

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

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- January 9: [Talent Pool](#) nominations due

Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. Rhode Island receives federal Preschool Expansion Grant; goal is to have 60 state-funded preschool classrooms by 2019

We received terrific news this week!:

The U.S. Department of Education has awarded Rhode Island a grant to add prekindergarten programs in the seven highest-need communities in Rhode Island: Central Falls, East Providence, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick, and Woonsocket.

With funding from this grant, the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) will expand the Rhode Island Prekindergarten Program from the current 17 sites to a total of 60 sites by the 2019-20 school year. The funds from the grant will increase access to preschool for children in high-need communities and will help ensure that the programs are of high quality.

The Rhode Island application for the federal Preschool Expansion Grant sought \$19 million in funding over the next four fiscal years. The U.S. Department of Education announced that the first-year [funding](#) for the grant will be \$2.3 million, which is the full amount Rhode Island requested for Year 1. Funding for Year 2 is in the budget and appears to be well on its way to approval.

It was special honor to be able to celebrate this award on Wednesday at the White House Summit on Early Education. As an educator with a background in early-childhood education, I know it is essential that all children, regardless of the economic status of their family or their community, have opportunities to enroll in high-quality early-learning programs. This federal grant will accelerate our progress in opening more state-funded prekindergarten programs across the state, and we will also continue increasing high-quality early-learning opportunities through our many important on-going initiatives, including our Quality Improvement Grants for early-learning programs and efforts to expand access to full-day kindergarten.

I deeply appreciate the support we received from you and from your professional organizations, which definitely helped our grant application. In preparing to apply for this grant, the RIDE team met with school leaders from many of our LEAs to discuss opportunities for state-supported prekindergarten classes as part of school systems. I know we will continue to communicate with you about this opportunity as we put the funding from the grant into action and issue a request for proposals for new prekindergarten classes.

Our news release on the grant is posted [here](#).

2. Children's Friend named preliminary winner of federal child-care grant

In addition to the great news this week about the Preschool Expansion Grant, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced the Children's Friend and Service, based in Providence, is a preliminary winner of an Early Head Start-Child

Care Partnership federal grant of \$1.2 million. (The Department of Health and Human Services notes the awards and amounts are not final and are subject to change; the Department will award the funds on a rolling basis through March.)

This award is a federal grant to improve the quality of child-care programs and to encourage collaboration between Early Head Start grantees and child-care providers. Rhode Island-based Head Start programs, child-care programs, and Children's Friend worked together on this grant application. This alliance will supplement and strengthen our work toward expanding access to high-quality preschool classes. Congratulations to all!

3. RIDE to release NECAP science results on Tuesday

Thank you for your participation in our webinar on the release of the 2014 NECAP science results. I appreciate your feedback throughout the review process, and I hope our team was able to answer your questions at the webinar and to provide you with assurance that we are committed to the accuracy and integrity of our assessment system. We will release the results of 2014 NECAP science assessments on Tuesday at 3 p.m. As I have noted to you previously, we are confident in the accuracy of all results at the statewide level, but we are asking people to use caution in interpreting results at the school (or district) level in for the grade-4 and grade-assessments. We are also asking parents of students who were tested in those grade levels to use caution in interpreting the "inquiry task" results, as some of the constructed-response items may have been poorly worded or given no credit when they should have received partial credit.

4. Council selects members of team that will develop, write strategic plan for elementary, secondary education

At its meeting last night (December 11), the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education selected the members of the Ambassador Design Team, which over the next seven months will develop and write the next strategic plan for elementary and secondary education. The Council was able to select only a small number of team members from among the 156 who applied to serve, but everyone who applied will have the opportunity to help in other ways with the on-going process of developing the plan. The design team members represent a wide range of views, but they share a commitment to our schools and to our students. I believe that the plan this team develops will guide our work and inspire us as we continue to transform education in Rhode Island. Our news release on the selection of members of the design team is posted [here](#).

5. Ceremony honors 2014 Commended Schools

We had a joyful ceremony last night at the State House, at which Governor Chafee and the members of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education honored our 2014 Commended Schools. A total of 30 schools from 20 of our school districts (plus 3 charter public schools) received this award, which we originally announced when we released our accountability results in June. Board of Education Chair Eva-Marie Mancuso made special notice of the six schools that have attained Commended School status for the past three years in a row:

- Blackstone Academy Charter School;
- Charlestown Elementary School (Chariho);
- Classical High School (Providence);
- Fort Barton School (Tiverton);

- Rockwell School (Bristol Warren); and
- Scituate High School.

Congratulations to the students, teachers, and school leaders in all of our Commended Schools! You are leading the way when it comes to student achievement, attainment of goals, closing achievement gaps, and improving graduation rates.

6. Six R.I. schools apply for grants to advance personalized learning

Six Rhode Island members of the [League of Innovative Schools](#) have submitted final proposals to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for the New England Secondary School Consortium Personalized Learning grant opportunity:

- the Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School of Coventry;
- Central Falls High School;
- Coventry High School;
- Cumberland High School; and
- Ponaganset Middle School and Ponaganset High School, in Foster-Glocester.

Funding from the [2014 Regional Funds for Breakthrough Schools initiative](#) will support the launch of fully personalized learning environments in each participating school, beginning in September 2015. These schools have made a public commitment to advancing educational equity, personalized learning, proficiency-based diplomas, and alternative-learning pathways. Each school participated in a 4-day design institute this summer and received technical assistance and coaching from the [Great Schools Partnership](#) to prepare a comprehensive plan for

submission this month. By the end of the month, the consortium will identify the schools moving into the next phase of the grant, and these schools will receive comprehensive support and assistance through individual coaching to implement their proposed plans. Thanks to the teachers and school leaders in Central Falls, Coventry, Cumberland, and Foster-Glocester for your commitment to personalized learning and educational equity!

From RIDE

Data Collections:

7. LEAs are asked to continue daily discipline data reporting

The discipline-data submission is a continuing submission that LEAs are required to perform on a daily basis. We use the discipline data for federal and state reporting to assure compliance with federal and state laws outlined in [collection guidelines](#). Discipline data can be submitted through [eRIDE](#) using the Enrollment Census application or through the Automated Data Transfer (ADT) agent. Discipline is a submission type within the Enrollment Census application. If you have any questions or concerns submitting discipline data, please contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495, or Jan Mermin, at Jan.Mermin@ride.ri.gov or 222-4710.

8. *Reminder:* LEAs asked to review cohort graduation data by December 19

The Cohort Exit Data Review is open, and LEAs should be reviewing their data. The instructions are located [here on eRIDE](#). The review process will close on **December 19**. Signed reports are due on December 19. This is a critical process for high schools. If

you have any questions or concerns about submitting graduation data, please contact Greg Martin, at Gregory.martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495, or input a request for assistance, at:

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

9. *Reminder: LEAs asked to migrate to new version of SCED by January 1 – Action Item*

RIDE has identified LEAs that are still using version 1.0 of the School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) codes for some or all of their courses. LEA-specific crosswalk files have been loaded to District Exchange for each LEA to help facilitate the migration from version 1.0 to version 2.0 SCED codes. It is vital that you migrate these codes by **January 1**. If you have any questions about this transition, please e-mail Greg Martin, at Gregory.martin@ride.ri.gov, or input a request for assistance, at:

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

Assessments:

10. *Reminder: Deadlines extended for PARCC student registration*

The Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) student-registration (enrollment) deadline for the spring Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) testing has been extended to **January 7**. It is recommended that LEAs complete student registration before the holiday break to ensure timeliness and completeness of the data. If you have any questions or concerns about PARCC registration, please contact Greg Martin, at

Gregory.martin@ride.ri.gov or 222-8495, or input a request for assistance, at:

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

11. PARCC publishes informational guides for each mathematics assessment

PARCC has just published informational guides for each grade level and each high-school mathematics course. The guides contain the revised claims structure, task types, test blueprints, evidence statements and revised tables, assessment policies, and the reference sheet for that particular grade or subject. These guides will allow educators to access all the pertinent information regarding their students' assessment in one place. Also, mathematics now has its own page at [parcconline.org](http://www.parcconline.org). You can find these guides, along with all other PARCC mathematics resources, at <http://www.parcconline.org/mathematics-test-documents>.

From other state agencies

12. Traveler monitored for Ebola symptoms, no presence of disease found

Please see this weekly update from the Department of Health regarding Ebola:

The Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) continues to conduct daily post-arrival monitoring of all travelers to Rhode Island whose travel originated in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, or Mali. Monitoring continues for the 21 days after an individual's last possible exposure to Ebola.

(Twenty-one days is the longest time it can take from the time a person is infected with Ebola until that person has symptoms of Ebola.)

On December 5, an individual in Rhode Island who had been in an Ebola-affected West African country 17 days earlier began experiencing mild symptoms of Ebola. As a part of HEALTH's traveler-monitoring program, this individual was being monitored daily. After having alerted the hospital in advance, HEALTH directed the individual to Landmark Medical Center for further evaluation. The patient was released after an evaluation suggested no presence of any significant disease.

All phases of the situation were carefully managed to ensure the safety of the public and a prompt evaluation of the patient. This experience displayed the value of the planning and close coordination that HEALTH and all components of Rhode Island's healthcare system have engaged in over the past several months. It also displayed the efficiency and effectiveness of the traveler monitoring program in Rhode Island.

From other organizations

13. Learning First Alliance - Rhode Island seeks proposals for presentations at conference on Whole Child Education

Please see this message from the Learning First Alliance – Rhode Island:

This school year's Learning First Alliance - Rhode Island conference, "Rhode Island Whole Child Education in Action," will feature workshops demonstrating best practice in

classrooms, schools, districts, and communities in Rhode Island. Conference strands will be organized around threads that demonstrate what it means for children and youth to be healthy, safe, supported, engaged, and challenged. It is understood and anticipated that workshops will cross over to address multiple threads.

The target audience for this conference will include teachers, administrators, policy-makers, school-committee members, counselors, community leaders, higher-education practitioners, and others. The conference will take place on March 14, from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., at Johnston High School.

A well-rounded, comprehensive education means that schools, parents, and communities work together to support all aspects of the process. This conference will focus on ways that is happening in Rhode Island schools.

Requests for presenter proposals are now being accepted.

Please visit www.lfari.org for more details and for a link to the conference RFP.

14. RIMLE announces three new awards for middle-level educators, seeks nominations for awards

Please see this message from the Rhode Island Middle Level Educators:

The Rhode Island Middle Level Educators (RIMLE) has announced new educator awards for middle-level educators and middle-level teams: the Distinguished Middle Level Educator Award, the Promising Practitioner Award, and the

Teams Making a Difference for Middle Level Educators Award.

Nominations for these awards are now open and are due by **March 1**. RIMLE will announced the award-winners at the membership meeting on May 21. For further information, see the RIMLE website, at:

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

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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