



PRESS RELEASE

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RI Teachers Issue Stinging Indictment of Commissioner Gist 85% of Teachers Believe Her Contract Should Not Be Renewed

Providence, R.I. - An independent survey of Rhode Island's public school classroom teachers today offered a stinging indictment of the leadership of Deborah Gist as the state's Education Commissioner. The survey, conducted by Fleming and Associates from April 22 to April 24, consisted of a telephone survey of 402 randomly selected Rhode Island public school teachers. The entire survey is attached.

Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals President Frank Flynn stated, "For too long Commissioner Gist has spoken of her support among classroom teachers. We decided to put that notion to an independent test. This survey found that she is not supported by classroom teachers. In fact, there is overwhelming evidence that her leadership is almost universally rejected."

The survey highlights speak for themselves:

- 82% of RI's classroom teachers feel less respected today than they did when Commissioner Gist started a few years ago.
- Commissioner Gist's highly touted Race To The Top initiative has been nothing short of a disaster for RI education. Classroom teachers, in overwhelming numbers, felt it was somewhat ineffective (22%) or a waste of money (60%).
- Teacher morale is abysmal under Commissioner Gist. Classroom teachers, at the rate of 68%, thought morale was poor, and 22% just fair. A remarkable 88% of teachers feel morale is unacceptable in RI schools today.
- When asked about Commissioner Gist's communication with teachers, the teachers responded that it was 63% poor and 27% fair. Only 8% thought her communication with teachers was excellent or good.

- 72% of teachers believe the NECAP test should not be a requirement for graduation from high school.
- When asked if Commissioner Gist's contract should be renewed in June, teachers responded 85% no and only 7% yes.

Robert Walsh, Executive Director of the National Education Association Rhode Island, concluded, "It is imperative that RI's classroom teachers be heard on the important matter of Commissioner Gist's contract renewal. On behalf of RI's roughly 10,500 public school teachers, we are calling on Governor Chafee and the Rhode Island Board of Education to hold a public forum on this important matter. These results go far beyond a simple 'no confidence' vote in Commissioner Gist's leadership. They spell out a serious need to immediately address the lack of leadership facing Rhode Island's education community today. "

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INTRODUCTION

This report for The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals and the National Education Association Rhode Island is based on a telephone survey of a random sample of 402 Rhode Island public school teachers

Interviewing was conducted by telephone between April 22 and April 24, 2013.

Each completed interview lasted approximately eight minutes.

Interviews were completed only with teachers who passed a screen designed to establish if they are public school teachers.

The following category of respondents were screened out of the survey, and thus not included in the final sample of 402 public school teachers:

- Those who indicated they were not public school teachers.

SAMPLING

The sample is an area random probability sample; based upon phone numbers of union members. They were selected using a computer generated random sample.

Teacher unions provided phone numbers of members of their union

For the overall sample of 402, the sampling margin of error 95 times out of 100 is approximately 5%, though slightly lower (4%) for responses selected by very high or low percentages of the total sample.

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IDENTIFICATION NO. _____

Rhode Island - April 2013
CODE 201312 Teacher survey

HELLO, MY NAME IS _____, I'M CALLING FROM FLEMING & ASSOCIATES, A PUBLIC OPINION POLLING FIRM. WE ARE CONDUCTING A SURVEY OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS HERE IN RHODE ISLAND AND I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS.

Q.1 Are you a public school teacher? (If not) Is there someone in your household who is a teacher? (If so) May we speak with them?

Yes, **100%** (Continue) No ...**0%** (Terminate)

Record respondent's gender (DO NOT ASK) Male....**25%** Female...**75%**

Mark which group from the sheet (Don't ask) RIFT...**50%** NEARI....**50%**

Q.2 How long have you been a public school teacher? Would it be under 10 years, 10 to 19 years, or 20 or more years?

Less than 10.. **17%** 10 to 19 years...**44%** 20 plus years. **38%** Not sure.. **0%** Refused...**0%**

Q.3 How would you rate the performance of Education Commissioner Deborah Gist? Would you say she has been highly effective, somewhat effective, somewhat ineffective or ineffective? **24% - 73%**

H effective **3%** Somewhat Effective. **21%** Somewhat ineffective **29%** Ineffective. **44%** Not Sure **3%** Refused.**0%**

Lets take a minute and talk about the past four years as an educator.

Q.4 Do you feel more or less respected as a professional than you did four years ago?

More...**8%** Less...**82%** Same (Vol)... **9%** Not Sure...**1%** Refused...**1%**

Q.5 How much professional support has RIDE provided to you over the past four years? Would it be a great deal, some support, very little or none at all? **37% - 62%**

Great deal...**4%** Some support...**33%** Very little...**41%** None at all...**21%** Not Sure...**1%**

Q.6 Thinking about what has taken place in education in the past four years, would you still have gone into education knowing what you know now?

Yes...**30%** No...**61%** Not Sure...**9%**

Q.7 Do you think that you are better off today under Education Commissioner Gist than you were four years ago?

Yes...**7%** No...**85%** Not Sure...**8%**

- Q.8 Commissioner Gist has touted Race To The Top as an important factor in reforming public education in RI. Do you feel it has been very effective, somewhat effective, somewhat ineffective or a waste of money in reforming education? **14% - 82%**
- Very effective...**1%** Somewhat effective. **13%** Somewhat ineffective...**22%** Waste of money **60%** Not Sure **3%**
- Q.9 Has your school or district benefited directly from the Race To The Top program?
- Yes...**31%** No...**57%** Not Sure...**12%**
- Q.10 How would you rate the level of teacher morale in your building under Commissioner Gist's leadership? Would you say it is excellent, good, just fair or poor? **8% - 90%**
- Excellent...**1%** Good...**7%** Just fair...**22%** Poor...**68%** Not Sure...**2%** Refused...**0%**
- Q.11 Do you believe that statewide assessments (NECAP) be a requirement for a student to graduate from high school?
- Yes...**21%** No...**72%** Not Sure...**7%**
- Q.12 To what extent do you believe that statewide assessments (NECAP) be used in teacher evaluations? Would it be a great deal, some, very little or not at all? **21% - 79%**
- Great deal...**0%** Some **21%** Very little...**31%** Not at all...**48%** Not sure...**0%**
- Q.13 To what extent do you believe that other measures of student assessments (SLO's) be used in teacher evaluations? Would it be a great deal, some, very little or not at all? **53% - 45%**
- Great deal...**10%** Some...**43%** Very little...**23%** Not at all...**22%** Not sure...**2%**
- Q.14 How would you rate Commissioner Gist's response to concerns raised about the use of statewide assessments as graduation requirements? Would you say she is highly effective, somewhat effective, somewhat ineffective or ineffective? **11% - 84%**
- H effective **2%** Somewhat Effective. **9%** Somewhat ineffective...**27%** Ineffective **57%** Not Sure **3%** Refused. **1%**
- Q.15 How would you rate Commissioner Gist's communication with teachers? Would you say it is excellent, good, fair or poor? **8% - 90%**
- Excellent.. **2%** Good...**6%** Fair...**27%** Poor ...**63%** Not Sure...**2%** Refused. **0%**
- Q.16 To what extent do you think RIDE policies reflect what classroom teachers feel to be in the best interest of students. Would you say a great deal, some, very little or not at all? **25% - 73%**
- Great deal...**2%** Some...**23%** Very little...**47%** Not at all...**26%** Not sure...**3%**

Q.17 How much input do you think that you or your colleagues have had in the development of any of RIDE's educational polices, programs or mandates? Would it be a great deal, some, very little or none at all? **12% - 86%**

Great deal...**1%** Some...**11%** Very little...**48%** None at all...**38%** Not sure...**3%**

Q.18 To what extent do you believe that Commissioner Gist values the professional expertise and opinions of Rhode Island teachers? Would it be a great deal, some, very little or not at all? **18% - 81%**

Great deal...**3%** Some...**15%** Very little...**39%** Not at all...**42%** Not sure...**2%**

Q.19 How would you rate Commissioner Gist's understanding of the real issues faced by Rhode Island classroom teachers? Would you say she understands them a great deal, some, very little or not at all? **19% - 80%**

Great deal...**2%** Some...**17%** Very little...**41%** None at all...**39%** Not sure...**1%**

Q.20 Commissioner Gist's contract as Commissioner of Education is up in June. Do you think that Governor Chafee should reappoint her as Commissioner of Education?

Yes...**7%** No...**85%** Not Sure...**7%** Refused...**1%**

That's the end of our interview, Thank you very much.