

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, April 22, 2016**

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## Action Item Calendar

**Today** (April 22) – [Student Advisory Council](#) selections due  
**Monday** (April 25): [2016-2017 School Calendar - Due](#)  
May 17: [Special Education Census – Due](#)  
May 17: [Special Education Census Reporting - Due](#)  
May 24: [Special Ed Census, Duplicate Resolution - Due](#)  
May 24: [Special Ed Census Reporting, Duplicate Resolution - Due](#)  
June 20 – Reports on [interventions](#) due  
June 22 – Roster sign-offs due (see [below](#))

### Notes from Commissioner Wagner

#### 1. Advanced Coursework Network to provide 120 additional Prepare RI courses this fall

Through a program that builds on and expands Governor Raimondo’s Prepare RI initiative for dual enrollment in high-school and postsecondary courses, public-school students in Rhode Island middle schools and high schools this fall will be able to enroll in a wider selection of dual-enrollment courses. The program – the Advanced Coursework Network – will present a range of courses offered by postsecondary institutions, nonprofit educational programs, and public schools from across the state, at no cost to the students or their families, subject to available state and district funds.

The Advanced Coursework Network is now open for student registration, and students can select from 120 credit-bearing courses, with an additional 85 courses anticipated in the spring of 2017. The courses, offered by 14 provider organizations, include advanced science and mathematics courses as well as Advanced Placement courses, courses in world languages, career-focused courses, and other Prepare RI courses that offer other both high-school and postsecondary credit (i.e., dual or concurrent enrollment).

One of the cornerstones in our work toward supporting students and schools is our commitment to providing all students with access to advanced coursework that will prepare them for success. Building on initiatives already in place that offer virtual learning and early college enrollment to Rhode Island students, the Advanced Coursework Network will provide even more students with access to courses previously unavailable to them. Students will be able to select courses that best meet their personal learning needs, their intellectual passions, their curiosity, and their interests – an excellent way for students to become truly engaged in and committed to their education.

Registration and information for students, families, and schools, including complete course lists, are posted, on our website, at

[www.ride.ri.gov/advancedcoursework](http://www.ride.ri.gov/advancedcoursework).

#### 2. How one high school achieves outstanding results: opportunity, expectations, expert instruction

Elmont Memorial High School, in Nassau County, N.Y., which serves a mostly working-class population of students of color, has achieved significant success: a 92-percent graduation rate, with 90 percent of the

graduates going on to postsecondary education, including many at some of the most selective colleges in the country. A recent post on The Education Trust website takes a look at how Elmont attains these outcomes – by providing students with opportunities, expectations, and expert instruction:

<https://edtrust.org/the-equity-line/elmont-memorial-high-school-provides-students-with-opportunities-expectations-and-expert-instruction-it-has-nothing-to-do-with-the-water/>

### **3. Providence Schools receive national environmental award**

Congratulations to the Providence School Department, which has received a Gold Level Recognition in the State Electronics Challenge, which the Northeast Recycling Council administers. The challenge encourages state and local governments, including schools, to purchase “greener electronic equipment,” reduce the impact of computers during use, and “manage obsolete electronics in an environmentally safe way.” Providence was the only school system this year to receive a gold-level award.

**From RIDE**

#### ***Assessments:***

### **4. NECAP Science testing to begin on May 2**

The NECAP Science testing window this year is May 2 through May 26. All science testing—including accommodations and make-up testing—*must* be completed by **May 26** (UPS will pick up materials on May 27). In planning your assessment schedule, you should take into consideration religious holidays, if any, and local events that may affect the ability of students 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, either during the regularly scheduled dates or make-up dates.

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.

#### ***Instruction:***

### **5. R.I. moving toward goal of computer science in every school by December 2017**

Our goal is for computer science to be taught in every public school by December 2017. We are already making progress! During the current school year, 171 elementary, middle, and high schools participated in an Hour of Code; 10 districts committed to holding district-wide events; and 20 high schools have committed to working with our CS4RI (Computer Science for Rhode Island) partners to provide new computer-science offerings to their students in the coming school year.

What can you do in your district, school, or classroom to help us reach our goal?

Plan an Hour of Code event in your community.

September 16 is Rhode Island Hour of Code Day. Add the date to your calendar today. More information coming soon.

### [Take the Pledge!](#)

Take a minute to say you are in. Add your name and commit to working with students, educators, families, and members of our community to offer high-quality computer-science education by engaging in a range of activities.

Attend one of the CS4RI professional learning opportunities for educators in elementary, middle, and high schools.

This information is updated often as additional dates are scheduled:

- *Elementary and Middle Schools:* Attend one of the many [Professional Learning Opportunities](#);
- *High Schools:* Attend one of the many [Professional Learning Opportunities](#); and
- *School Leaders:* If you haven't done so already, complete the [Expanding CS Opportunities Survey](#) to begin connecting with computer-science providers.

For additional information about the CS4RI initiative, visit

<http://www.CS4RI.org>.

### ***Educators:***

#### **6. 2016 educator-evaluation surveys open through May 13**

As in past years, RIDE seeks to better understand educators' experiences with all of the evaluation systems in Rhode Island schools. Feedback will help us identify the successes and challenges of implementation and will guide continued improvements. As always, responses are confidential.

RIDE is pleased to announce incentives for participation in the 2016 Educator Evaluation Surveys! We will hold a drawing to randomly select 8 educators who complete a survey in its entirety. Please use the appropriate link to complete the survey. You can also find these links on the Educator Quality & Evaluation page of our website:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EducatorEvaluation.aspx>

The survey window closes on Friday, **May 13**.

Here are direct links to the surveys:

Central Office Administrators: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CentralOfficeeval16>

Building Administrators:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BAeval16>

Teachers:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/teachereval16>

Support Professionals: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SPEval16>

If you have any questions or concerns about these surveys, please contact Carrie Appel, at [Carrie.Appel@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Carrie.Appel@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8955.

## 7. RIDE begins blog on equitable access to excellent educators

We are excited to announce our first blog post on Equitable Access. This entry, written by RIDE Education Specialist Carrie Appel, will be the first of many entries that will explore issues related to ensuring that all students have access to excellent educators. You can read her blog post on our commitment to equitable access as well as the Rhode Island Equity Plan on the Equitable Access page of our website:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EquitableAccess.aspx>

### **Data Collection:**

## 8. Roster Verification to begin on May 9

The first stage of Roster Verification will begin on May 9 and will run through May 23. During this stage principals will review the teacher, course, and section data submitted to RIDE. The second stage of review will open May 25 and run through June 3. During this time, teachers will review their rosters and principals will monitor the status of their teachers' progress. Once this second stage is completed, principals will verify and sign off on the rosters, between June 6 and through June 22. Please note that, beginning this year, teachers in grades 4 through 8 will participate in the roster-verification process (as opposed to grades 3 through 7 in the past).

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/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/TCS%20guidance%202016%20FINAL.pdf>

If you have any questions about roster verification, please submit a help desk ticket, at:

<https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

## 9. **Reminder: Several data collections open or due by the end of next month**

The following are upcoming data-collection da:

- April 25: [2016-2017 School Calendar - Due](#)
- May 17: [Special Education Census – Due](#)
- May 17: [Special Education Census Reporting - Due](#)
- May 24: [Special Ed Census, Duplicate Resolution - Due](#)
- May 24: [Special Ed Census Reporting, Duplicate Resolution - Due](#)

Information about upcoming data collections can be found on the [data collection calendar](#). Weekly collection [webinars](#) provide details regarding upcoming collections, along with a question-and-answer period.

## From the U.S. Department of Education (USED)

### 10. USED announces grant program to improve state assessments

Building on [President Obama's Testing Action Plan](#), the U.S. Department of Education last week released a series of case studies with examples of work states and districts are doing to ensure fewer, better, and fairer tests for students. The examples are part of the USED continued efforts to lift up promising practices and provide information to states and districts about thoughtful ways to reduce and improve testing.

As part of that work, the USED also outlined [proposed priorities for applicants](#) of the [Enhanced Assessment Grant](#), a competitive grant program for states and consortia of states to improve state academic assessments. Through a notice published in the Federal Register, the USED is proposing three additional priorities for applicants: developing innovative assessment item types and design approaches, improving assessment scoring and score reporting, and conducting an inventory of state and local assessment systems to eliminate unnecessary, redundant or low-quality tests.

For more information on these grants and case studies, see:

<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/obama-administration-takes-action-ensure-fewer-and-better-tests-students>

## From other organizations

### 11. URI School of Education invites applicants to graduate program

The University of Rhode Island School of Education invites applications for our graduate program in Elementary and Secondary Special Education. The program is for the first-time admitting graduate students on a part-time basis. We also encourage educators to enroll in individual courses. For example, we offer a course on using positive behavioral supports to address students with challenging behaviors (EDS 503 Positive Behavior Supports). A course on assessment addresses the Response to Intervention model, in addition to addressing standardized assessments (EDS 513 for the secondary educator and EDS 502 for the elementary educator). Please contact the School of Education, at 874-4068, for information or permission numbers. Application materials can be found at:

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

### 12. Summer Standards Institute to begin July 11

The summer Standards Institute will take place from July 11 through 15, in Florida. The Standards Institute is an opportunity for a community of practitioners to think deeply about their work, get smarter about research and materials, and confront the challenges of meeting high standards with all students. We're especially excited to be offering learning sessions for returning participants. These are sessions designed specifically for participants who have attended a prior Institute, and we will again offer 3 pathways: ELA, math, and leadership, with a focus on English Language Learners.

We'll announce a city within Florida by **May 1** and open registration then. Please visit the Institute's website for updates:

[standardsinstitutes.org](http://standardsinstitutes.org).

As you know, we encourage teams of learners from schools, networks, and districts to attend together. We provide intensive, content-based learning experiences for teachers and leaders in multiple grade bands across math, ELA, and leadership.

Watch a short video about our summer Standards Institute here:

<https://vimeo.com/139157403>

[Please take a look at this flier](#) with important details about the event, including content and course design for new and returning participants.

### **13. Lifespan Hospitals schedule community forums on health concerns**

Join us for a conversation about your community's health needs!

We are holding public meetings so that you can help us understand your health concerns and hear how Lifespan Hospitals (Rhode Island Hospital/Hasbro Children's Hospital, The Miriam Hospital, Bradley Hospital, and Newport Hospital) can help respond to those concerns. The information you share will help us to complete a Community Health Needs Assessment and will be used to create an action plan. We know that the best way to learn about the health-related needs of our community is to ask the people who live and work here. Your participation is important to us so we hope you will consider attending.

Each hospital is holding separate community forums. Below are links to sign up for the forums, where you can also see dates, times, and locations:

Bradley Hospital: <http://bradleyhospitalchnaforums.eventbrite.com>

Newport Hospital: <http://newporthospitalchnaforums.eventbrite.com>

The Miriam Hospital: <http://themiriamhospitalchnaforums.eventbrite.com>

Rhode Island Hospital/Hasbro Children's Hospital:  
<http://rhodeislandhospitalchnaforums.eventbrite.com>

Note that we will have interpreters and childcare for ages 5 through 12 available upon request, along with free parking. Refreshments will be served.

***RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:***

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