



Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Rhode Island Special Education Advisory Committee

The Rhode Island Special Education Advisory Committee is an active voice in advocating that all students receive superior educational services enabling each student to achieve optimum success throughout the school years and into the world of adulthood.

March 20, 2014

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

RI Parent Information Network
1210 Pontiac Avenue Cranston, RI 02920

Meeting Minutes

Present: Edward Angilly, Eileen Botelho, Ann Brockmann, Cris Brodeur, Jennifer Connolly, Cindy Duckworth, Gillian Elliot-Pearis, Deborah Garneau, Rosemary Gomes, Patti Hien, Barbara Irons, Laura Laviano, Pamela O'Brien, Robin Pacheco, Douglas Pierson, Brian Quigg, Maria Silvestri-Golotto, Sharon Ursini-Quimby, Marty Morris.

Absent: Kate Barnas*, Wilfred Beaudoin, Sharon Bissonnette*, Amy Canario*, Lori DiPina*, Susan Donovan*, Allyson Dupont, Joanne Eichinger*, Craig Levis, JoAnn Nannig*, Mary Pendergast*, Elizabeth Santana.

RIDE-OSCAS: Beth Pinto

** Indicates that prior notice was given regarding absence*

Call to Order, Welcome, Agenda Review: The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm. by Patti Hien who welcomed everyone and reminded all that Susan, Mary and David were away at a conference.

Announcements:

- The membership committee has copies of Notice and Invitation that anyone can take if they know of someone they think would be interested in becoming a member of RISEAC. Applications need to be returned by April 14th.
- A reminder to all that the Parent Survey will be coming out next week, so look for it in the mail.

New Business:

Speakers: Kathleen Almanzor and Carolyn Taylor, Common Core Ambassadors. The Power point presentation will be emailed out to the membership for future reference. Highlights of the presentation are given below:

- Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are outcome based for both English/Language Arts and math.
- The CCSS were developed as a response to the increased need for remedial work that was being required at the college level.
- There is now a wealth of resources available since 36 states are using the CCSS, unlike when RI had GSEs. Websites such as Engage NY share resources that have been developed for implementing the CCSS.
- Development of the CCSS was not a federal decision; it was the result of state governors pushing for a set of common standards.
- There are fewer standards, i.e. 10 anchor standards in ELA.
- The standards are clearer and higher, the latter needed for improved readiness for college entry.
- The CCSS reflect information requested from the business sector about what they wanted in their workers.
- Standards: Learning goals, adopted by the *states*
- Curriculum: Plans for meeting the standards, developed and adopted *locally*
- Instruction: Strategies teachers use to promote student understanding, implemented in *classroom*
- Some of the changes with the new CCSS:
 - Content shifts in what teachers teach:
 - Some content shifts between grade levels
 - Some content is new
 - Some previous content no longer included
 - Conceptual shifts in how teachers teach:
 - Taught in greater depth
 - Students asked to think about content in new and different ways
- Timeline for the CCSS:
 - Adopted July 2010 for Rhode Island
 - 2010-2013 – RI began revising curriculum and instruction
 - 2013-2014 – All RI schools using new CCSS
 - 2014-2015 – RI schools administer the PARCC assessment to measure student progress
- RIDE website has many resources available

Speaker: Phyllis Lynch, Ph.D, Director of Instruction, Assessment and Curriculum, RIDE speaking about **Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC)** – The Power point presentation will

be made available to the membership via email. Highlights of the presentation are listed below:

- The PARCC is made up of 16 states.
- Administration of the PARCC assessment will begin in school year 2014-2015.
- It is a system of, not just summative, assessment which includes:
 - (Optional) Diagnostic assessment
 - (Optional) Mid-year assessment – performance-based items and tasks with an emphasis on hard-to-measure standards
 - Performance-based assessment – administered about ¾ into the year with extended tasks and applications of concepts and skills

- End-of-year assessment – administered about 90% into the year with innovative, short-answer items
- Higher expectations in ELA/literacy and math
- Assistive technology allowed
- How PARCC will be different:
 - Will help determine if students are on track for college and career
 - Teachers will have timely data to guide learning and instruction
 - Parents will have clear and timely information about their children’s progress
 - Valid results will be comparable across borders (state to state)
 - For students, the test will reflect high-quality coursework and will be computer based, interactive and engaging
 - It will measure skills and knowledge students need for career and college
 - It will produce timely information which will allow teachers to tailor instruction to student needs
 - Includes embedded supports for English Language Learners (ELL) and students with disabilities
- Accessibility policies include:
 - Features available for all students
 - Features identified in advance available to specific students
 - Accommodations for students with disabilities and ELL (all are IEP team decisions) – these accommodations need to be used as part of regular instruction in order for students to be eligible for the accommodations on the PARCC.
- Resources are available on RIDE website to check out various accessibility features

Speaker: Heather Heineke, RIDE to speak about **National Center and State Consortium (NCSC)**, the new Alternate Assessment – Highlights of the presentation are listed below:

- The NCSC will be taken by approximately 1% of students in the state
- The Common Core Connectors (CCC) have been developed which are the CCSS chunked into smaller units
- A comparison of the current RI Alternate Assessment (RIAA) and the NCSC are given:

<u>RIAA</u>	Versus	<u>NCSC</u>
Portfolio		Adaptive
Grades 2-8 and 10-11		Grades 3-8 and 11
Reading, writing, math, science		ELA and math
Year-long		month-long
Grade spans		discrete grade levels
Demanding teacher time		Lighter teacher time
Teacher scores		Teacher scores with some’ constructed
items		
Highly individualized content/activities		Standardized content with adaptations
accommodations		&
- NCSC will be operational Spring 2015

Summary and Q&A:

- For PARCC field testing beginning week of March 24, no results will be released to teachers or the public
- All test results will be used to improve the test before it “goes live”
- States will see data for groups of students, not for individuals
- Teachers and administrators will provide feedback on their experiences and experiences of the students
- NCSC is aligned to CCSS but not at full grade level so it is not equivalent and not eligible for diploma
- CCC is used to design items. It breaks down CCSS and then creates items to provide a place to start
- PARCC versus Smarter Balance (other CCSS assessment) – PARCC was chosen due to the quality and approach to items; PARCC is a richer, more complex test
- Locator items help place students on the NCSC

Director’s Report: Briefly noted by Beth Pinto on behalf of David Sienko

1. Families informed about PARCC Field Test

As we prepare for the beginning of the PARCC Field Test on **March 24**, the Commissioner prepared this letter to all friends of education, which we will distribute over the next few days through our list-serve and on social media:

As we continue working together to transform education in Rhode Island, one of our top priorities has been adopting standards that clearly state what our students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Over the past three years, we have worked with teachers and school leaders across the state to prepare for the new Common Core State Standards, and I am pleased that this year these standards are guiding instruction in all of our public schools.

Another priority for us has been developing assessments to help us see whether students have mastered the Common Core State Standards. In partnership with educators in 16 other states, we have been working for three years to develop a new set of assessments called PARCC (Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers). Next year, our schools will transition to these new PARCC assessments. Students in grades 3 through 10 will take the PARCC assessments in the spring of 2015. (Juniors will take the NECAP in the spring of 2015.)

To help everyone get ready for PARCC, about 9,000 students in most of our schools will participate in a PARCC “field test,” beginning on Monday, March 24. For most participating students, this practice test will take a total of about 3 to 5 hours, over two or three sessions. The experience of participating in the practice run will give students and teachers the opportunity to become more familiar with PARCC, preparing them for the actual assessments next year. Keep in mind that there will be no report of results from this year’s practice run, so there is no need for any anxiety about performance during the field test. And by the way – we expect glitches to occur during the practice run. We want to iron out the bugs now so that everything will go more smoothly when we roll out the PARCC next year.

I truly believe the PARCC assessments will improve teaching and learning in our state in several ways. Like our current assessments, the PARCC will ask students to provide written responses to many questions, giving students the opportunity to show what they know and can do. Unlike our current assessments, however, the PARCC will be offered in the spring – in line with the materials students are taking in their current classes. For most students, PARCC will be computer-based and therefore more engaging for students and easier for teachers to administer. Teachers will receive results much more quickly than they had received NECAP results, so they can use information from PARCC to guide instruction and to support individual students. Of course the questions on PARCC line up with the standards in the Common Core, so the PARCC material will be familiar to our teachers

and to the students taking the assessments. We have posted a number of helpful materials on the PARCC assessments on our [website](#), and the PARCC consortium [website](#) has important materials on the field test as well.

Our students have made significant progress over the past five years, and I believe the Common Core and the new PARCC assessments will help us continue on the right course in the coming years. The PARCC field test will be an important step on this exciting journey!

In an effort to assist you with notifying parents about the upcoming PARCC Field Test, RIDE has created a sample letter that you can modify to meet the specific needs of Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking parents in your community. You can download a copy of the letter here:

Spanish-language version:

www.ride.ri.gov/PARCC-FT-letter-template-doc-ES

Portuguese-language version:

www.ride.ri.gov/PARCC-FT-letter-template-doc-PR

English-language version:

www.ride.ri.gov/PARCC-FT-letter-template-doc

If you have any questions about the PARCC Field Test, please contact Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley (222-8494 or PARCC@ride.ri.gov).

2. Next year's junior class to take NECAP, not PARCC assessments

There has been some confusion in schools regarding the testing regime for the Class of 2016. Next year's junior class will take the NECAP assessments in the fall (October 2014); next year's junior class will *not* be required to take the PARCC assessments and the students will not be "double-tested." Next year's freshman and sophomore classes will take PARCC assessments, beginning in the Spring of 2015. These students (Class of 2017 and Class of 2018) will be the first to take the PARCC assessments as part of both our annual state assessments and our diploma system.

This will describe these accountability-system revisions in the application RIDE will submit to the U.S. Department of Education for an extension of our Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver discussed at last month's RISEAC meeting.

3. NECAP retest process completed

The NECAP retake process for high-school seniors who had not yet fulfilled the state-assessment component of the Diploma System has been completed. Every report RIDE received has emphasized that the students and staff members took this retest opportunity seriously, that students were trying hard to show their best work throughout the testing, and that many students felt proud and optimistic on the completion of the assessments. We will have results by the end of April, and believe that many students will show improvement and that the Class of 2014 will be more ready for success beyond high school than any other graduating class from our state.

4. Federal lawsuit could affect special-education

Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel David V. Abbott has informed the Rhode Island Association of School Committees that a plaintiff has filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court, *K.S. v. R.I. Board of Education, et al.*, C.A. No. 14-77, that has the potential to affect the education of students with disabilities. This lawsuit argues that, under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, LEAs are responsible for providing a free, appropriate public education to students until they reach the age of 22 (instead of ending services at the age of 21). The plaintiff is seeking to make this case a class-action lawsuit. The plaintiff's attorneys base the case on a recent ruling in the State of Hawaii. As the Board of Education is named in the lawsuit legal research is being

done to see if the Hawaii decision could be applicable in RI, and we will keep you informed of any significant developments related to this case.

5. RIDE issues annual report on career and technical education

RIDE sent to the General Assembly our Annual Report on Career and Technical Education for the 2012-2013 School Year, which provides a summary of career-technical initiatives over the course of that year. 120 RIDE-recognized career-and-technical education programs serve about 7,600 students across the state, providing students with the knowledge, skills, and credentials they will need for entry into the Rhode Island economy. With the Fiscal Year 2013 categorical funding, RIDE provided \$2.7 million to aid 17 school districts administering high-cost career-technical programs. In addition, RIDE distributed \$300,000 in start-up funding (and leveraged more than \$100,000 in a cash match) through a competitive-grant process. These start-up grants provided funding to support new programs in state priority sectors.

The [report](#) is posted on the RIDE website.

6. RIDE issues annual report on virtual learning

Rhode Island school leaders and teachers are embracing technology and digital learning.

To further our partnership in this initiative, RIDE has just released the annual legislative report, “RI Virtual Learning.” This report shows us how virtual learning and online instruction are transforming the way all of us think about schools, classrooms, teaching, and learning. In our Innovation Powered by Technology model schools – Pleasant View Elementary School, in Providence, and Wakefield Hills Elementary School, in West Warwick – students and teachers are creating learning environments that others are emulating. In many classrooms across the state, we see teachers and students who are working in small teams and one on one, using technology to create and collaborate and to meet the individual learning needs of every student.

This report documents, 12 of our school districts are offering students a total of 235 online courses, 4 districts are offering hybrid or blended-learning opportunities, and 2 new blended-learning schools opened this fall. A year ago, fewer than 1 of every 4 classrooms had wireless access to the Internet; today, thanks to the Wireless Classroom Initiative, we anticipate that all of our classrooms will have wireless access within the next two years. At least five school districts are moving toward providing every student access to computer devices.

The movement toward virtual learning is just beginning, but even at this early stage we can see the myriad opportunities technology and wireless communications offers for our students, teachers, and families.

The [report](#) is posted on the RIDE website.

7. School-health programs regulations posted for public hearings

The Department of Health has posted for public hearing the proposed Rhode Island Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs on the Secretary of State website. See the posting at this link:

http://sos.ri.gov/documents/archives/regdocs/holding/DOH/SchoolHealthPrograms_2ndPublicHearingDraft_11Feb2014.pdf

8. RIDE posts responses to frequently asked questions about the Support Professionals Evaluation and Support System

Responses to frequently asked questions about the Rhode Island Model Support Professional Evaluation and Support System have been added to the RI Model FAQs page on the RIDE website. Please feel free to contact the Educator Quality Office directly, at ed.eval@ride.ri.gov, with any additional questions or concerns.

To access the Support Professional FAQs, please go to the RIDE website at:

9. Rhode Island receives approval for Race to the Top no-cost extension

Over the course of the four years of our Race to the Top federal grant, we have used the \$75 million to support transforming education in Rhode Island. Among the major initiatives the grant has supported are:

- professional development for educators on transition to the Common Core State Standards,
- development by educators of curriculum in English language arts and mathematics aligned with the standards,
- professional development for educators on the use of data,
- implementation of annual evaluations for all educators,
- induction program and supports for new teachers,
- academy for training aspiring principals,
- development and implementation of virtual learning math modules for students.

At this time, Rhode Island has met almost all goals in our Race to the Top application, and the state and all 52 participating school districts have expended almost all of the \$75 million grant funding. This entire project has been a success thanks to the ongoing and extensive partnerships formed among RIDE and the teams from your LEA and all other participating LEAs.

The U.S. Department of Education has approved RIDE's request for a no-cost extension to our Race to the Top Scope of Work, which will provide additional time to complete a few specific projects that RIDE initiated using funds from the grant. As its name implies, the no-cost extension will entail no additional cost to Rhode Island; rather, it gives us an additional year to expend remaining funds and to achieve our Race to the Top goals.

The U.S. Department of Education has approved the request to use \$2.4 million in remaining funds. Of this total, \$1,952,000 will enable RIDE to complete work on a system, now known as the Instructional Support System that will provide all educators with support and resources, including:

- information to better serve our students;
- a bank of Common Core-aligned items for classroom use;
- model lesson plans and units of study;
- assessments for measuring student progress (Interim Assessments); and
- other resources and information that support teaching and learning.

The first phase of this system is ready for use, and it is anticipated that the rollout of the Instructional Support System will be completed by the end of the year.

Our no-cost extension provides funding for two additional components of the Race to the Top Scope of Work:

- \$200,000 for develop a "platform" to provide educators with better access to professional development; and
- approximately \$280,000 to provide additional professional development to educators preparing to work in the lowest-achieving schools.

10. National Youth HIV and AIDS Awareness Day to be held April 10

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that, in 2010, young people aged 13 to 24 accounted for 26 percent of all new HIV infections in the United States, and nearly half of the 19 million new sexually transmitted diseases reported each year are among young people ages 15 to 24. In an effort to bring attention to this issue, April 10 has been designated as National Youth HIV and AIDS Awareness Day. The

2014 theme is: Engaging Youth Voices in the AIDS/HIV Response. Today's young people are the first generation that has never known a world without HIV and AIDS. An AIDS-free generation is not possible without our nation's youth. Please feel free to share the HIV/AIDS Awareness resources that are available on the Advocates for Youth website, at <http://amplifyyourvoice.org/nyhaad> with your school staff. The Department of Health has additional resources for HIV prevention, at:

<http://www.health.ri.gov/healthyliving/sexualhealth/about/safersex/index.php>

11. U.S. Department of Labor awarding grants for education of disadvantaged youth

The U.S. Department of Labor will award Youth Build grants to organizations to oversee the provision of education, occupational skills training, and employment services to disadvantaged youth in their communities while performing meaningful work and service. The program addresses affordable housing, education, employment, crime prevention, and leadership development. The application deadline is April 22. For more information, click [here](#).

12. ResilientKids to hold workshop on mindfulness

A Rhode Island nonprofit, ResilientKids, is working with 1,300 students in nine Rhode Island public schools, most of them in high-need districts, teaching mindfulness and yoga as part of the school day. Students and teachers report excellent results - increased focus, reduced stress, fewer behavioral referrals.

ResilientKids is offering a workshop for teachers, principals, social workers, parents, guidance counselors, psychologists, and school nurses, featuring two national leaders in mindfulness in education. The workshop has two goals: explore the concept of mindfulness and how it can be applied to support adults working in your school, and engage in hands-on learning about mindfulness concepts and techniques.

The [workshop](#) will take place on Friday, **April 11**, from 8 a.m. to noon, at the Squantum Association, 947 Veterans Memorial Parkway, East Providence.

To learn more about ResilientKids, see: <http://www.resilientkids.org>

13. RIDE Team Attending Regional Meeting on SSIP

The RI Team is attending the North East regional meeting on preparing for the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) also known as Indicator 17. The team has now met with OSEP, national experts and has had state planning team time to examine the timeline and content for the development of the SSIP. We will provide an update at next month's RISEAC meeting.

Public Comment: None.

Adjournment: A motion was initiated by Maria and seconded by Ann to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:28 pm.

Recording Secretary: Ann L. Brockmann

RISEAC website: www.riseac.org