

**BOARD OF REGENTS  
FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**WORK SESSION MINUTES**

**Thursday, December 17, 2009  
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

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The Rhode Island Department of Education – Shepard Building  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor – Peter McWalters Conference Room  
255 Westminster Street – Providence, RI 02903  
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**In Attendance**

Patrick Guida Acting Chairman, Colleen Callahan, Betsy Shimberg, Angus Davis,  
Anna Cano Morales, Karin Forbes

**Commissioner's Comments**

**Hope High School:** Commissioner Gist reported that she has been in contact with Providence about the issues at Hope High School and has received a response from Providence Superintendent Brady responding to the changes. Ms. Gist reviewed Superintendent Brady's response and the group discussed the role of the Board and how assistance could be provided within the progressive support and intervention process. Deputy Commissioner, David Abbott told the members of the Board that nothing in the order prohibits the district from making scheduling changes at the school. The group then discussed the issue of the lack of student achievement at the school and the financial sustainability of the current Hope structure. The Commissioner re-visited the Board of Regent strategy of district intervention for failing schools versus school by school intervention. Regents expressed their concern that any progress that has been made at Hope would be lost if the scheduling changes were made against the wishes of Hope faculty and students. It was the consensus of the group that the school would be monitored to ensure that the progress Hope has made continues. They asked that the Commissioner send a response to the Superintendent's letter indicating that the Regents are not going to intervene at this time, but that the school would be monitored.

**LDS Grant Application:**

Commissioner Gist told the Board that the first LDS grant provided Data Quality Training for districts, including "train the trainer" program for district clerks and administrators; a data quality website for schools and districts; E-transcript for grades k-12; and alignment of all high school courses to the National Center for Education Statistics' standardized course codes. RIHEAA is currently piloting the e-transcript with 2 high schools and will pilot with 10 more in January. In the new grant, RIDE proposed the development of an infrastructure so that the data available to RIDE and to Higher education would be much more robust. The new grant also provides a mechanism for higher education to be able to have all of their data in one place and in RI.

Currently, each of the 3 higher education institutions have their own databases. Additionally the new grant will provide infrastructure for the full implementation of a multi-state agency (Health, Children, Youth and Families, Family Court, etc) data repository at Providence Plan. Additionally, we will build a user interface for the data warehouse with a portal for all users; build a value-added system to measure student growth against teacher credentials, preparation, and professional development; and pilot an instructional management system (linked to RIDE's data warehouse) with two school districts. The new grant will also provide for the development of a performance management system that links teacher preparation, assignment, compensation, advancement, and tenure, and can be used to measure the quality of teacher education programs; and expand New England Secondary Schools Consortium partnership (CT, ME, NH, RI, VT) to include cross-state research, an e-transcript pilot, and measures of high school and post- high school outcomes. The new grant was submitted Dec. 3 (due Dec. 4th). The earliest anticipated start date is May 2010.

**Budget Update:**

The Commissioner reported on the changes to the FY 2010 enacted (RIDE submission and Governor's recommended budget) as attached.

**School for the Deaf Update/Trustee Nomination Process Update:**

Commissioner Gist told the members of the Board that according to R.I. State statute 16-26-3.1, the Board of Trustees for the R.I. School for the Deaf shall be comprised of nine (9) individuals, not less than five (5) of whom shall be persons who are deaf and hard of hearing. There are three (3) members currently on the Board of Trustees for the School for the Deaf (two (2) Trustees are deaf and hard of hearing and one (1) is hearing) and there are six vacancies. RIDE will conduct interviews on Wednesday, December 16, 2009. There are five (5) hearing candidates to be interviewed and one (1) deaf and hard of hearing candidate to be interviewed. Following the interviews, the Committee will provide a list of recommended candidates to Commissioner Gist. Based on the Trustee nominations received, the Committee is hoping to recommend three (3) hearing candidates and one (1) deaf and hard of hearing candidate. If all nominations are accepted by the Board of Regents, there will be seven (7) members on the Board of Trustees for the R.I. School for the Deaf - four hearing members and three deaf and hard of hearing members. Once the process is complete, there will be two (2) remaining vacancies. Both vacancies are mandated to be filled by deaf and hard of hearing candidates. RIDE is currently in the process of soliciting nominations for these vacancies.

**School Update:**

The Commissioner continued with a school update as follows: Faculty and administration at RISDeaf are engaged in a robust professional development program focusing on literacy, language mapping and planning and school culture and climate. RISDeaf has addressed all compliance issues identified through the School Support monitoring system; and RISDeaf administration has been designated by the Board of Trustees to negotiate the teacher's bargaining agreement.

**Approval of Act [H6294] Enabling the Financing of a Portion [\$5 million] of the Approved Projects by the City of Central Falls to Provide for the Renovation, Rehabilitation, Replacement, Improvement and Equipment of Public School Buildings and School Facilities in the City of Central Falls.**

[Regent Anna Cano-Morales recused herself from all discussion and vote on this agenda item.]

Commissioner Gist explained to the members of the Board that on September 3, 2009, the Regents approved \$20,499,000 in repairs to school buildings in Central Falls. A Legislative Act authorizing the municipality of Central Falls to bond for the first \$5,000,000 for the most urgent emergency repairs was enacted in October. For some reason, RIHBEC bond counsel wrote the legislation (H 6294) in such a way as to require the Regents to “approve the Act” itself. The Commissioner told the Regents that this is a purely technical matter and commits no additional funds and that without this vote, bond counsel for Central Falls will not process the bond and the authorization for the funds will lapse on December 31, 2009. The Regents discussed the “work” to be done in Central Falls and expressed concern about voting to spend \$5 million “just to keep the schools open”, when the district actually needs \$20 million to make all of the repairs needed on all of the schools.

Additionally, there was concern about how the \$5 million would be spent and that the City of Central Falls had agreed to bond only \$2.5 million for the schools. The Regents agreed to approve the “Act”, but that the Department should work with the City of Central Falls to require them to allocate additional money to the schools.

**MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Act [H 6294] Enabling the Financing of a Portion [\$5 million] of the Approved Projects by the City of Central Falls to Provide for the Renovation, Rehabilitation, Replacement, Improvement and Equipment of Public School Buildings and School Facilities in the City of Central Falls.**

**VOTE: Approved Unanimously. [Regent Cano-Morales recused from the vote]**

**Race to the Top**

Commissioner Gist reviewed the power point presentation, as attached.

**Review Strategic Plan for Approval**

Commissioner Gist referred the Regents to copies of the Strategic Plan, including edits, in their package. All changes are listed on the front page and highlighted in yellow. She then reviewed the process as follows: 22 written comments received via the web-site and e-mail. These comments focused on strong support for ensuring educator excellence (10 comments); validation that the five priorities will make a difference in Rhode Island, especially by including families and communities in the vision(5 comments); strengthening professional development and working collaboratively with labor (2 comments); making user-friendly data available to the public (1 comment); addressing other subject matters in the content standards and

recommending lengthening the school day (2 comments); recognizing that the fifth priority on equitable funding will be the hardest to achieve in Rhode Island (1 comment); and strongly recommending that the strategic plan be more innovative and less reliant on traditional student-teacher-classroom model (1 comment). She then told them that based on specific feedback from Regents and staff, we have made a number of changes within the document that are highlighted for you in yellow that adds language which strengthens partnerships, expertise, etc. For example, see page 13 where we have added business community and national and state experts in creating viable pathways.

Ms. Gist then reviewed, in detail the proposed changes to the document as follows:

- Two changes under Ensuring Educator Excellence address feedback received around the state role in tenure-decisions and professional development. On page 3 a clarification of Department responsibilities to analyze and report on district decision-making on tenure based on performance; and on page 4 a new strategy added that is the responsibility of the state with respect to professional development.
- Additionally, based on the feedback received, narrative text boxes for each priority area have been added so that we can emphasize why these priorities matter, how they will take partnerships with others over-time, and that they are inclusive for students, districts, schools, and community.

Finally, all the impact measures within the strategic plan are being calibrated with the Race to the Top application. Those revisions will be reviewed at the January Board meeting. Then, following the January meeting, the strategic plan will be moved into production.

[Regents Anna Cano Morales and Betsy Shimberg left the meeting at 12:30 p.m.]

#### Review Early Learning Program Standards for Approval

Commissioner Gist presented the Comprehensive Early Childhood Programs Standards of Preschool and Kindergarten Programs, as attached, for Regents consideration. These standards will be brought back to the Board for Approval in January. The Commissioner reminded the members of the Board that the Department is approaching preschool education through three avenues: standards for students (already adopted and promulgated to the field), standards for programs (being reviewed today and scheduled to be adopted at the January Board meeting), and standards for educators (future work). The Commissioner then reviewed the time line of the progression of the standards – from the initial draft through multiple stakeholder forums and public hearings; the comments from the public hearings; the multiple levels of approval for early learning environments; and the sites that currently have some sort of approval. She also reviewed the revisions since the original proposal. The complete package is attached.

#### Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.