

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, August 14, 2015**

Notes from Commissioner Wagner

1. [PARCC](#) Governing Board considering standard-setting, timeline for results release
2. Council considers final draft of 2015-2020 [Strategic Plan](#)
3. Governor Raimondo launches [School Building Authority](#)

From the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE)

Technology:

4. Telecommunications Educational Access Fund forms due **September 18**; LEAs asked to update [technology plans](#) – **Action Item**

From other organizations

5. RIASP seeks nominees for [Principal of the Year](#) awards, due by **September 15**

Action Item Calendar

August 21: [School Prayer](#) assurances due

September 18: RITEAF forms due (see [below](#))

Notes from Commissioner Wagner

1. PARCC Governing Board considering standard-setting, timeline for results release

Today I am in Washington for a meeting of the PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) Governing Board. We will discuss setting the standards for each scoring level on the PARCC high-school exams and the timing of the release of high-school results. We will discuss standard-setting and the release of results for grades 3 through 8 at a future meeting. I will keep you informed about these matters as the Governing Board reaches consensus on these complex issues.

As we prepare to communicate with educators and with families regarding PARCC results, it is important to remind everyone that these are new assessments. The PARCC assessments are based on higher learning standards than we have ever had before, and the assessment results will set a new baseline for us and for all states in the PARCC consortium. The performance levels that students achieve will be different from the performance levels on prior assessments, and the results will not be precisely comparable.

We will be transparent about the results that we release, and we will communicate to all what the data show and what the caveats may be – for example, to what degree did participation rates affect results? We will also encourage everyone to be cautious about the use of the scores, especially in the first year of PARCC.

As I said to the members of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education at their meeting on Tuesday, we will need to make decisions that are fair to students, teachers, families, communities, and schools, particularly regarding the potential use of scores for graduation requirements. We will learn a lot from this first year of PARCC assessments, and that learning has to inform any decisions we will make, particularly around graduation requirements.

2. Council considers final draft of 2015-2020 Strategic Plan

On Tuesday evening we presented to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education a set of summary materials on the final draft of the 2015-2020 Rhode Island Strategic for PK-12 and Adult Education. One document we presented includes brief statements of the values that “set the foundation for the plan.” We also presented key outcomes for each of the six priorities in the plan, along with 11 proposed measurable targets. The targets represent ambitious yet achievable five-year goals. As we develop more and better data sources, we will develop additional metrics over time. The document with key outcomes and measurable targets is posted here (click Enclosure 3A):

<http://ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/CESE/Council Work Session Agenda 8 11 15.pdf>

This plan is a living document. A year from now, we can look back and revisit the plan and make any necessary changes such as adding additional intended outcomes or metrics. We will learn as we go through the process of putting the plan into action and building our work goals around its priorities. Right now, we’re eager to get started. Council members asked good questions and

generally expressed their enthusiasm for the plan, which I hope the Council will approve at its next meeting.

3. Governor Raimondo launches School Building Authority; applications for construction funds due September 10

Success starts in the classroom, and we need to ensure those classrooms are safe, creative, and challenging learning environments.

I was pleased to join Governor Raimondo on Tuesday morning at the Kickemuit Middle School, in Warren, where Governor Raimondo launched the School Building Authority. Thank you to those who attended the event, and in particular to the Bristol Warren Regional School District for hosting and to the facilitators who volunteered to lead the interactive workshops. As you may know, the School Building Authority has \$20 million in its Capital Fund available to school districts and charter public schools for school repair and renovation projects.

RIDE is now accepting [Capital Fund applications](#) for these repair and renovation projects, which can range from \$10,000 to \$1 million in cost and must be completed by September 2016. Once your project receives approval, you will submit monthly invoices to the Authority, which will reimburse you for costs on an on-going basis.

For those who missed the event or who would like further information about the Authority, the School Building Authority has prepared a short technical-assistance webinar (compatible with Office 2013) on the [new application process](#) and on School Building Authority Capital Funding.

We will review the applications and approve projects on a priority basis, with the highest priority being immediate health and safety and code compliance. We expect to announce the allocations by the end of next month.

We don't build schools just for health and safety purposes; we build schools to make learning come alive for kids and families. We are fortunate to have leaders in Rhode Island – including Governor Raimondo, legislative leaders, and the members of the Board of Education – who are committed to improving the quality and safety of our classrooms and school buildings and who understand that investments in education are an investment in our future.

As a reminder, the School Building Authority Capital Fund applications are due **September 10**. Letters of intent for fast-track repair projects are due **September 15**. For additional information or to view the webinar, please visit:

www.ride.ri.gov/sba.

From RIDE

Technology:

- 4. Telecommunications Educational Access Fund forms due September 18; LEAs asked to update technology plans – *Action Item***

The Rhode Island Telecommunications Educational Access Fund (RITEAF) forms have been updated based on feedback from throughout the year. We need these forms to apply for E-Rate funding on behalf of the consortium of schools and libraries in Rhode Island receiving RITEAF telecommunications lines. These forms must be returned no later than **September 18** in order for us to file the appropriate E-Rate paperwork on your behalf and for your schools to receive line allocations for the 2015-16 school year.

The updated forms are located at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/FundingFinance/SchoolDistrictFinancialData/RITEAFE-RateProgram.aspx>

Please be sure to mail your original, signed documents. Please do not use outdated forms. Look for the correct school year: *2016-17*.

You can find frequently asked questions on our website as well as on the forms and accompanying paperwork. Technology directors and those responsible for E-Rate paperwork should be made aware of the updates and due dates. Questions about the RITEAF forms can be directed to Karen Cooper, at karen.cooper@ride.ri.gov.

Also, please log onto eRIDE and update the URL that points to your LEA technology plan. Many RIDE staff members use these technology plans, so it's important to keep these plans current.

We will cross-check technology plans with bandwidth-upgrade requests. If you request a bandwidth upgrade, you must justify the request.

From other organizations

5. RIASP seeks nominees for Principal of the Year awards, due by September 15

Please see this message from the Rhode Island Association of School Principals (RIASP):

Each year, RIASP entertains nominations for Principal of the Year in four categories: High School/Middle School (NASSP), Elementary/Middle Level (NAESP), Assistant Principal (NASSP), and First-Year Principal. This year we are starting the process earlier than usual after having encountered scheduling issues last year once the PARCC testing cycle began.

We are inviting school-committee members, superintendents, school administrators, PTA members, RIDE staff, and members of our teacher organizations to nominate school administrators they feel have done exemplary work in educating Rhode Island's students.

We would be most appreciative if you would pass on to your memberships the invitation to participate in this process. Nominators are asked to submit a letter of nomination (up to two pages). To assist in making nominations, the selection criteria is included below. In nomination letters, please indicate the award (high school, middle school, elementary

school, or first-year principal) being recommended for the nominee.

First-Year Principal of the Year nominees must have completed at least one year of service in their position but less than two years. Nominees for Elementary/Middle/High School Principal of the Year must be members in good standing of their national organization (NAESP or NASSP) and must have been in their positions a minimum of three years. Assistant Principal nominees must be members of NASSP and have been in the position a minimum of three years.

Nominations may be made by mail – RIASP, 600 Mt. Pleasant Avenue, Bldg. #6 - RIC Campus, Providence, R.I. 02908 – or by email. to: exec-director@riasp.org

Nominations will close on **September 15**.

Nominees will be notified and will be requested to complete the Award Application to be considered for the awards.

Thank you for your assistance in helping us to recognize outstanding educators.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

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