

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, December 20, 2013

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Data and information:

10. Principals asked to check NECAP [demographic data file](#) for accuracy, report corrections by **January 31 – Action Item**

Action Item Calendar

Today (December 20): Deadline to sign off on [cohort data](#)

Today (December 20): [AP fee](#) waiver survey due

December 31: Review reports on [work assignments](#)

January 6: Registration deadline for NECAP results meetings (see [below](#))

January 15: Deadline for Race to the Top budgets, reimbursement forms (see [below](#))

January 31: Deadline for checking demographic file (see [below](#))

Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. Commissioner issues holiday greetings, reviews accomplishments of 2013; next Field Memo: January 3

Every year around this time I look back and take stock of the many things we have accomplished as we work together to transform education in Rhode Island. It's obvious to me that, over the past year, our accomplishments have been extraordinary. Though the road forward has not always been smooth and straight, I am proud that we have been able to stay focused on the goals of our strategic plan for transforming education and that we have remained committed to working in the best interest of our students. Thanks to our strong working relationship and our continued communication with you and your representative organizations, we have moved forward on many fronts – from implementing the first year of full educator evaluations, transitioning across the state to the Common Core State Standards, providing an unprecedented level of support to students who need additional skills in mathematics in order to earn a diploma, expanding the statewide prekindergarten programs, developing revised statutes to ensure school safety, expanding full-day kindergarten, launching the Wireless Classroom Initiative, winning two more U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School awards, and convening the Governor's Educator Autonomy Working Group – to cite just some examples. The results have been positive as well, as we learned last month that Rhode Island students have surpassed the national average for the first time in all mathematics and reading tests on the U.S. Department of Education Nation's Report Card for 2012. With these accomplishments in mind, I wish you a wonderful season of celebration with family and with friends. If you are traveling next week, I wish you a safe journey – and let's continue our journey together in 2014!

We will transmit our next Field Memo on Friday, January 3.

2. West Warwick math coach highlighted in U.S. Department of Education weekly newsletter

This week, the current edition of the U.S. Department of Education newsletter “The Teachers Edition” includes an item on Audra McPhillips, a mathematics coach in the West Warwick schools, whose uses “hint cards” to help students solve mathematics problems and think independently. Congratulations to Audra on receiving national recognition for her work!

3. Providence Plan to receive Investing in Innovation grant

Last month we learned that the U.S. Department of Education had selected The Providence Plan as one of 25 potential grantees in the 4th round of the Investing in Innovation (i3) competition. The potential grantees had to receive matching funds in order to receive the federal funding. This week, the U.S. Department of Education reports that The Providence Plan has received its matching funds and will therefore receive its full Investing in Innovation grant. Congratulations to The Providence Plan on this achievement!

From RIDE

Webinars and training:

4. RIDE to hold two concurrent training workshops on PARCC Field Test on January 7; LEAs urged to register

RIDE will be providing two concurrent, in-person PARCC Field Test training workshops on Tuesday, **January 7**.

The first of these concurrent workshops, the **Field Test Training Workshop**, will be an all-day workshop with two parts that will focus heavily on the technology-related aspects of the field test.

Part I of the Field Test Training Workshop, which will start at 8:30 a.m. and end at 11:45 a.m., will provide an overview of PearsonAccess as well as details on user access and user roles as they relate to computer- and paper-based assessment. Part I will also provide information on the types of accessibility features and accommodations available for online testing as well as on how to assign accommodated test forms and how to register students for participation in the PARCC Field Test. Part I of the Field Test Training Workshop is especially designed for district- and school-level testing coordinators as well as for special education directors and technology directors and coordinators.

Part II of the Field Test Training Workshop, which will start after lunch at 12:45 p.m. and end at 3:30 p.m., will focus exclusively on technology setup and is especially designed for district and school staff responsible for the technical setup and support of PARCC computer-based testing (e.g., the district technology director or school technology coordinator).

We strongly recommend that each district send 2 or 3 representatives and that each school send 1 representative to attend the Field Test Training Workshop. (Note: If your school will be administering only the paper-based tests, then you should send a representative only to Part I of the training.)

The second concurrent workshop, the **Test Coordinator Training Workshop**, will offer a morning session and an afternoon session. Both sessions will cover the same material, so participants have a choice of coming from *either* 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. *or* from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. The Test Coordinator Training Workshop is especially designed for district- and school-level test coordinators as well as for school principals. Topics covered will include an overview of PARCC and the field test, and the workshop will provide information on planning and preparation for the field test, scheduling and logistics, test security, accommodations, and other essential information on field-test policies and procedures. The Test Coordinator Training Workshop will also provide information on additional support, such as upcoming training webinars and other online resources.

We strongly recommend that each district send 1 representative to attend either the morning or afternoon session of the Test Coordinator Training Workshop and that each school send 1 or 2 representatives (you may send one person in the morning and one person in the afternoon if you wish).

To register for each of these training opportunities, log in in to eRIDE, at <http://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopreg/default.aspx>, and choose the workshop(s) you wish to attend.

If you have any questions about these two concurrent workshops, please e-mail your questions to PARCC@ride.ri.gov .

Race to the Top:

- 5. LEAs asked to submit amended Race to the Top budgets, reimbursement forms for expenses by January 15 or risk losing available funds – *Action Item***

As the year comes to a close, it is a great opportunity to reflect on the hard work that we have done together to implement our Race to the Top initiatives across our state. We have made excellent progress in transitioning to the Common Core and in preparing for comprehensive assessments, implementing educator-evaluation systems, and supporting beginning teachers, to name just a few of our initiatives. With approximately nine months left before the end of the grant, however, we must continue to maintain our momentum and, most important, we must continue to make the most of the opportunities that the Race to the Top funds have made possible.

At present, we have more than \$10 million in unspent LEA funds, representing both funds allocated to LEAs based on their Title 1 population *as well as* supplemental funding from the state (SEA) budget that we have provided to LEAs in order to ensure that all LEAs were able to participate in the Race to the Top initiatives. We have agreed that we do not want to return any Race to the Top funds to the federal government at the end of the grant period; therefore, we are asking that you to submit the following information to us by **January 15**:

- an amendment that fully budgets for the funds you intend to spend through September 2014; and
- all reimbursements for expenses incurred through December 2013.

After January 15, we will pursue options to reallocate unspent and unbudgeted LEA funds.

To support you in this process, we will send you an e-mail summarizing your remaining funds as well as the immediate

action that we require. As you may remember, during the summer we reached out to you to ensure that you had a solid budget plan for spending all of your funds in the final year of the grant. We pursued multiple strategies with each LEA superintendent or director, including reaching out either by e-mail or telephone to follow up on budget plans. If you have either general questions on the funding process and protocol or a specific question about your budget and the amount of allocated Race to the Top funds that you have spent, please contact MaryBeth Fafard (MaryBeth.Fafard@ride.ri.gov), at 222-8956, or David Alves (David.Alves@ride.ri.gov) at 222-4271.

Certification:

6. Temporary Initial Educator Certificates available for certification applicants from out of state

This year RIDE began issuing Temporary Initial Educator Certificates. These certificates are available to educators from other states who are new to Rhode Island and meet Rhode Island certification requirements *except* for the Rhode Island certification test requirements. The Temporary Initial Educator Certificate is valid for one year and is not renewable. The purpose of this certificate is to allow out-of-state educators to serve in Rhode Island schools while they work to complete Rhode Island certification test requirements. You may review the application, at:

www.ride.ri.gov/certification.

7. Work Experience Verification Forms available for certification applicants

Applicants who need to provide evidence of prekindergarten through grade-12 professional education experience or verification of substitute-teaching work experience may use the Work Experience Verification Form with their certification application. The Work Experience Verification form may be completed in lieu of a letter from a superintendent stating the applicant's title and number of years of experience in the position. You may review the form, at:

www.ride.ri.gov/WorkVerification.

8. RIDE launches eCert portal with additional features regarding certification processing, status

RIDE is pleased to announce the launch of the eCert – District Portal. As of last Wednesday (December 18), all superintendents have been able to access this new portal, which gives you three new features in the eCert module: Verify Educator Certification, Request Priority Processing for Certification Applications, and Verify Highly Qualified Status of Educators.

For more information on this portal and its features, click [here](#) or visit <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Certification> and click on the Updates tab.

Assessments:

9. RIDE schedules mandatory meetings on release of 2013 NECAP results; registration due by January 6 – *Action Item*

RIDE will hold two meetings next month to support LEA plans for the release of the October 2013 NECAP results. Attendees will receive communication materials and strategies to use in

communicating with students, families, and the community about NECAP scores, particularly for the Class of 2014. Each LEA *must* attend one meeting as a team, which should include at a minimum the superintendent or director, the assistant superintendent, and all high-school principals. The first meeting will take place on **January 8**, in the Paff Auditorium at RIDE, 255 Westminster St. or 80 Washington St, Providence, from 5 to 7 p.m., and the second meeting will take place on **January 14**, at a location to be determined, also from 5 to 7 p.m.

LEAs that do not have full district or school leadership present at the meeting will not receive their October 2013 NECAP results. Participants must register by **January 6**. Registration for the meeting dates will be on a first-come, first-served basis, as space allows.

Registration information is here:

NECAP Score Release Meeting – January 8

[Register - January 8th](#)

(January 8 Meeting Link:

<https://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopReg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=900>)

NECAP Score Release Meeting – January 14

[Register - January 14th](#)

(January 14 Meeting Link:

<https://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopReg/ViewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=901>)

For more information on these meetings, you may contact Sharon Lee (Sharon.Lee@ride.ri.gov).

Data and information:

10. Principals asked to check NECAP demographic data file for accuracy, report corrections by January 31 – *Action Item*

On December 27, the NECAP Testing Demographic Data File will be available in eRide via the File Share module. It is very important that principals check their file for accuracy because RIDE will be using the corrected files for both accountability (AYP) and growth calculations. RIDE is providing this opportunity so that schools can be proactive rather than reactive once accountability and growth reports are posted. By reviewing demographic data now, schools will know which students will be used to calculate school performance. The corrected file must be uploaded to eRide by **January 31**. Detailed directions will be sent to principals via the principal listserve. Questions about the demographic files may be directed to our helpdesk, at helpdesk@ride.ri.gov.

RIDE will post this field memo on Thursday, January 2, at:

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