 222-8968 or Mario.Goncalves@ride.ri.gov, for assistance with this matter.

6. *Reminder: Instructional Support System can integrate data from local assessments*

The Instructional Support System has the capability of integrating local assessment data from LEAs. We have currently partnered with Renaissance to integrate the STAR assessment data, with minimal efforts by LEAs. We are looking for LEAs that use other assessments, such as DIBELS, NWEA, MAP, AIMSWEB, or locally produced (e.g., end-of course-exams or common tasks), to allow us to visit and work with you to build the process of integrating these assessments into the Instructional Support System.

When you submit your Renaissance data agreement, please notify Greg Martin so that we can monitor the progress of your data.

If you have any questions or concerns about this data integration, please contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.Martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

7. *Reminder: Roster Verification to begin on May 11*

The initial stage of Roster Verification will occur between May 11 and May 21. During this process, principals will review the teachers, courses, and sections on their roster-verification tab within the [EPSS on RIDEmap](#). The second stage of review will occur from May 27 through June 6, during which teachers will

review their rosters. During the second stage, principals will also monitor the status of teacher roster verification. Once this second stage is completed, principals will verify and sign off on the rosters, between June 8 and June 24.

Updated user guides for principals and teachers are available at:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EducatorEvaluation/EducatorPerformanceandSupportSystem\(EPSS\).aspx](http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EducatorEvaluation/EducatorPerformanceandSupportSystem(EPSS).aspx).

In preparation for this year's roster-verification process, please ensure that all principals are familiar with your policy regarding contributing educators. You can find our updated guidance on Establishing Teacher-Course-Student Connections at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EducatorEvaluation/GuidebooksForms.aspx#19333-other-guidance>.

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

Assessments:

8. Pearson releases administrative bulletin, recommends against latest Java update

Pearson has released a new [Administrative bulletin](#) that has an impact on the technology used in the schools during the PARCC assessment. A key technical detail that you should be aware of is the Java critical patch update released on Tuesday. Pearson recommends that school districts *do not* upgrade to this release of

Java. If you have any questions about this bulletin, please contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.Martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

9. RIDE seeks educators to participate in NECAP Science Item Review and Bias and Sensitivity Committees

Each year, RIDE offers two opportunities for classroom educators to participate in the development of the NECAP Science test for grades 4, 8 and 11. The Item Review and Bias and Sensitivity Committees are essential to the work of creating a valid and reliable assessment. Many Rhode Island educators have participated in these committees and have learned a lot not only from the process but also from educators representing all three NECAP Science states (New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont). Below are answers to frequently asked questions about participation:

Application: Educators must complete an application and meet minimum criteria in order to be considered for participation on one of the committees. Applications are due by 4 p.m. on Friday, **May 29**. Applications can be found on the RIDE website, at:

www.ride.ri.gov/NECAP-Test-Development.

Please note: Even if you have applied or attended in the past, you still must complete an application each year in order to be considered for participation.

Successful applicants will be notified by Friday, June 12.

Location: The Item Review Committee (IRC) and Bias & Sensitivity Review Committee meetings will be held at the Stoweflake Mountain Resort and Spa in Stowe, Vermont, on August 6 and

7. Hotel accommodations will be provided for each participant. Additional details such as directions to the hotel and meeting times and places will be provided at a later date for members of each committee.

Transportation: Once participants have been selected, it is their responsibility to arrange for transportation to and from the meetings of the committee to which they've been assigned.

Mileage: Participants who drive their own cars are reimbursed for mileage and tolls to and from the meetings

Meals: Participants are reimbursed \$25 per night for dinner. Breakfasts and lunches are provided as needed. Forms for meal reimbursements are handed out at each meeting.

Committee Assignment: Because the IRC and Bias & Sensitivity Review Committee meet concurrently, selected members can serve on only one or the other. You may, however, submit your application to one or both committees for consideration.

Information: Additional information can be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/p8smsvw>

If you have any questions about these sessions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Peter McLaren, at peter.mclaren@ride.ri.gov or 222-8454.

10. *Reminder: RIDE prepares for migration of PARCC data for End of Year assessments*

The PARCC End of Year (EOY) student registration, Personal Needs Profile (PNP) Data Import Process, and PNP guidance documentation have been placed in the PARCC Technology Toolkit on [District Exchange](#) in the public folder. These documents will facilitate the migration to the EOY assessment block of your Performance Based Assessment student data, PNP data, and session data. If you have any questions about this data migration, please contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.Martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495.

Legal:

11. RIDE issues Commissioner's decision on residency

RIDE has issued this Commissioner's decision:

Student who lives with custodial parent in Connecticut is not a resident for school enrollment purposes of Rhode Island school district where the non-custodial parent resides:

[http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2015/003-15 Residency of S. Doe -41315.pdf](http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2015/003-15%20Residency%20of%20S.%20Doe%20-41315.pdf)

From the U.S. Department of Education

12. Secretary Duncan discusses proposed revisions to Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Last week, Education Secretary Arne Duncan posted on his blog regarding the proposed reauthorization of the elementary and Secondary Education Act. Here is an excerpt from Secretary Duncan's blog:

Earlier this week, Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Patty Murray (D-WA), the Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate education committee, announced an agreement to begin a bipartisan process of fixing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The committee will consider the proposed bill next week. This agreement, however, is just a beginning.

As I [detailed in a speech](#) at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Washington, D.C., there is work ahead to deliver a bill that fulfills the historic mission of this law.

Congress originally passed ESEA 50 years ago this week. Then as now, it stood to connect civil rights to education, enshrining America's core value that every child deserves a quality education, no matter her race, disability, neighborhood, or first language. I am happy to see this bipartisan effort come together, yet I also know the distance we have to go toward a bill that establishes an expectation of excellence for all American children, and stays true to ESEA's role as a guarantor of civil rights.

ESEA must continue this nation's vital progress in closing gaps for vulnerable students. In that effort, there is more yet to do.

Positive Steps

The Alexander-Murray proposal moves reauthorization forward in important ways, including requiring states to adopt college- and career-ready standards as part of the effort to ensure that all students are prepared for the demands of higher education and the workforce. It also

would require that states set achievement goals and graduation rate goals for all students and student subgroups. And, the proposal would provide more flexibility than NCLB for states and school districts, and ensure that parents know how their children and children's school are doing by keeping requirements for annual statewide assessments.

The bipartisan agreement also provides improved support for educators, especially for principals and teachers. And it takes steps in the right direction by promoting transparency on resource inequities and rejecting earlier proposals to allow resources to be siphoned away from our neediest schools.

Further to Go

Yet there are areas where this bill doesn't do enough to support the learning of students throughout this country. As the bill progresses, we look forward to working with Congress to ensure that a final bill will do more to maintain the crucial federal role in protecting our country's most vulnerable students. The goal is not just to identify a problem, but to do something about it.

A good bill must expand access to high-quality preschool, to give children a chance to get off to a strong start in life.

A good bill must ensure that schools and educators have the resources and funds they need to do their jobs – and that schools with high proportions of low-income and minority students receive their fair share of those resources.

A good bill must ensure meaningful accountability, and support for action, in any school where subgroups or the whole school are persistently underperforming.

A good bill must ensure bolder action and focused resources for the lowest-performing five percent of schools, including America's lowest-performing high schools.

A good bill must ensure strong support for innovations by local educators that change outcomes for students.

And a good bill needs to close a long-standing loophole in federal law that undermines the ability of Title I funds to provide supplemental resources for schools serving high concentrations of students from low-income families, and allows local funding inequities to continue.

It's easy to say that every child deserves opportunity—regardless of race, disability, zip code or family income. And it's easy to say that we expect excellence from all our children. But it takes work to make opportunity real. Our work is to make sure that opportunity is not just a possibility, but a promise. Now is not the time to turn back the clock.

13. U.S. Education, Labor Departments seek comment on Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Please see this message from the U.S. Department of Education Press Office:

The Departments of Education and Labor are seeking comment on five Notices of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRMs),

proposing rules that would implement the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#) (WIOA). The act, signed by President Obama on July 22, 2014, is the first major reform to federal job training programs in more than 15 years. It's designed to streamline and improve the coordination of employment and training services across federal agencies and strengthen collaboration with state and local partners to increase access to and opportunities for the employment, education, training, and support services for individuals to succeed in the labor market.

“WIOA will provide the opportunities for workers and learners to obtain the foundation skills necessary for 21st century jobs and foster a modern workforce that can compete in a global economy,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. “It makes key improvements in the nation’s workforce development and education system, by emphasizing the creation of career pathway programs, improved training, and streamlined service delivery to individuals—especially for underserved youth and adults.”

“We are embarking on a fundamental transformation in the way we prepare people for the careers of today and tomorrow,” said U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez. “More than ever before, we’re taking a job-driven approach and making sure training programs connect businesses that want to grow with workers who want to punch their ticket to the middle class.”

The proposed regulations are designed to: update and improve federal workforce programs that serve workers, job seekers, and employers; strengthen accountability and transparency; increase access to work-based learning tools, such as [apprenticeships](#); improve relationships with

employers, including through sector partnerships, and foster more cohesive planning within economic regions. The proposed rules would also improve access to education and workforce services for individuals with significant barriers to employment—veterans, individuals with disabilities, disconnected youth, and other vulnerable populations—to help them find good work.

The proposed regulations align closely with principles outlined in [Vice President Joseph R. Biden's Ready to Work report](#) on developing a more evidence-based, job-driven workforce system. The vice president's report included a call for greater coordination and more strategic use of federal resources to yield better results, transparent and relevant information so job-seekers and the public know what works, and putting business front and center so our investments are directly responsive to hiring needs.

WIOA supersedes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, reauthorizes the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and amends the Wagner-Peyser Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The five NPRMs announced yesterday include: a joint rule, issued by the Departments of Labor and Education, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services, proposing to implement jointly administered activities related to unified planning, performance accountability, and the one-stop system; a Department of Labor rule proposing to implement DOL-specific activities under Title I; and three Department of Education rules proposing to implement the requirements of Titles II and IV.

Please visit www.regulations.gov to share your comments on the specific proposed rules, in accordance with the process outlined in the NPRMs. Any comments not received through the processes outlined in the NPRMs will not be considered by the departments.

A webinar on how to provide comments on the NPRMs will be available the week of April 27. For more information, visit www.doleta.gov/WIOA.

From other organizations

14. RISSA, RIEMA schedule free School Safety and Risk Assessment training sessions

Please see this message from your Rhode Island School Superintendents' Association:

At our R.I. Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) School Safety Committee meeting on Wednesday, we discussed creating training opportunities for all of the districts centered on completing the RIGL-mandated School Safety and Risk Assessment form. Through work with RISSA and RIEMA, the feedback garnered was that the districts needed training on how to complete a risk assessment and fill out the required form. To this end, the RIEMA School Safety Committee has generated two dates and locations for this training. The first will be at East Providence High School, on June 24, and the second will be at South Kingstown High School, on June 30. Both sessions will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. This training will be *free* to our districts statewide.

The Safety Committee thought it best to have two sessions and two locations to try to accommodate the entire state. Please complete the Google Sheets link at the bottom of this message and indicate who will be coming from your district. For most districts, we are limiting attendees to a team of 4, but for the larger districts (Cranston, Pawtucket, Providence, Warwick, and Woonsocket), a group of 7 will be allowed. Attendees should include the following: SRO, Crisis Team Coordinator, Administrators, Other Crisis Team Members.

The trainer will be Lieutenant Derek Borek from the R.I. State Police, along with various other local Rhode Island law-enforcement officers.

The RSVP deadline for each of these sessions is **May 18**.

Should you have any questions about these sessions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Lawrence Filippelli directly, at 647-4100.

Thank you for help and support with this!

School Safety Risk Assessment Training Session

What?: Training for mandated School Safety and Risk Assessments (RIGL – 16-21-23)

Who is the trainer?: Lieutenant Derek Borek, R.I. State Police, and other Rhode Island city and town police agencies

Where and when?:

- Session One – June 24, East Providence High School, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- Session Two – June 30, South Kingstown High School, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Who should attend?:

- Groups of 4 from each district (up to 7 may attend from Cranston, Pawtucket, Providence, Warwick, and Woonsocket)
- Groups should consist of School Resource Officer, School Principals, Chair of Crisis Response Team, other crisis team members

Cost?: None – Training is free.

RSVP:

Please reply using the Google Sheets Reservation Form below or to Larry Filippelli (RISSA liaison to RIEMA), 647-4100, no later than May 18. Please choose from *one* of the training sessions when making reservations for your group.

Links for Google Sheets Reservation Form for the session you wish to attend:

- June 24 – East Providence High School
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1IEslpvJy6Q6bk53kjcsgeulbpdPRFDcSlxHy2gAVbWA/edit?usp=sharing>
- June 30 – South Kingstown High School

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1nUEsdVIN-HMcrJAuyTBv507mTMSH8a_PWU6TPPhmKmw/edit?usp=sharing

15. Summer workshop for high-school teachers on economic concepts scheduled for June

Please see this message from the American Institute for Economic Research:

The American Institute for Economic Research (AIER), located in the Berkshires, in Western Massachusetts, will hold its second Teach the Teachers workshop for high-school teachers from June 22 to 26. Teachers will hear leading experts in economic education and will integrate key economic concepts such as money and inflation, business cycles, and government and the economy into a lesson for their students.

Presenters include:

- Scott Wolla, senior economic education specialist, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; taught history and economics for 14 years;
- Jane Lopus, professor of economics, California State University, East Bay; director of the Center for Economic Education, former high school economics teacher;
- Bonnie Meszaros, assistant professor of education, University of Delaware; past president, National Association of Economic Educators; and

- Research staff and fellows of the AIER, a nonprofit economic research institute.

Teachers will construct lesson plans, test them with their peers, and gain feedback. They will learn how to apply economics to real-life problems and educational approaches to delivering content to 21st-century learners.

*Deadline for applying: **May 1.*** Enrollment limited to 20.

Cost: \$150 registration fee (refundable upon completion of the workshop). Accommodations and meals are provided. Travel expenses are reimbursed up to \$150. *A stipend of \$500 is provided for teachers who field test a lesson in the classroom and provide a feedback report.*

Credit: AIER has partnered with Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) to provide three graduate in-service credits for the course (\$300) or 45 Professional Development Points (\$100). A certificate of completion from AIER and MCLA is also available at no additional cost.

Substitute reimbursement: If your school is in session for all or part of the workshop week, AIER will reimburse a school district for hiring a substitute teacher.

To register and for more information:

<https://www.aier.org/teach-teachers> or contact Michelle Ryan, Education Programs Coordinator, at [\(413\)528-1216 X 3129](tel:4135281216) (michelle.ryan@aier.org)

16. Rhode Island Foundation offers scholarships for high-school artists

The Rhode Island Foundation's Patricia Edwards Fund is offering high-school artists scholarships of up to \$425 for art classes. Current freshmen, sophomores, and juniors are eligible. The deadline to apply is **May 29**. For more information, see:

<http://www.rifoundation.org/WorkingTogether/ForScholarshipSeekers/ScholarshipFellowshipOpportunities.aspx>

or:

<http://bit.ly/1E16Ru3>.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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