

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, September 12, 2014

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Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. Hearings to be scheduled on proposed changes to diploma requirements

The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education has approved for public comment proposed revisions to the Secondary School Regulations that would have Rhode Island begin using state assessments as a diploma requirement with the Class of 2020. As I have noted to you previously, the students in the Class of 2020 are at present in 7th grade and they will enter high

school in the fall of 2016, two years from now. By the time the Class of 2020 enters high school, it will be six years since Rhode Island adopted the Common Core State Standards and it will be the third year of administration of PARCC assessments. I believe this transition plan will provide students, families, teachers, and school leaders with more than enough time to become familiar with the Common Core and with PARCC assessments.

I appreciate your input and your support as we have grappled with revisions to our proficiency-based graduation requirements. We arrived at this decision because of the feedback that you and others have shared with us. I recognize that the period of public comment may reopen a wide-ranging discussion about the use of standardized assessments as a component in determining whether a student is eligible to graduate from high school. Looking back, I am proud of the success we have achieved with the Class of 2014, which is better prepared for success than any other graduating class from Rhode Island. I know that you remain committed to high expectations, rich opportunities, and a strong system of support for all students, and I look forward to our ongoing work together in the months ahead.

2. Race to the Top Steering Committee to hold final meeting on Monday

As I noted to you in a recent Field Memo, we have shared with the media the [‘Race to the Top Success Stories’](#) blog, which presents some highlights of Race to the Top accomplishments from each participating LEA, as described in your own words. We are also sharing these success stories with the Race to the Top Steering Committee, which will hold its final meeting on **Monday** (September 15), at 4:30 p.m., at the Rhode Island Foundation, 1 Union Station, Providence. The Steering Committee has met

quarterly, in public session, throughout the grant period. The Steering Committee has provided us with guidance about administration of the grant and has served as a communications liaison to many organizations and communities. The final committee meeting will be an occasion for all of us to celebrate the accomplishments we have achieved through funding from our Race to the Top grant. You and your team are invited to join us at this event; to help us with a head count, please let my assistant, Dana Wilson (dana.wilson@ride.ri.gov), know if you plan to attend.

3. Superintendents asked to sign Future Ready District Pledge

Through such initiatives as our Innovation Powered by Technology conference and model school grants, the Wireless Classroom Initiative, and our recently announced partnership with The Learning Accelerator, we are actively pursuing opportunities to bring blended learning into all of our schools and classrooms. Rhode Island has received national recognition for our commitment to the use of technology to improve teaching and learning. Recently, Richard Culatta, Director of the Office of Educational Technology, and Seth Andrew, Senior Advisor and Superintendent in Residence, at the U.S. Department of Education sent a letter to all superintendents, encouraging you to sign the Future Ready District Pledge. This pledge to pursue opportunities for digital learning is in line with our commitment to bringing blended learning – the combination of digital learning under the guidance of an educator and traditional face-to-face instruction – to every school in Rhode Island. I encourage you to read the [letter](#) and to read and consider signing the [pledge](#).

4. Sherman School, in Warwick, recognized for effective data use

Congratulations to Principal Michelle Paton and her team at the William A. Sherman Elementary School, in Warwick, who are the subject of a profile in the Data Quality Campaign State Stories. This profile, “Data Are Just Part of Good Teaching in Rhode Island,” shows how Sherman exemplifies “the effective use of data by a school community – including teachers, principals, and other school-based staff.” One of our priorities as a state is to use data to improve teaching and learning and our Race to the Top grant has supported this type of professional development, so it’s great to see a Rhode Island school receiving recognition. You can read the story [here](#) and you can view the video [here](#).

5. Education Council to vote on Commissioner’s Decision on tuition for summer school

At the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education meeting on Monday, one item on the agenda was a vote on whether to uphold a Commissioner’s Decision on charging tuition for summer school. As you may be aware, previous decisions, as well as an advisory that I issued in August 2009, have held that Rhode Island school districts may not charge fees for extracurricular activities nor for participation in school athletics. In this decision, however, I found that, under the specific facts in the matter before me (*G. Doe v Cumberland School District*), no law or regulation prohibited Cumberland from charging tuition for summer school, especially in that no laws or regulations require summer programs or courses and that school districts cannot compel attendance at summer school.

The Appeals Committee of the Council voted 2 to 1 to support this decision. The Council voted to table the matter until its meeting next month, as several Council members asked for more

information to inform their decision, in particular the complete file on the specific case and information on whether school districts at present charge tuition for summer programs. The RIDE team is in the process of gathering the information that the Council members requested.

From RIDE

Certification:

6. Educators selected for certification-renewal audits to be notified next month

Certification regulations effective January 2012 established a requirement that educators who receive ratings of “developing” or “ineffective” must participate in professional development for the renewal of their certificates. The Certification Renewal Audit System is the system that RIDE uses to monitor the completion of required professional development hours for those educators with “developing” or “ineffective” ratings. An educator who is selected for a certification-renewal audit is required to submit evidence of professional development prior to their certification-renewal expiration date. Educators who have been selected for the audit will be notified next month.

For more information on the Certification Renewal Audit System, go to:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Certification/Cert-main-page/RIDE_Certification_Renewal_Audit_System_Policy.pdf

If you have additional questions about the certification-renewal audit, please contact Mary Keenan, at mary.keenan@ride.ri.gov or 222-8497.

Instruction, Assessment and Curriculum:

7. RIDE opens registration for PARCC assessment training workshops this fall

RIDE will offer full-day training workshops this fall to prepare LEA- and school-level personnel for the administration of PARCC assessments this school year. Each session will cover the same material (e.g., long-term preparation, logistics planning, technology preparation, PearsonAccess Next, accommodations) and will be limited to 50 participants.

LEAs will be responsible for registering all district- and school-level personnel. When registering, LEAs should send the following participants: test coordinator, technology director, special education director. Representatives from schools should include the test coordinator and a teacher-leader or technology specialist. Please be aware that space is limited for these sessions so it is important that no more than 3 LEA-level personnel and no more than 2 school-level personnel per school are registered for participation in one of the workshops. If your LEA requires more than these allotted numbers, please contact PARCC@ride.ri.gov and we will do our best to accommodate your request.

PARCC will make various online modules for test coordinators and test administrators available throughout this fall. In addition, RIDE will be providing “live” webinars for teachers/test administrators as well as a half-day in-person workshop in the spring for test

coordinators that will provide key information on test set-up, materials coordination, test procedures, and test security.

The locations, dates, and registration links for the fall full-day sessions are listed below.

University of Rhode Island (Kingston Campus):

October 14:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopreg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=1117>

October 29:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopreg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=1118>

East Bay Educational Collaborative:

October 21:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopreg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=1119>

November 13:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopreg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=1120>

Community College of Rhode Island (Knight Campus):

October 22:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopreg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=1121>

November 5:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopreg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=1122>

Northern Rhode Island Collaborative:

October 24:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopreg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=1123>

November 7:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopreg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=1124>

November 20:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopreg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=1125>

New England Institute of Technology (East Greenwich Campus):

November 17:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopreg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=1126>

November 18:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopreg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=1127>

If you have any questions about these sessions, please contact PARCC@ride.ri.gov.

8. RIDE provides update on the RI Interim Assessments

RIDE is working on phase 2 of the Instructional Support System which includes decoupling of the RI Interim Assessments from the previous Instructional Management System and making reports available through the new Instructional Support System. RIDE is planning a soft launch of the revamped Interim Assessments in October with the goal of making the system fully available to all LEAs in November. The Interim Assessments will continue to offer two options: fixed form assessments that can be administered any time during the year and a test construction tool that allows educators to create their own tests. While the fixed forms assess

mathematics and English language arts content, the test construction tool contain items for mathematics, English language arts, science and social studies. Both assessment options will be available for grades 3-11. Please contact Ana Karantonis at ana.karantonis@ride.ri.gov with any questions.

Data Analysis and Research:

9. Limited space available for WaytogoRI Training on the new Individual Learning Plan

There are still openings principals and guidance counselors to participate in training on the new Individual Learning Plan (ILP) sponsored by WaytogoRI. Two trainings are filled but space is available for Wednesday September 24th and Thursday September 25th. Follow this link for more information: http://www.riheaa.org/press/WaytogoRI_ILP_Training_Announcement.pdf

An ILP Kickoff Webinar will be held on Tuesday, September 16, 2014 from 3:00-4:00 PM. It is recommended that you register for this webinar in preparation for the WaytogoRI workshops. Follow this link to register: <http://bridges.adobeconnect.com/riilp091614/event/registration.html>

From other organizations

10. American Red Cross instructor training available for teachers, school nurses

Please see this notice from the American Red Cross:

American Red Cross Instructor Training is available for teachers and school nurses for the current school year. The free (due to the limited amount of funding available for the trainings, registration is on a first-come, first-served basis) training is available for teachers and school nurse-teachers to become certified for two years as a First Aid & CPR/AED Instructor and authorized to teach all components of the First Aid/CPR/AED Program, including optional first-aid modules: Asthma Inhaler, Anaphylaxis and Epinephrine Auto-Injectors, and Using a Tourniquet lessons.

Participants must:

- be a Rhode Island teacher or school nurse;
- possess current American Red Cross First Aid or CPR-AED certification(s) or the equivalent (your certifications will be verified during your first classroom session); and
- complete the online pre-course at least 2 days prior to the first classroom session.

For additional information and to schedule a 12-hour training (minimum 4 participants) for your LEA, contact:

Joseph Lodge

Corporate Solutions Account Executive

American Red Cross/Preparedness, Health & Safety Services

Cell: (860) 335-7502

Fax: (860) 678-5461

E-mail: Joseph.Lodge@redcross.org

Note: If you are currently an instructor for another First Aid/CPR/AED program (American Heart Association,

American Safety & Health Institute, etc.) *free* crossover training allowing you to teach American Red Cross programs in addition to your current instructor authorization is available.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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