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Friday, June 10, 2016**

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## **Notes from Commissioner Wagner**

### **1. Special-education teacher, coordinator named 2017 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year**

In a surprise ceremony at the Beacon Charter High School for the Arts, in Woonsocket, Governor Raimondo announced that Nikos Giannopoulos, a special-education teacher and coordinator, is the 2017 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year. Mr. Giannopoulos, who has taught at Beacon for the past six years, co-teaches classes in algebra, chemistry, and filmmaking. He is also responsible for creating transition plans and evaluations for the students at Beacon with special learning needs, and he is the sponsor and coordinator the Gay Straight Alliance at the school.

As we focus on coursework that is rigorous and relevant and on the importance of engaging students in challenging courses, it is significant that we have chosen as our Teacher of the Year an educator with such a diverse set of interests and skills. Along with his responsibilities as a special-education transition coordinator, Nikos Giannopoulos teaches a wide range of courses, covering the arts, science, and mathematics. Additionally, as a sponsor of the Gay Straight Alliance at Beacon, he is committed to diversity and to creating a safe and secure learning environment for all. He is an excellent choice as the 2017 Teacher of the Year, and we thank the committee of educators that recommended the selection.

Mr. G., as he is known at Beacon, now becomes a candidate for selection as the 2017 National Teacher of the Year, and we will support him as he completes his application for that distinction.

## **2. Budget includes record education funding; RIDE budget cut by \$4 million**

As you are aware, the House Finance Committee approved a Fiscal Year 2017 budget early on Wednesday morning and transmitted the budget to the House for a vote next week. We are pleased that the budget includes record funding for PK-12 education, including funds to expand the Rhode Island Pre-kindergarten program (\$5.2 million); the first categorical funding for English Learners (\$2.4 million); increased funding for students with disabilities (\$2 million), regional transportation (\$2 million), and career-and-technical education (\$1 million); funding for free PSAT and SAT participation for all students in public high schools (\$500,000); and funding to provide instruction in computer science in all public schools (\$260,000), among other initiatives.

Over the past two days, budget discussions have focused on revisions to the funding formula, particularly regarding aid to charter public schools, and these discussions will be on-going.

While we recognize that the budget supports education in several key areas, we want to let you know of our concerns about the cuts of more than \$4 million to the RIDE budget as proposed by the Governor. These cuts could hinder our efforts to move forward on several key initiatives. The cuts include:

- elimination of the plan for providing leadership training for aspiring principals (\$1 million);
- elimination of planning funds for schools considering developing innovative proposals to become Empowerment Schools (\$1 million);

- elimination of funding to establish a team of “instructional fellows” at RIDE who would work directly with teachers in the field (\$750,000);
- elimination of funding to carry on with our work on early learning, including advancing preschool program quality and developing a kindergarten-readiness profile (\$800,000); and
- reduction in E-Rate funding that supports investments in broadband Internet access for schools and libraries (\$500,000 ).

We will continue to work with Governor Raimondo’s team and the General Assembly to advocate for the restoration of funds to support these vital initiatives, which serve the best interest of Rhode Island educators and students.

### **3. RIDE develops, posts policy guidance on transgender and gender-nonconforming youth**

RIDE has developed and posted Guidance for Rhode Island Schools on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Youth. Developed as a result of expressed district need, the guidance includes summaries of pertinent federal and state laws as well as information on best practices that can help you in the development of local policies on transgender and gender-conforming youth in your schools. The reference page in the guidance contains links to additional resources. Rhode Island has a strong history of encouraging safe and supportive environments for all children; this guidance is another tool to add to that body of work to support health, safety, and educational opportunities for Rhode Island youth.

The RIDE team is available should you have questions about this guidance. We have posted the guidance here:

<http://www.thriveri.org/documents/Guidance.for.RhodeIsland.Schools.on.Transgender.and.Gender.Nonconforming.Students-2016.pdf>

#### **4. Central Falls awards Seal of Biliteracy to 15 graduates**

After a year of working to pilot the seal of biliteracy in Central Falls, the Central Falls School Department awarded 15 graduating students a seal of biliteracy as part of their diploma. The biliteracy seal recognizes their demonstrated proficiency in English and another language. The criteria for earning the seal included demonstrating proficiency in English, defined by GPA of over 3.0 over 4 years of English courses, and proficiency in another language, defined by earning an intermediate-to-mid score or better on AAPPL, 600 or higher on SAT II, or 3 or higher on an AP language exam. Earning the seal in English and Spanish were graduating seniors Johanna Alvizures, Yeury Galva, Ludin Garcia, Dayana Henriquez Rodriguez, Nolfer Lima Fuentes, Helen Magana, Maria Menendes Banos, Carlos Munoz Escobar, Devin Santana Torres, and Juan Cano Trujillo. Earning the seal in English and Portuguese were Adiana Lomba Goncalves, Jailson Varela Sanches, Helder Cardoso, and Stive Mendes. Earning the seal in English and French was Max Dacruz.

Congratulations to the students who have earned this important distinction and to the team of educators to worked to make it happen!

#### **5. USDA selects North Kingstown schools for a “One in a Melon” award for Farm to School program**

The North Kingstown schools have received a “One in a Melon” award from U.S. Department of Agriculture for the district Farm to School Program. In addition to purchasing local produce when seasonally available for the school-meal programs, North Kingstown participated in the Harvest of the Month during the school year and the North

Kingstown schools have facilitated the Veggie Box program, which makes local produce available to families outside of school.

Farm to School programs help kids form healthy habits, learn where their food comes from, and develop an understanding of the importance of nutrition and agriculture. Results of the 2015 USDA Farm to School Census show that schools with robust Farm to School programs report reductions in food waste, higher school-meal participation rates, and increased willingness of the students to try new foods, notably fruits and vegetables. Congratulations to the North Kingstown Public Schools and to their school food-service program, which Patricia (Trish) Cawley manages.

## **6. Microsoft releases free version of Minecraft: Education Edition**

Microsoft has announced the release of a free, early-access version of Minecraft: Education Edition. The education version of Minecraft allows classrooms of up to 30 students to work together on problem-solving. See:

<http://education.minecraft.net/announce060916/>

**From RIDE**

### ***Health and Safety:***

## **7. Action Item: Physical-restraint data reports due July 15**

The Rhode Island physical restraint regulations require all public education programs to report incidents of physical restraint to RIDE on an annual basis. You must report the number of restraint incidents and the number of students involved in physical restraint in each school during the current school year (from July 1, 2015, through June 30,



2016). A detailed incident report must be kept on file in your LEA, and parents or guardians should be informed as soon as possible (no later than two school days after the incident) regarding every incident of restraint involving their child.

Please submit data for your schools by **July 15**, by logging into eRIDE and clicking on Physical Restraint Data Collection. In addition to reporting numbers, you must answer two questions regarding whether training was provided for all staff within the first month of school (required within the first month of employment for new staff) and whether advanced training was provided for staff members identified to serve as a schoolwide resource.

If you need an eRIDE account, please contact the data manager in your LEA. For technical support, please enter a ticket at [www.support.ride.ri.gov/tickets/new](http://www.support.ride.ri.gov/tickets/new). For restraint data-related inquiries, please contact Alice Woods, at 222-8983 or [alice.woods@ride.ri.gov](mailto:alice.woods@ride.ri.gov).

## **8. RIDE helps launch Summer Meals campaign; LEAs asked to designate Summer Meals liaison to work with RIDE coordinator**

As educators, we know how important it is to keep children healthy, well-rested, and well-nourished – not just during the school year but throughout the year. During the school year, almost 76,000 Rhode Island students receive meals through the National School Lunch Program daily, but far too often children eligible for free and reduced-price food services during the school year have fewer options – or none – in the summer. We cannot let these children go hungry.

Last year we served more than 400,000 meals throughout the summer. These meals might be the only ones a child receives in any given day during the summer. Our goal is to connect healthy free meals to the

children in your community – good nutrition is crucial for children’s development and also for their readiness when the new school year starts in the fall. Many cities and towns in Rhode Island have opened sites where children 18 and under can receive summer meals at no cost to them. There are no eligibility criteria; families don’t have to fill out any paperwork to receive these free meals at these sites.

To make sure that children have access to these healthy meals year-round, we are working with community partners on a statewide campaign that will invite families to take advantage of the free summer meals. Our campaign has a few objectives:

- removal of the stigma that associates the poor and needy with the Summer Meal Program; and
- sending the message that all of us need to work together to build and maintain healthy communities.

I hope that you can be a champion for healthy schools in your community by supporting our Summer Meal Program. We want you and your team to help us provide people in your community access to information about our Summer Meal Program. You can help us by:

- posting our campaign Summer Meal banner outside of your school buildings or your administrative office;
- sending news releases about this program to local media;
- participating in a kickoff event to launch the Summer Meal Program; and
- using your call-back system to send a message, which we can provide, about summer meals.

Our hope is that you can:

- designate someone on your team to serve as your liaison to the Summer Meal Program; and
- have your Summer Meals liaison contact our outreach coordinator here at RIDE, Azade Sarah-Perin, at [Azade.Perin@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Azade.Perin@ride.ri.gov), to discuss this initiative.

Azade may also contact your office to follow up with further information about the Summer Meal Program.

Please be one of our “Healthy Ambassadors” and help us build “Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities, for a Healthy Rhode Island.”

***Instruction:***

**9. RIDE seeking proposals for presentation at conference on excellence, innovation in schools; submission deadline, June 30**

On October 29, RIDE will host the first “Open Doors Teacher Conference.” This conference will be presented by Rhode Island educators, and the conference will be an occasion for Rhode Island educators to celebrate excellence and innovation in our schools. Attendees will have an opportunity to learn from educators around the state about effective and innovative practices at a variety of grade levels and from various content areas. If you are interested in presenting and sharing an especially effective or innovative practice, please read the [conference proposal guidelines](#) and complete this [conference proposal form](#) by **June 30**. Conference registration will open in late September. If you have any questions or would like more information about the conference, please contact Tracy Lafreniere at [tracy.lafreniere@ride.ri.gov](mailto:tracy.lafreniere@ride.ri.gov).

***Career and Technical Education:***

**10. CTE programs can schedule program review for the fall; deadline, June 17**

If you are interested in scheduling Career-Technical Education (CTE) programs in your schools for RIDE CTE Program Approval review in the fall, please make sure that you or your program instructors complete the following and return the forms to RIDE:

Notices of Intent to Participate in Fall 2016 CTE Program Review Process. Due **June 17**; and

Completed Program Approval Application. Due September 16.

You can access both of these forms on our website:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/EducationPrograms/CareerTechnicalEducation.aspx#31771060-new--cte-program-review-and-approval-materials-and-processes>.

Before the due dates, please contact Joyce Anderle, at [Joyce.Anderle@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Joyce.Anderle@ride.ri.gov), with any questions or concerns about program review so that we can provide any technical assistance you may require.

***Assessments:***

**11. Interim Assessments no longer available after June 30**

Due to the lack of statewide use of the Interim Assessment System, RIDE has decided not to renew the contract for the system. As such, as of June 30 the Interim Assessments will no longer be available through RIDEmap. We are exploring the possibility of making the item banks available through a different system, but no decisions have yet been

made. Please make any arrangements regarding the items or saved assessments as soon as possible.

If you have any concerns or need assistance printing any test you have previously saved in the system, please contact Ana Karantonis, at [ana.karantonis@ride.ri.gov](mailto:ana.karantonis@ride.ri.gov).

**12. Some preliminary PARCC results to be available on or about June 20**

Access to the preliminary PARCC results through the on-demand reports in PearsonAccess<sup>next</sup> has been delayed. The PARCC on-demand *preliminary* results reports in PearsonAccess<sup>next</sup> will now be available on or about Monday, June 20. Once a firm date is provided by Pearson, RIDE will send out a notice to the field. The preliminary results will include student-level data for those tests on which Pearson has completed the scoring process. Results for all students are not yet available. For those LEAs that participated in the earlier “Option 1” test window and administered *computer*-based tests, please send an email to [PARCC@ride.ri.gov](mailto:PARCC@ride.ri.gov) if you need access to these preliminary results earlier than June 20. Please remember that all results are embargoed until the public release in August.

***Legal:***

**13. Commissioner issues decisions on 504 Plans, anti-bullying policies, career-preparation programs**

Please see these three recent Commissioner’s decisions:

Evidence did not establish that the Johnston School Department failed to implement a Section 504 plan; student did not prove that

his failing grades and resulting ineligibility to play basketball were the result of discrimination on the basis of his disability:

<http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2016/012-16 S. Doe v. Johnston S.D. 050616.pdf>

Circumstances were not appropriate for the appointment of a special visitor to assist in the implementation of a private school's anti-bullying policy:

<http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2016/014-16 D.%20Doe v. A RI Private School 052716.pdf>

The Commissioner affirmed a prior Commissioner's ruling that, consistent with state regulations adopted in 2012, students have the right to attend a career-preparation program "of their choice" even if the program they choose is outside of their home district and even if their home district offers such a program in the same subject area:

<http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2016/016-16 H. Doe v. Chariho R. S. C. 060116.pdf>

### ***Educators:***

#### **14. LEAs encouraged to apply for grants on teacher preparation, performance-based compensation**

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Innovation and Improvement recently invited applications under two grant competitions – the Teacher Quality Partnership Program, or TQP, and the Teacher Incentive Fund, or TIF – to ensure all students have access to great educators who can help them succeed.

[TQP](#) builds partnerships between high-need schools and teacher-preparation programs to prepare and support effective educators, either as an extension of an undergraduate degree program or using a “residency” model to give candidates real world experience and practice as they prepare to become outstanding educators. Since 2009, TQP has partnered with 64 grantees, representing an investment of more than \$545 million. This year’s TQP grant competition will fund up to five grantees with an estimated \$5 million

Specifically, the TQP grant seeks to improve the quality of new teachers by creating and strengthening partnerships among preparation programs, high-need school LEAs, their high-need schools, or high-need early childhood education programs. These partnerships will create model teacher-preparation programs at the pre-baccalaureate level (or in a 5<sup>th</sup>-year initial-licensing program) through the implementation of specific reforms of existing teacher preparation programs or model teaching residency programs for individuals with strong academic or professional backgrounds but without teaching experience.

We strongly encourage you to reach out to preparation programs to consider this grant opportunity. Applicants must be part of an eligible partnership that includes a high-need LEA, one or more high-need schools, a postsecondary partner, a school or college of education within the postsecondary partner, and a college or school of arts and sciences within the postsecondary partner. The lead applicant must be one of the aforementioned entities, and RIDE cannot serve as the lead applicant. If, however, you are interested in pursuing this grant opportunity, please e-mail Sarah Whiting at [sarah.whiting@ride.ri.gov](mailto:sarah.whiting@ride.ri.gov). Applications are due to the USED by 4 p.m. on **July 7**. More information about this opportunity can be found at:

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/tqpartnership/index.html>

The [TIF](#) grants support districts creating teacher-leader structures and determining compensation for those structures. The next grant competition will build on a portfolio of 97 grants, representing nearly \$2 billion in funding to states, districts, and nonprofit organizations, by awarding up to \$70 million to up to 10 grantees to attract, develop, and retain great educators. This year's TIF grant competition also includes a focus on serving rural districts, as well as a focus on promoting equitable access to effective educators.

15. ***Reminder: New guidance documents posted on evaluations; all LEAs must submit educator-evaluation data to RIDE by July 8***

For LEAs using the Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS), the Final Effectiveness Rating Report (FERR) has changed since last year. Evaluators and LEA administrators should click the link labeled "*EPSS Closeout and Turnover*" on the EPSS page to review updated instructions on how to complete the FERR. Please note that evaluators must submit an FERR for *all* educators, including those who did not receive a full evaluation this year. LEAs *must* finalize their forms in EPSS by **July 8**.

For LEAs *not* using EPSS, some of the fields have changed since last year to reflect changes to some systems. Data managers and LEA configuration administrators should review the updated *Evaluation Data Submission Guidance* document, which provides details on how to submit data via CSV file. These LEAs have until **July 8** to upload educator-evaluation data.

All documents related to educator-evaluation closeout have been posted on the [EPSS page](#) of the RIDE website under the heading "End of Year Information."



Please e-mail [edeval@ride.ri.gov](mailto:edeval@ride.ri.gov) if you have any questions about submitting educator-evaluation data to RIDE or if you would like additional support.

***Data Collection:***

**16.      *Reminder: Roster Verification for Principals due June 24***

The third and final stage of Roster Verification will run through **June 24**. During this stage, principals will verify and sign off on all the rosters for their school.

User guides for principals are available at:

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

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

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

**17.      New data show prevalence of chronic absenteeism**

This week the USED released new, first-ever chronic-absenteeism data through a new [interactive web site](#) and hosted a two-day [Every Student, Every Day National Conference](#) to support states, districts, schools, and communities in their efforts to develop effective chronic-absenteeism policy and practice. The conference focused on how schools can address root causes of the problem and strengthen the collaborative capacity of multi-agency early warning systems to link students to interventions, programs, and preventative services.

The 2013-14 CRDC shows that chronic absenteeism impacts students in all parts of the country and is prevalent among all races, as well as students with disabilities. National data reveal more than six million students – or 13 percent of all students – missed at least 15 days of school in the 2013-14 school year.

“Chronic absenteeism is a national problem,” said U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. “Frequent absences from school can be devastating to a child’s education. Missing school leads to low academic achievement and triggers drop outs. Millions of young people are missing opportunities in postsecondary education, good careers and a chance to experience the American dream.”

To address the concerns about the depth of the problem, the Obama Administration launched [Every Student, Every Day: A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism](#) last fall in response to recommendations put forth by President Obama’s My Brother’s Keeper Taskforce. Led by the White House and the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Justice, the effort is aimed at combating chronic absenteeism and urging states and local communities across the country to reduce absenteeism by at least 10 percent each year. As part of this initiative, 30 communities across the country [*Note: including Providence*] have joined the [My Brother’s Keeper Success Mentor initiative](#), an evidence-based effort which aims to reduce chronic absenteeism by connecting students who are or at risk of becoming chronically absent with trained school-linked caring adults and near-peers over the next three to five years.

## **18. Secretary King, USDA Secretary Vilsack urge support for Summer Meal Programs**

Please see this message from the Secretaries of Education and Agriculture:

We are writing to you as educators on the front lines ensuring that America's children grow up and become our Nation's future leaders. No one knows better than you that children must have the proper tools to succeed, including proper and consistent nutrition to grow up healthy so they can learn and reach their full potential. During the school year, with your help, millions of children from low-income families can count on getting healthy meals at school. However, we want to make certain that essential nutritional support remains available during the summer months, and we are asking for your leadership again this year to make sure that children do not go hungry in your community this summer.

Each day, more than 22 million children receive free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National School Lunch Program. But, when school is out, many children who rely on these meals go hungry. USDA's Summer Meal Programs help children get the nutritious meals they need even when school is not in session. Unfortunately, these Summer Meal Programs currently reach fewer than four million children nationally.

We need your assistance so that every family whose children need meals this summer knows how to find a summer meal site in their community. Here are some ways you can help:

*Provide summer meals to children at your schools this summer.* Local schools make great summer-meal sites. Children and parents are familiar and comfortable with local schools providing nutritious food in a safe environment. Schools in low-income areas can be summer-meal sites and fill an important meal gap for students, even if summer school is not offered at the school. For a comprehensive outreach toolkit, please visit:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-meals-toolkit-summer-meal-sites>.

*Ask principals, teachers, and staff in your schools to share information about nearby summer meal sites.* Schools communicate regularly and effectively with their students' families. Please encourage principals, teachers, and staff to connect their school families with summer-meal locations by visiting <http://www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks> or by calling (866) 348-6479 or (877) 842-6273.

*Champion the USDA Summer Meal Programs in your community.* As a recognized leader, please share with other community leaders the importance of USDA's Summer Meal Programs to ensure children have the resources they need to succeed. Encourage local organizations to become summer-meal sponsors or sites. Distribute flyers, postcards, and bookmarks about USDA's Summer Meal Programs and promote summer meals on your schools' websites and in your schools' e-mails. Digital and printable summer meals materials can be found at:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/raise-awareness>.

To learn more about the USDA Summer Meal Programs, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program>. In addition, the Food and Nutrition Service Regional Office staff are available to provide technical assistance and answer any questions you may have on USDA Summer Meal Programs. Find contact information for your region at:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>.

Thank you, as always, for your dedication and commitment to our children. By working together, we can ensure our children have the food and nutrition they need to grow and succeed.

Thomas J. Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture  
John B. King, Jr., Secretary of Education

## **19. Data show wide disparities in equity, opportunity**

On Tuesday, the USED Office for Civil Rights (OCR) unveiled [new data showing persistent gaps](#) in key areas affecting equity and opportunity, including incidents of discipline, restraint and seclusion, access to courses and other programs that lead to college and career readiness, teacher equity, rates of retention, and access to early learning. Despite significant work by states, school districts, and schools, the wide disparities shown in the latest [Civil Rights Data Collection](#) (CRDC) – with data from all public schools and districts nationwide for the 2013-14 school year – highlight the need for a focus on equity, especially in the implementation of the new *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). The CRDC collected data on several topics for the first time, including chronic absenteeism, access to education programs in justice facilities, availability of distance education, presence of sworn law enforcement officers in schools, availability of partially or fully subsidized preschool, and whether the district has a civil rights coordinator. A [First Look report](#) is the first in a series of data analyses from the 2013-14 CRDC that OCR will issue over the summer and fall. To make the data more accessible and useful for parents, educators, and policymakers, for the first time, the whole data file is available for download. (Note: Using the CRDC, GreatSchools aims to build a richer set of individual school profiles.)

### **From other organizations**

## **20. Instructional materials available on World War I**

The [U.S. World War I Centennial Commission](#) and National World War I Museum and Memorial are creating a bi-monthly electronic newsletter and corresponding web pages with resources and learning opportunities about World War I and are asking teachers to [share created content](#) that can be used in the classroom.

## **21. Tuition waivers available for summer PD course on LEGO robotics**

If you're planning to start a [FIRST LEGO League](#) (FLL) robotics team for the fall season or if you are interested in using LEGO robotics in an educational or afterschool setting (library, school, co-op, etc.), you won't want to miss [Rhode Island Students of the Future's](#) (RISF) professional development course in LEGO robotics.

The course will be held August 1-5, from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., at the Gordon School, in East Providence. Gordon is graciously letting RISF use its LEGO EV3 kits for this course, so you don't need to own a LEGO robot or computer in order to attend. The professional development course will provide 26 hours of hands-on learning—participants will learn how to design, build, and code the LEGO EV3 robotics system and get tips on how to best harness the power of the LEGO robotics system in a classroom, afterschool club, or FIRST LEGO League team. [Here's an article from the Warwick Beacon about last year's course.](#) And this is a [Providence Business News piece about RISF.](#)

Tuition waivers are available, thanks to the generous support of National Grid, the Verizon Foundation, Textron Charitable Trust, and Zebra Technologies. (Priority will be given to formal or informal educators who

register a FIRST LEGO League team for the fall. We have a small pool of grant funding available to help with team registration, as well!)

[Register here!](#)

Questions? Contact Mary Johnson ([mary.johnson@risf.net](mailto:mary.johnson@risf.net)) or visit [our website](#) or [Facebook page](#).

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

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