

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Thursday, November 10, 2016**

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Notes from Commissioner Wagner

Post-election thoughts and resources offered to educators

This election season was exhausting, and when educators are faced with a tough situation, we do what we do best – we teach.

Over the coming weeks and months, let's help our children engage with others, ask questions, form thoughtful opinions, express themselves, test their ideas, be kind, learn and grow. Let's help all kids dream, design, and build a better and still better world.

Our strategic plan captures it well: "All of our graduates will be ready to investigate the world, recognize the perspectives of others, communicate their ideas to diverse audiences, and take actions to improve conditions in our world."

To paraphrase Churchill: Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others. A periodic peaceful transfer of power following cycles of flash and fury is one of the wonders of our American democratic republic. Let's help our children understand the elegant

complexities of their government, the heritage and promise of our diverse people.

You will find a thoughtful collection of post-election resources at [Share My Lesson](#), a professional-learning site powered by our colleagues at the AFT.

When we teach our children, we can make a difference – a big difference.

Top R.I. school in Scholastic Summer Reading Challenge named

Congratulations to the students, educators, and families at the Marieville Elementary School, in North Providence, the top Rhode Island school in the [Scholastic](#) Summer Reading Challenge. The kids at Marieville read for a total 722,239 minutes this summer – tops in Rhode Island!

Middle-school girls participate in STEM expo; two students win URI scholarships

The Tech Collective reports to us that 125 middle-school students and ten educators from Sophia Academy, Woonsocket Middle School, Paul Cuffee Middle School, and Calcutt Middle School (Central Falls) attended [Tech Collective's](#) sixth annual STEM in the Middle Girls' Career Expo, held at Rhode Island College. The expo was supported by funds from a [Real Jobs Rhode Island](#) grant and was sponsored by IBM and Dassault Systemes Simulia.

STEM in the Middle aims to raise awareness and participation in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields at the middle-school level. Students attended 12 hands-on interactive STEM workshops throughout the morning. The workshops were designed and

facilitated by female industry professionals, RIC faculty, and students from the William M. Davies, Jr. Career and Technical High School and North Kingstown High School. Workshop topics included computer science, cosmology, biotechnology, engineering, environmental science and environmental engineering, marine science, wearable technology, and laser printing. Sophie Girard, a junior at North Kingstown High, and Viviana Barrientos, a senior at Davies, who designed and facilitated two of the workshops, are two of the recipients of the 2016 GRRL Tech/URI Scholarship essay contest. The theme of the essay was to design an interactive, hands-on workshop for middle school girls while staying within a \$100 budget. Sophie and Viviana's essays were chosen out of a field of more than 80 applicants. The topic of Sophie's workshop was "Heating Your House - Helping Our Home" and Viviana had the girls building anemometers out of everyday household items. If Sophie and Viviana are accepted at URI each will receive a \$20,000 scholarship. Congratulations to Sophie and Viviana!

From RIDE

Early Learning:

RIDE posts list of free state prekindergarten, Head Start programs

Rhode Island State Pre-K and Head Start programs offer free, high-quality preschool programs for young children. Click [here](#) for a list of programs available in each community. Openings can occur throughout the school year, so encourage families to contact programs to see if there is a current opening or to get on the waiting list. Children who attend high-quality preschool develop strong social skills, richer vocabularies, and basic math skills.

Legal:

Decision issued on nonpublic-school placement

RIDE has issued this Commissioner’s Decision on placement in a nonpublic school:

B. Doe v. Bristol Warren School District and Mount Pleasant Academy: “Parent was not entitled to interim order to maintain her child at Mount Pleasant Academy after the director of this private school, and the child’s 504 team, made a determination that he no longer met criteria for attendance and was no longer benefitting from his placement there. Additional time for the LEA to secure a new and appropriate placement for this student was requested.”

<http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2016/023-16 B. Doe v. Bristol Warren and Mount Pleasant Academy 010316.pdf>

Instruction:

Educators invited to learn more about interdisciplinary kindergarten curriculum

Last month, 23 kindergarten teachers from 7 districts began learning how to implement an interdisciplinary kindergarten curriculum, developed by the Boston Public Schools (BPS), with professional development support from BPS and coaching support from the Education Development Center. This training is part of a pilot project sponsored by our Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant, with the aim of supporting developmentally appropriate, Common Core-aligned kindergarten teaching and learning.

The catalyst for this initiative was a concern regarding the ability to implement the rigorous Rhode Island standards in ways that are both consistent with how kindergarteners learn best and aligned with the Common Core standards. RIDE then worked with Education Development Center to develop an approach that began this past September with the first ever Rhode Island kindergarten conference and that continues with the curriculum and coaching pilot. In an effort to build LEA capacity, reading specialists and coaches from each LEA are joining the kindergarten teachers in the professional development sessions and participating in special coach-training days.

This initiative is generating an unusual level of enthusiasm among teachers, coaches, and school and district leaders. Educators have begun to create learning centers where children are reading, writing, speaking, and listening, in addition to building with blocks, creating art, taking on roles through dramatization, and conducting science, engineering, and math investigations. We encourage LEAs interested in learning more about the BPS curricula to check out the BPS [website](#), read a feature about BPS in [Atlantic Monthly](#), and view a [PBS video](#) highlighting BPS's positive work in early-childhood education.

If you have questions about the RIDE K-Pilot initiative, please email Diane Girard, at diane.girard@ride.ri.gov.

Meetings:

Board of Education to meet on Wednesday (November 16)

The next Board of Education quarterly meeting will take place on **Wednesday** (November 16), at 5:30 p.m., at the Community College of Rhode Island (Room 4090), 400 East Ave., Warwick. RIDE will [post](#) the agenda on **Monday** (November 14), by 5:30 p.m.

From other organizations

Reminder: DownCity Design offers free fellowships for teachers interested in project-based instruction; deadline, November 18

[DownCity Design](#) is offering a free professional-development series for Rhode Island educators beginning in January. The Innovative Educator fellowship will bring together teachers from across Rhode Island interested in using Design Thinking to guide their students through project-based investigations in science, social studies, language arts, and more. Innovative Educator fellows will gather five times over the course of the school year to develop and test hands-on, standards-aligned curricula that create meaningful and fun learning experiences. The application deadline is **November 18**. To learn more and apply, please click [here](#).

Write Rhode Island accepting story submissions, holding writing workshops for students

Submissions are now open for Write Rhode Island, a writing competition for students. Students in grades 8 to 12 can submit one story that incorporates Rhode Island. Visit the Write Rhode Island page on School One website, www.school-one.org, and click on the Submit button.

Write Rhode Island is holding several writing workshops in the coming weeks. The Newport Art Museum is hosting workshops on **Monday** (November 14), November 21 and 28, at 3:30 p.m. Please contact Maggie, at the Newport Art Museum to sign up: 848-2787 or registration@newportartmuseum.org.

The Fox Point Library will hold a workshop Tuesday (November 15), at 6 .pm. Please contact the teen librarian, at 331-0390, for information.

The North Scituate Public Library is offering Introduction to Short Story Writing on Wednesday (November 16), at 6 p.m. Contact Brenda, at 647-5133, for information.

Rebecca, teen librarian at the Johnston Public Library, welcomes teens as part of an after-school fiction writing workshop on November 17.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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