

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo**  
**Friday, October 17, 2014**

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**Action Item Calendar**

November 12: [Presidential Scholar](#) nominations due  
December 5: Textbook-reimbursement forms due (see [below](#))

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**Notes from Commissioner Gist**

## **1. RIDE applies for federal grant to add preschool sites**

Working with our partners at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and with support from the Rhode Island Foundation, RIDE has submitted a powerful application for a federal Preschool Development – Expansion Grant. Our proposal seeks federal funds to accelerate our existing preschool expansion plan in order to increase access to preschool for children in high-need communities as well as to improve our current processes and supports for ensuring program quality. We are seeking to expand our Rhode Island Pre-K Program from the current 17 sites to a total of 60 sites by the 2019-20 school year, through adding programs in our seven highest-need communities: Central Falls, East Providence, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick, and Woonsocket. The application for this highly competitive grant seeks approximately \$18 million over the next four fiscal years to support an additional 36 preschool classrooms; state dollars from the funding formula for aid to education will support the additional classroom expansion and would continue to support the expanded preschool program when Rhode Island has expended funds from the federal grant. I will let you know when we receive word on our grant application.

## **2. RIDE remains in contact with Health regarding enterovirus, Ebola**

This week you may have received a communication from Education Secretary Arne Duncan, regarding enterovirus and Ebola. In case you did not receive this letter, I have included it [below](#) in this Field Memo. I want to ensure you that we remain in close contact with the R.I. Department of Health, which is closely monitoring all health issues in Rhode Island. We are working with

the R.I. Emergency Management Agency and the R.I. Department of Health to schedule a conference call or webinar to provide you with the most up-to-date information and to answer your questions on enterovirus and Ebola. Meanwhile, if you have any concerns or if you need further information about public-health matters in relation to your schools, feel free to contact me at any time, at [Deborah.gist@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Deborah.gist@ride.ri.gov) or 222-8700.

### **3. All are invited to Innovation Powered by Technology conference on October 25**

All of us at RIDE are looking forward to our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Innovation Powered by Technology Conference, which will take place on Saturday, October 25, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Rhode Island Convention Center, 1 Sabin St., Providence. The conference will include workshops, breakout sessions, panel discussions, demonstrations of student work, keynote addresses, and exhibits. Some of the leaders in digital learning, from Rhode Island schools and from across the country, will participate in this conference. More than 600 people have registered so far, and we expect this year's conference to be the biggest to date. Registration is still open, and I invite you and anyone on your team to join us at this conference. Information about the conference is on the home page of our [website](#), or you can access the registration form directly at:

[http://www.rsvpbook.com/event\\_page.php?id=587385&p=921](http://www.rsvpbook.com/event_page.php?id=587385&p=921)

In preparation for the conference, I want to draw your attention to a recent publication by one of our partners, The Learning Accelerator, that takes a good look at digital learning in many

states, including Rhode Island. Here is a note from The Learning Accelerator on this publication:

2Revolutions and The Learning Accelerator are excited to share a new publication: *So You Think You Want to Innovate: Emerging Lessons and a New Tool for State and District Leaders Working to Build a Culture of Innovation*.

<http://learningaccelerator.org/about-us/news/2014/10/new-framework-helps-educational-leaders-build-culture-of-innovation>

We pursued this work because both of our organizations saw a collective need and curiosity around how education organizations could build and sustain a culture that supports and champions innovation at all levels as they strive to design powerfully effective learning experiences for young people. After many months of research and synthesis, we developed this new framework and tool. In it, we share what we believe to be components of an innovation culture and then provide a self-assessment tool 1.0 that leaders can use to track and realize progress.

#### **4. LEAs reminded to have school committees review school-safety plans by November 1; conference scheduled for Thursday**

Last year, legislation passed that requires all school committees to review and update their school-safety and emergency-response plans every year. These reviews must be completed by **November 1**. Please make sure to go to e-RIDE and indicate when your LEA has complied with this law. (RIGL 16-21-25)

By end of the year, RIDE must report to the Speaker of the House, the Senate President, and the Governor that all LEAs have completed these required updates and review.

As noted in the October 3 Field Memo, the Emergency Management Agency will hold its annual Rhode Island School Safety Conference **Thursday** (October 23), at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, in Warwick, from 8 a.m. to noon. The theme of this year's conference is "Building Partnerships for a Safe School Community," and the agenda has been shaped to address how state and local government agencies can work with schools in order to create a safe and secure environment for students and staff members throughout the state of Rhode Island.

At the conference, copies of the updated School Safety Assessment checklist will be available, which can help guide your school-safety assessments. These checklists are for your use in conducting your school-safety assessments; you do not have to submit this document to RIDE. As of last year, all LEAs are required to conduct a school-safety assessment in conjunction with local police and fire departments. Once you have conducted your initial school-safety assessment, the law requires that you perform a new assessment every three years. (RIGL 16-21-23[a])

Registration information for the school-safety conference is available at:

<https://riema.wufoo.com/forms/2014-rhode-island-school-safety-conference/>.

If you have any additional questions or comments about the conference, you may contact the Emergency Management Agency, at 946-9996.

As a reminder, two other bills passed last year dealing with emergency drills and the public records act.

One statute requires schools to conduct emergency-egress drills every month. (Schools must not conduct these drills at the end of the year; they must conduct at least one drill each month while school is in session.) Schools must also conduct two lockdown drills, one in September and one in January. Your schools should coordinate these lockdown drills in conjunction with local police “whenever possible.” (RIGL 16-21-4[a]).

Schools must also provide written reports to RIDE upon completion of these emergency drills. The fire marshal, assistant deputy fire marshal, or a local fire official may require that a fire drill be conducted in his or her presence. (RIGL 16-21-4[f])

Other legislation passed last year exempts from the public records and the open meetings acts all meetings of school-safety teams and documents that these teams produce. (16-21-25)

## **5. Central Falls teacher receives Evolution Education Award**

The National Association of Biology Teachers has named David Upegui, a science teacher at Central Falls High School, as the recipient of the *2014 Evolution Education Award*. David teaches biochemistry, food & nutrition science, human anatomy & physiology, AP biology, biology, and modern science & technology. He also started and coaches the Science Olympiad Team, and he is the Science & Math Investigative Learning Experiences (SMILE) teacher-leader. David facilitates relationships between Central Falls High and many other organizations, including Rhode Island colleges and universities,

the JASON project, Mystic Aquarium, Amgen pharmaceuticals, the SeaPerch Program, and the Norman Bird Sanctuary. An adjunct professor at Rhode Island College, David is a graduate of Central Falls High School and of Rhode Island College, where he is also an adjunct professor. Congratulations to David on earning the prestigious award!

The Evolution Education Award recognizes innovative classroom teaching and community education efforts to promote the accurate understanding of biological evolution.

## **6. Blackstone Valley Prep wins expansion grant**

Congratulations to our friends at the Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, which has won an expansion grant from the U.S. Department of Education Charter Schools Program to support the development of the school as it adds three new campuses. Year one funding from the grant will be \$429,400. Blackstone Valley Prep is one of only 11 charter public schools to win one of the Expansion of High Quality Charter School grants.

## **From RIDE**

### ***Early Learning:***

## **7. Update: RIDE seeks proposals for full-day kindergarten start-up funds**

RIDE is seeking proposals from school districts committed to moving to full-day kindergarten. The General Assembly enacted the Rhode Island Full-Day Kindergarten Accessibility Act (H 8049), which provides for one-time state start-up funding to support

districts that intend to open, operate, and sustain new full-day kindergarten classrooms.

The newly set proposal submission deadline will be **November 14**.

The Request for Proposals is now posted here:

[www.ride.ri.gov/Early-Childhood](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Early-Childhood)

***Finances:***

**8. RIDE requests reimbursement forms for nonpublic school textbooks by December 5 – *Action Item***

With funding from the textbook-reimbursement fund established by RIGL 16-23-3.1, RIDE will reimburse LEAs for any English language arts, history, or social studies textbooks on the approved 2013-14 Textbook List. A single reimbursement payment will be made in February 2015. For reimbursement, please complete the Fiscal Year 2014-2015 [Textbook Verification Form](#), located on the RIDE website, and submit the form to RIDE by **December 5**.

***Educator Recognition:***

**9. First network meeting for the Rhode Island District Teachers of the Year will be October 30**

The Rhode Island District Teachers of the Year will meet on Thursday, October 30, for their first DTOY Network Meeting of the 2014-15 academic year. In the months following this meeting, the DTOYs will have the opportunity to interview a few students to capture student perspectives on education. These interviews and the perspectives captured will be one piece of a much larger

pool of information that will inform the development of the new Rhode Island strategic plan for education.

### **From the U.S. Department of Education**

#### **10. Secretary Duncan issues letter on enterovirus, Ebola**

Please see this letter from Education Secretary Arne Duncan, on the recent health issues related to enterovirus and Ebola.

Dear Superintendents,

As you are likely aware, the United States has been experiencing a nationwide outbreak of enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) associated with severe respiratory illness that has been especially harmful to children. At the same time, you and your communities may also have questions about the Ebola virus. To address both public health concerns, the U.S. Department of Education and our federal health partners have a number of informational resources to share with you.

Almost all of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-confirmed cases this year of EV-D68 infection have been among children. Many of the children had asthma or a history of wheezing. Many parents continue to be worried about the outbreak and want information about what they can do to prevent illness and protect themselves and their families. The CDC has developed information and resources for parents about EV-D68. Please help us to address parents' questions and concerns and make them aware that these resources are available.

Below are CDC resources about EV-D68 developed for parents:

- [Web Feature](#), “What Parents Need to Know About Enterovirus D68”
- [Drop-in newsletter article \(matte article\)](#), “Parents: Learn the Facts about Enterovirus D68”
- [Fact sheet for parents](#), “What Parents Need to Know about Enterovirus D68”
- [General questions and answers for the public](#)
- [Infographic: Keep Your Child from Getting and Spreading Enterovirus D68](#)

Here are just a few ideas of how you can use and share these resources:

Most importantly, work with your schools to share CDC information with parents:

- Print and send copies of the fact sheet and/or infographic home with children
- Email parents links to information on the CDC web site
- Post links to CDC information on schools’ social media accounts
- Link to the URLs provided in the list above on your parent-facing web pages.

Share the infographic or Web Feature with parents over social media. Below are some sample tweets or create your own:

- Parents, CDC addresses your questions & concerns w/ new educational materials about EV-D68. <http://1.usa.gov/1o92Sdx>
- Concerned about #enterovirus? Here's what you need to know about EV-D68 & respiratory illness. <http://1.usa.gov/1sC9Jfc>
- Parents, follow these steps to protect kids, esp those w/ asthma, from EV-D68 & other viruses that cause respiratory illness. <http://go.usa.gov/VyzA>

Syndicate content from the CDC website. CDC encourages organizations to mirror CDC's web text through content syndication rather than copy text onto their websites. Benefits include immediate and automatic updates whenever any changes are made on the CDC site and ensures all content is consistent and current across the Internet. If you'd like to include EV-D68 Web content without having to monitor and copy updates, visit [Content Syndication](#) for the free, one-time setup instructions. Enterovirus D68 is listed under "Syndication Topics."

Place the text of the matte article on your website or in e-newsletters and other publications you have that reach parents.

Work with local child-care facilities and organizations in your area to share CDC information with parents:

- Ask child-care centers to place the drop-in article in parent newsletters.

- Ask child care centers to print and post the fact sheet or infographic.
- Encourage parents and community partners to share the fact sheet with doctor's offices, clinics, faith communities, and other community settings.

Yesterday, the CDC issued a [press release](#) sharing news about a new lab test developed by CDC for EV-D68, which will allow more rapid testing of specimens. Because of this new test, confirmed cases of EV-D68 will appear to rise rapidly over the next 7 to 10 days as specimen testing accelerates. However, changes in case counts won't represent a real-time influx of new cases.

Remember, too, as enterovirus season is expected to taper off, flu activity usually begins to increase in October. While there is not a vaccine to prevent illness from enteroviruses, the single best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated each year. Many resources for parents and others can be found on the [CDC flu web site](#). CDC recommends that *all* children 6 months old or older get a flu vaccine.

Finally, we know your communities may also have questions about what schools can do to keep students and adults safe from the Ebola virus. The President has made control of Ebola a top national security priority, and we as a nation have spent more than \$100 million fighting this outbreak since the first cases were reported last March in Africa. Our national health system has the capacity and expertise to quickly detect and contain this disease and is working with states and school districts to ensure the safety of our students and school employees. As you likely know, the CDC

is continually updating its information on Ebola, information that can be found here:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html>.

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Safe and Healthy Students has a number of materials available regarding Readiness and Emergency Management of Schools in crisis situations, and those materials can be found here:

<http://rems.ed.gov/>.

One resource at this web link is steps the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) has taken to keep parents and community partners continually updated on the Ebola situation there, including establishing a website:

<http://www.dallasisd.org/healthupdates>.

Additional materials developed by the DISD Communications Team included there are:

[All Staff Notice about Ebola](#)

[Parent Letter — English](#)

[Parent Letter — Spanish](#)

[Ebola FAQ](#)

[Talking with Children about Ebola](#)

[Recognizing and Reducing Signs of Anxiety in Times of Crisis](#)

We sincerely hope that you find these materials beneficial and that you will share them through all of your available networks and communication vehicles.

Thank you.

The National Public Engagement Team  
The State and Local Public Engagement Team  
U.S. Department of Education

### **From other organizations**

#### **11. Rhode Island schools invited to participate in performance-assessment project**

Please see this message from the Center for Collaborative Education:

The [Center for Collaborative Education](#) (CCE) invites you to participate in a groundbreaking performance-assessment project sponsored by the [Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity](#) (SCALE), the [Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education](#) (SCOPE), the [Educational Policy Improvement Center](#) (EPIC). The work many of you have done as part of the Strengthening Proficiency Based Graduation performance assessment initiative puts you in an excellent position to contribute.

The [Innovation Lab Network](#) (ILN) Performance Assessment Project is collecting and curating a set of quality performance tasks that will populate an open-source, vetted task bank accessible to teachers. The emphasis is on the type of performance-based measures that support assessment of deeper learning. Last year's pilot included 27 tasks in ELA, mathematics, and science. The next pilot stage

of the performance tasks is expected to take place in Spring 2015. CCE invites Rhode Island secondary schools to submit a self-authored performance task or tasks to be considered for inclusion in the bank.

Submitted tasks will be reviewed to ensure their consistency with project-based Quality Criteria and formatted to fit a common project template. Task submission is needed by **October 30**. Please respond with your interest and/or questions to Laurie Gagnon ([lgagnon@ccebos.org](mailto:lgagnon@ccebos.org)).

## **12. Grants available to schools for environmental projects**

Please see this message from the Environment Council of Rhode Island:

The Environment Council of Rhode Island's (ECRI) Education Fund is pleased to announce that we are opening the application process for the Eighth Annual Loraine Tisdale Environmental Education Fund awards.

Each year ECRI's Education Fund gives out small grants to Rhode Island schools and school-based after-school programs for hands-on environmental projects by students that benefit the local environment. Schools and after-school programs can request an application from the [ECRI's Education Fund](#), or download one [here](#).

We are pleased to offer 3 grants of up to \$250 in support of school-based projects that:

- have student participation;

- lead to measurable improvement in an environmental condition; and
- involve the community beyond a school in some way.

All Rhode Island schools and school-based after-school programs are encouraged to apply, and an ECRI Education Fund representative will be happy to answer any questions to help schools with their project application. We can be contacted either by e-mail [here](#) or by phone, at 621-8048.

Independent environmental professionals will review all applications, and three schools or school-based after-school programs will receive \$250 to carry out their projects. Over the last 5 years, schools all over Rhode Island have been awarded these grants for water-quality, school-garden, recycling, composting, and alternative-energy projects.

The Loraine Tisdale Environmental Education Awards honor a woman whose energy for a just and healthy environment was legendary. Mrs. Tisdale held an undergraduate degree in chemistry and a degree in nursing. For many years she led an organization that addressed safety and health issues concerning pesticides.

The application deadline is **November 20**, and awards will be made in January for projects to be undertaken in the spring of 2015. Applications and further information are available [here](#).

### **13. Boston Globe available free to educators, students**

Please see this message from the Boston Globe Foundation:

[The Boston Globe News in Education \(NIE\) program](#) is pleased once again to extend an exciting offer to Rhode Island educators and their students.

Thanks to the generosity of private donors and corporate sponsors, access to The Boston Globe and educational resources are available free of charge to Rhode Island teachers in kindergarten through grade 12.

Register for free Boston Globe classroom access at:

<http://nieonline.com/bostonglobe/order.cfm>.

The registration process is quick and easy. (For Rhode Island schools, under “I can’t find my school” enter school name and Zip code.) Once registered, teachers and their students will now have 24/7 access to these Boston Globe digital products:

- [The Boston Globe e-paper](#) looks just like an electronic replica of the print newspaper but with interactive features. Using the Boston Globe e-paper, students can listen to individual articles or have them translated into 17 languages.
- [BostonGlobe.com](#) is the digital version of The Boston Globe. Students can search for keywords on BostonGlobe.com and save articles to their own personal accounts.
- [Boston.com](#) offers 24-hour breaking news and sports coverage from The Boston Globe along with streaming audio and video from RadioBDC, the Globe's alternative rock Internet radio station.

- [Boston Globe Archive](#) contains the full text of Globe articles from 1872 to the present.

In addition to the news, teachers will have full access to Boston Globe NIE Common Core lesson plans, a weekly Boston Globe news quiz and newsletter, daily science webcasts, a Words in the News vocabulary quiz generated by grade level, a caption contest for editorial cartoons, and much more.

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

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