



Rachael Stamp • Daily Times

Commissioner of Education Deborah Gist visits with students at the Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School. Gist said she has been using her visits to schools around the state to assess how capable the schools are of reaching the goals she has set for the state's education system.

# Commissioner visits local schools

**RACHAEL STAMP**  
Special to the Times

COVENTRY — The state education commissioner has a goal to visit all school districts in the state.

To that end, Deborah Gist, the commissioner of education, visited the Coventry schools, interacting with students and teachers.

Gist just became commissioner this July. As part of her 100 day visit to schools in the area, she visited Coventry High School, Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School and Tiogue Elementary School on Friday.

During her visit to Coventry, Gist traveled throughout the schools and

mingled in classrooms, interacting with teachers and students. She sat down and talked to students about their lessons. She would stop and take an interest in what each teacher was doing and talk to them about it.

"I'm doing this because I'm new to the state," Gist said. "This is a great way to know the communities better and meet people."

She said traveling around the state has given her a better perspective of putting the town name to

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people and places. Her visits are meant as a way to connect with schools and the people in them.

Each school welcomed Gist and was excited to meet and interact with her. They led her through the

school, allowing her to understand each school at a personal level.

"We were thrilled to have Commissioner Gist come to Tiogue," said Denise Richtarik, principal of Tiogue elementary school. "She was very interested in our work —

not only at Tiogue but at all schools across the district. Our staff can't wait for her to visit again."

Gist said her visits help her to see where schools are excelling and where they may face challenges. She said by understanding each district, she can see how schools could help each other in different aspects.

She said her goals of transforming education, allowing all Rhode Island students to be ready for success in college, careers, and life, are ones that all schools can achieve.

She has five priorities in forming good education in Rhode Island.

# Education official drops in on schools

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The five goals are ensuring educator excellence by supporting educators in the classroom, accelerating all schools towards greatness with expectations of high-quality schools, establishing world-class standards

and assessments by holding educators and students to high expectations, developing user-friendly data systems that allow everyone access to useable data, and to invest schools' resources wisely as capable stewards of the taxpayers money.

Gist said visiting the schools gives her a

clearer picture and understanding of how to attain her goals.

"I see that we're celebrating the good things and learning about the challenges that face us," said Gist. "It's different with different districts. I'm really enjoying this, meeting all these people and having fun too."