

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
MINUTES OF MEETING
May 24, 2007

A meeting of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education was held at the Shepard Building-255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903 and convened at 4:15 pm.

In Attendance

J. DiPrete, A. Beretta, B. Camara, P. Guida, K. Forbes and G. Grove, C. Callahan

Public Remarks

Chairman DiPrete welcomed the graduates of the Rhode Island Reading Recovery Program and Deputy Commissioner Todd Flaherty introduced Dr. Julia Barnhart Francis, the teacher/leader. Dr. Francis spoke briefly about the program saying that it is a highly effective short-term literacy intervention program for first grade children that are having extreme difficulty learning to read and write. Dr. Flaherty presented certificates to each of the awardees as follows: Michelle Coen, Jennifer Limoges, Andrea Leung, Seana Edwards, Sheree Chen, Brenda Leclerc, and Charlene Pino. Commissioner McWalters and Chairman DiPrete offered the graduates their congratulations and best wishes.

(Regent A. Beretta arrived at 4:15 PM)

(Regent C. Callahan arrived at 4:20 PM)

Valerie Forte, Director of the Rhode Island Education Partnership addressed the Regents on the work of the legislative joint committee on the proposed education funding formula. Ms. Forte said that she had sent a letter to Elizabeth Bryant supporting the proposed formula and is looking forward to working with the Regents. Ms. Forte then introduced Dr. Will Van Horn to give the group a historic perspective on the work.

Steve Fishback addressed the group on the proposed school construction regulations under consideration. He questioned the section of the proposed regulations that allows reimbursement for site remediation on a site-by-site basis and the need to demonstrate that there are no other sites available. He urged the Board to change the proposed regulations to know the site costs up front and that schools should only be built on clean sites. Also, Mr. Fishback urged the board to include ongoing air pollution monitoring.

Chairman's Remarks

- Ms. Sara Groh, President of the Rhode Island Association of Student Councils reported that her Association just learned that they would collaborate with the Rhode Island Chapter of the National Association in the upcoming year. She thanked the Regents for the support they have provided her organization over the past year. On behalf of the Regents, Chairman DiPrete thanked Ms. Groh for her work on the board and presented her with a token of their appreciation.
- Chairman DiPrete reported that he had represented the Board at the state college and university graduations; and had
- Celebrated with Bain Middle School on their accomplishment of being a high performing school.

Approval of Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting Minutes

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the Meeting Minutes of April 26, 2007.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Acceptance of Highly Qualified Educator Plan

Paulajo Gaines, RIDE Director of the Office of Educator Quality, introduced the agenda item. Ms. Gaines said that this plan was developed in response to a request made by the U.S. Department of Education that every State submit a revised HQT plan detailing the actions that State agencies and local districts would take to ensure that during the 2006-07 school year and beyond, all teachers of core academic subjects are highly qualified, and that poor and minority children are taught at the same rates as other children by highly qualified and experienced teachers. The plan was developed by department staff along with public school educators, administrators, higher education faculty, and professional organizations representing a cross-section of the Rhode Island educational community. Ms. Gaines told the Board that currently 95.4% of Rhode Island teachers are highly qualified. Regent Forbes told the Board that the plan has been reviewed in her committee "numerous" times and that the plan for the state is that 100% of our teachers will be highly qualified.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Accepts the Rhode Island Highly Qualified Teachers Plan, as presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously

Approval of School Construction Regulations

Regent B. Camara recognized RIDE Director of Finance Carolyn Dias and RIDE staff Celeste Bilotti and Kristen Cole for their hard work in bringing together these regulations. He then introduced the agenda item and briefly highlighted the major pieces of the proposed regulations. Ms. Beretta explained that the major change in the regulations is the way school construction applications will be processed. Under the new regulations, there will be a two-stage application process that would allow districts to go before the Regents for approval whenever their documentation is complete. Also included in the new regulations are maximum space allowances, cost standards, and ineligible costs. Regents discussed how the regulations would apply to Charter Schools and the issue of the cost of cleaning up contaminated sites. Chairman DiPrete, on behalf of the Board thanked Regent Camera and RIDE staff who worked very hard to bring these regulations forward for approval.

MOVED AND SECONDED, THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the School Construction Regulations, as presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Discussion of Proposed Education Funding Formula

Chairman DiPrete introduced Elizabeth Burt Bryant to present the agenda item. The Commissioner explained that the final meeting of the joint legislative work group would not happen until Friday, but thought it was important to present to the Regents the work done this far.

Ms. Bryant distributed and reviewed the report that was disseminated to the Joint Committee to establish a permanent foundation aid formula for Rhode Island.

She highlighted the five major principles that serve as the basis for the group's recommendations as follows: equity, adequacy, predictability, accountability and efficiency. She also talked about the major agreements and essential elements of a successful formula and the advisory group's proposal to sort all expenditures into four categories as follows:

- Foundation Formula – a recalibration of how municipalities and the state share core expenses – the foundational amount must be based on an accurate per pupil cost calculation;
- State Efficiencies – expenses that should be borne by the state based on criteria of efficiency and accountability;
- State Program – specific program expenses over which the state either desires to exert accountability oversight or avoid unpredictable cost increases, i.e., progressive support and intervention, group homes, and housing aid.
- Local Program – costs over which the local school district has much greater control than does the state – i.e., post retirement health care costs.

The complete report is attached and has been presented to the joint committee.

Report on Adult Education

The State Director of Adult Education, Dr. Johan Uvin and RIDE's Staff member, Elizabeth Jardine reported on the agenda item – Adult Content Standards. Dr. Uvin told the members of the Board that the adult education content standards are being finalized by a team of national and Rhode Island standard experts and practitioners. In addition to specifying what adult students should know and be able to do, this standards expert team has closely examined alignment with other standards including the Board of Governors' College Readiness Standards. The standards, once adopted, will inform assessment, curriculum development, and instruction. The standards will be presented for review and endorsement at the June meeting of the Governor's Workforce Board and, subsequently, at a future meeting of the Board of Regents for final review and approval.

Update on Central Falls/URI Agreement

Commissioner McWalters gave the group a historical overview of the Central Falls/URI agreement discussions over the past six months. He recommended to the Regents that they don't formally endorse the agreement until a more detailed plan has been developed. He also told the Board that when the corrective action plan for Central Falls is filed, he will bring it forward to the Board for review. The group discussed the partnership and when, how and under what conditions the Regents would endorse it. Superintendent, Fran Gallo explained to the Board that the explicit plans are currently being worked on. They have five major planning areas: community outreach, curriculum and instruction, student development, technology, and operations. Representing URI, Ron DiOrio addressed the group on the "academic" side of the work. He reported that URI is assisting Central Falls with the hiring of the new high school principal, grant writing, planning leadership training for incoming Central Falls students, and facility planning. Board members discussed the legal implications of the agreement addendum that had been sent over to board members earlier in the day. The group will meet in a work session in the near future to review the plan.

Regents' Committee Reports

Administrator & Educator Quality – Regent Karin Forbes announced that there will be a BOR Administrator and Educator Quality meeting on June 4 at 2:00 p.m.; and public hearings on the Rhode Island Professional Teaching standards have been scheduled for June 19 at the Paff Auditorium and June 20 at CCRI in Warwick. Also, the committee has been invited to attend a meeting with CPAB on Monday, June 25th at 4:30 p.m.

Finance & Personnel - Chair of the BOR Finance and Personnel Committee, Bob Camara told Board members that RIDE is monitoring the budget session. Mr. Camara also expressed his disappointment that Warwick has chosen to spend money on a higher cost health plan for their employees rather than putting that money into more services for students.

PS&I - Regent Patrick Guida reported that the notices to the districts in corrective action are scheduled to go out next week.

CASP - Regent Colleen Callahan told Board members that the BOR CASP committee is working to schedule a meeting for a legal review of the secondary regulations and those regs will be scheduled for public hearings in the fall with final approval scheduled for the end of October 2007. Additionally, there is a dual enrollment meeting scheduled for Friday morning.

State and Charter Schools – Regent Gary Grove informed the group that there would be a BOR State and Charter Schools committee to review the reauthorization of the Blackstone Academy Charter School, the Compass School, and the New England Laborers’/Cranston Construction Careers Academy Charter School on June 7th. The recommendations will then come forward to the Regents for final review at their next meeting.

Legislative Report

RIDE staff member, Andy Andrade reported to the Board on the status of the legislative session. He highlighted legislation affecting the budget deficit, funding formula, group homes and school bus size.

Commissioner’s Report

Commissioner McWalters reported to the Board that the school classifications will be released next week and reminded everyone that this is the last year of the “second incremental bar” and that the schools have done very well.

Mr. McWalters also reported that the Regents had held a second workshop on the proposed special education regulations and they would come before them for approval for public hearing at the next Board meeting. However, there would be no public hearings held on these regs this summer. They would be held off until September.

Executive Agenda

As per R.I.G.L. 42-46-5-(2), the meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m. for Executive Session.

The meeting reconvened to open session at 6:45 p.m.

Adjournment

With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.