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NEWS RELEASE

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Regents to Consider Statewide Purchases, Contracts for All School Districts

PROVIDENCE – At the meeting last week (March 23) of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education, Board Chairman James A. DiPrete said that school districts should work together to establish statewide purchasing agreements and service contracts and that the Regents will help them to do so.

His comments followed a presentation to the Board by Brian P. Stern, Executive Director at the Department of Administration.

Stern told the Board of Regents that municipalities and the State of Rhode Island have saved money by consolidating purchases and service contracts for such things as delivery services, copy machines, office supplies, janitorial supplies, police cars, and medical insurance.

He said that school districts could also benefit from savings on similar purchases and service contracts. He asked the Regents for a list of the 30 or so items most frequently purchased by school departments, as the school districts might be eligible for purchasing discounts right now through various statewide purchasing contracts. He said individual teachers might be eligible for some price discounts as well.

Chairman DiPrete noted that the Regents strongly support economies of scale regarding purchases and service contracts. He said that the Regents are particularly interested in having school districts develop a statewide health-insurance contract. He noted, however, that there are many issues to be resolved: health insurance is generally part of a contract negotiated with a labor union, and the contracts do not all expire on the same date.

“Still, we have to get the districts to the table,” he said. “The Board of Regents supports efforts to save money through economies of scale, particularly because the money saved on purchases and service contracts can be redirected toward teaching and learning.”

Chairman DiPrete asked Regent Robert Camara, chairman of the Regents’ Finance Committee, to immediately begin work with the R.I. Division of Purchases and the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to explore ways to implement statewide purchasing procedures among the 36 school districts.

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