

**RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
MINUTES OF MEETING – May 7, 2008**

A meeting of the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education was held at the Shepard Building - 255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903 & convened at 4:05 p.m.

In Attendance:

R. Flanders, C. Callahan, A. Beretta, R. Camara, A. Cano-Morales, F. Caprio, A. Davis, K. Forbes.

Recognition of Reading Recovery Teachers' Graduation

Patricia Starnes, the Reading Recovery Teacher Leader for the Rhode Island Southern Collaborative distributed a booklet regarding Reading Recovery in Rhode Island and gave the Board a short explanation of the program. She introduced the following teachers that have completed a one-year course of study to qualify them as literacy specialists: Jeanne Burgett Burdett, Lynne Eaton, Denise Kenny, Kelley Pigeon, Suzanne Mills Shaw, and Jayne Ward.

Public Comments

Kim Bolton – the parent of a child currently enrolled in a public school and a member of the statewide School Improvement Team Collaborative (SIT) told the members of the Board that she is interested in working in collaboration with the Board of Regents on education concerns. She said that up until now parents have not had a voice in the decisions that are affecting their children and that along with parents of children from Exeter, West Greenwich, Newport, Middletown, North Kingstown, Johnston, Cranston, East Providence, Pawtucket, Cumberland, Smithfield, Coventry, and Narragansett, she would like to request a meeting with the members of the Board of Regents.

Mary Sommer – Statewide SIT Collaborative Member expressed her concern about making the results of the NECAP testing count for graduation.

Teri Maio-Cicero – Parent, Statewide SIT Collaborative, and a member of the Exeter/West Greenwich School Committee spoke to the Board about the proposed changes to the graduation requirements. She expressed her opposition to the proposal that the NECAP test count for one-third of graduation requirements.

Zack Berger - Westerly High School librarian and past president of the RI Media Association – urged the Regents to support school libraries. Mr. Berger spoke to the group about the importance of students being able to have full access to their school libraries and how cuts of full-time librarians and outdated materials affect student learning. He asked that the Board of Regents require that all Rhode Island schools monitor staffing levels, as mandated by the BEP.

Kimberly Ann Page - North Kingstown School Committee member/SIT/Parent – talked about the failure of the Washington graduation test, known as the WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning).

Carmela Geer - Middletown High School Improvement Chair – urged the Board of Regents to work with the SIT group to improve education.

Lori Dunsmore – Director of the RI School for the Deaf spoke to the group about the challenges at the RI School for the Deaf and thanked the Board and Commissioner for sending RIDE staff member, Keith Oliviera, to work with them.

Conrad Kirchure – Student – spoke about his experience with his school library and told the Board about how the librarian at his school supports his learning.

Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Flanders announced that he will sit down with the SIT group at a later date.

Approval of the Minutes

A spelling correction was made on page two, third paragraph under Ron Walk to read: “and cited the creating of the MET...”

MOVED AND SECONDED: That the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approved the Minutes of the Meeting of April 23, 2008 and the Executive Minutes of April 23, 2008 as Presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Charter School Amendments

Chairman Flanders and Commissioner McWalters talked about the recommendations and reminded the group that the Board's State and Charter Schools Committee had previously reviewed the recommendations with RIDE staff member, Keith Oliviera. The Chairman of the committee, Angus Davis briefly talked about each of the proposals. At the request of the Chairman, Mr. Oliveira gave the Board a quick "refresher" on how charter schools are funded and how they impact local school district budgets. The group discussed some of the irregularities of the charter schools funding.

Motion to Amend the Charter of the Paul Cuffee Charter School

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education authorizes the Paul Cuffee Charter School to increase its class size enrollment from 16 to 18 students per class in grades K-8 by the 2009-10 school year. Total school enrollment shall not exceed the currently authorized limit of 624 students.

Vote: Approved Unanimously.

Motion to Amend the Charter of the Highlander Charter School

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education amend the charter of the Highlander Charter School to accommodate 36 students per grade in grades K-8, subject to the specified growth limitations of 276 in school year 2008-09 and a maximum of 288 from 2009-10 through 2011-12 school year.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Motion to Authorize Increased Student Enrollment at the Beacon Charter School

RECOMMENDATION THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education authorizes the Beacon Charter School to increase its student enrollment in accordance with the maximum enrollment of 225 students as set fourth in its original charter.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Regent Davis recognized RIDE staff members Keith Oliviera and Kristen Cole for their hard work on this agenda item.

Briefing on BEP work

Deputy Commissioner David Abbot spoke briefly about the updating of the Basic Education Plan (BEP) which was last updated in 1989. He then reviewed the new format and explained to the members of the Board that the purpose of the document is to create a “floor of adequacy” for the districts. He told the Board that a work group that included superintendents, principals, AFT, and NEA had met to review the document and talk about what needs to be added and what should be deleted. The group is scheduled to meet again to talk about how to edit the document to ensure a “quality” education. The Commissioner will bring the sections before the Regents for review beginning over the summer months and public hearings will be scheduled in the fall.

As part of this discussion, the group talked about the lack of a Rhode Island funding formula and the work being done to develop one.

Budget and Personnel Update

The Commissioner reported that the supplemental budget had passed which included changes to the retirement benefits and that the Department could lose 30+ people this year through retirement. As soon as there is a more definite number, we will look at the impact on our work and report back to the Board.

BOR Committee Reports

- **State & Charter Schools** – Chair of the BOR State and Charter Schools Committee, Angus Davis reported to the Board that the committee will be working with Rhode Island School for the Deaf to replace the members of the Board of Trustees.
- **Appeals** – Chair A. Beretta reported that her committee is scheduled to meet on Thursday, May 29 to re-hear some appeals that had been heard last month.
- **Program/School Improvement** – Chair P. Guida reported that the committee had met and worked on scheduling along with a time table for work. The next meeting will be a full work session on the secondary regulations on May 15 from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Commissioner’s Report

Commissioner McWalters distributed the annual report for the RI College Crusade; and Announced that USDOE Margaret Spelling had invited him to join a group for a peer review of differentiated accountability; and Distributed a copy of the “Education Week” article on his retirement. As part of this discussion, Chairman Flanders told the group that he would like to work with staff on strategies for addressing the negative “Education Week” report on Rhode Island education initiatives (or lack thereof) in the areas of technology and teacher quality.

Executive Agenda

There was no Executive Session.

Adjournment

With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.