



**Enclosure 2a**  
**May 29, 2019**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**  
**February 13, 2019**

**RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION**

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The Rhode Island Board of Education met on Wednesday, February 13, 2019, at the Community College of Rhode Island, Warwick.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Cottam welcomed everyone to the quarterly meeting of the R.I. Board of Education, noted for the record that Members Beretta, DelGiudice, Field, Grey, McConaghy, and Monte, had notified her that they would not be joining the meeting, and called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

**Present:** Barbara Cottam, \*Christopher Bove, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Dennis Duffy, Jo Eva Gaines, \*\*Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Marta Martinez, Lawrence Purtill, \*Jay Rumas, and Jeffery Williams

\* Ex-officio, non-voting member

\*\*Arrived at 5:36 p.m.

**Absent:**

Amy Beretta  
Timothy DelGiudice  
Gara Field  
Mike Grey  
Daniel McConaghy  
Marianne Monte  
Stephan Pryor

**1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA**

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Karen Davis, it was

**VOTED:** That, the Rhode Island Board of Education accepts the agenda for the meeting of February 13, 2019

Vote: 9 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Barbara Cottam, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Dennis Duffy, Jo Eva Gaines, Thomas Izzo, Marta Martinez, Lawrence Purtill, and Jeffery Williams

NAYS: 0

[Board Member Green arrived after the acceptance of the agenda]

## 2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

### 2a. Minutes of the November 14, 2018, Meeting

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Karen Davis, it was

**VOTED:** That the Rhode Island Board of Education amend the minutes of the November 14, 2018, meeting, for the reason that Member Beretta was listed in the minutes as having attended the November 14, 2018, Board meeting, when in fact she did not attend that meeting.

Vote: 9 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Barbara Cottam, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Dennis Duffy, Jo Eva Gaines, Thomas Izzo, Marta Martinez, Lawrence Purtill, and Jeffery Williams

NAYS: 0

Next, Chair Cottam asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 14, 2018, meeting, as amended.

On a motion duly made by Karen Davis and seconded by Thomas Izzo, it was

**VOTED:** That the Rhode Island Board of Education approves the minutes of the November 14, 2018, meeting, as amended

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Barbara Cottam, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Dennis Duffy, Jo Eva Gaines, Thomas Izzo, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

[Member Green arrived after the approval of the minutes]

[Members Martinez and Williams had to recuse themselves from the vote as they did not attend the November 14, 2018, Meeting of the Board of Education]

### **3. OPEN FORUM**

Eight (8) members of the faculty at the Community College of Rhode Island took turns reading a "Program Brief" entitled "CCRI's Trouble with J-Term 2019" prepared by an Anonymous Faculty Member for the Community College of RI Faculty Association, dated January 17, 2019.

A copy of the "Program Brief" is filed with the meeting materials in the Office of the Board of Education.

### **4. REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS**

#### **Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education**

Commissioner Wagner began by sharing that this will be the third year that RIDE will be administering the statewide SurveyWorks, an annual survey administered to students, families, and teachers, and a key part of our voice work. He expressed that we can't have systems that are just represented by the voices of the people who control the systems, but rather, the systems need to be informed by the voices of the people who receive the services. There has been great participation over the last two years and the measures of comprehensive input and feedback are included in Rhode Island's accountability structures and are made transparent through our School Report Card platform.

Next, Commissioner Wagner reported that last week RIDE launched the state's partnership with XQ, the nation's leading organization dedicated to reimagining high school education, on a design challenge for Rhode Island's 55 high schools. He conveyed that our high schools were built for a world, a time and an economy that hasn't existed for many years, and even if the PK-12 education system did what it is currently designed to do perfectly and everything was implemented flawlessly and efficiently, we are still losing too many students as they are disengaging from school as early as second grade. He ended by emphasizing the need to modify and change the structures of PK-12 education, which cannot be achieved unless there is partnership and coordination with the postsecondary education system.

Commissioner Wagner ended his report by noting his imminent transition as Commissioner. He shared that he has been talking about a transition since the time he arrived in Rhode Island and that change is not just about leadership or just about being a leader, but also thinking about the time when leadership transitions occur. He emphasized that transition is about sustainability and stressed the need for everyone to stay the course.

### **Commissioner of Postsecondary Education**

Commissioner Dann-Messier began by welcoming Jay Rumas, a sophomore student at the University of Rhode Island and the new Student Representative on the Council on Postsecondary Education.

Next, Commissioner Dann-Messier took the opportunity to publicly thank Governor Raimondo for her support of the postsecondary education budget.

Commissioner Dann-Messier went on to share that on January 7, more than 150 leaders from state government, public and private institutions of postsecondary education, and national and local organizations, attended the Inaugural Summit on supporting the mental health needs of postsecondary students in Rhode Island. The Summit, which highlighted student mental health needs, common institutional challenges, and effective practices, was called by Governor Raimondo to help identify opportunities and strategies for collaboration among the counseling centers on Rhode Island's college campuses. The Summit culminated with closing keynote addresses by former Congressman, Patrick Kennedy, and his wife Amy, longtime mental-health advocates, who spoke on the need for coordination and continuity between mental-health services and interventions at the elementary/secondary levels and the postsecondary institutions. Commissioner Dann-Messier thanked Board Member Izzo for his active participation in all of these efforts.

Commissioner Dann-Messier also reported that the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC) is pleased to lead a statewide initiative to increase postsecondary financial-aid awareness among underrepresented groups of students in Rhode Island. OPC has been working with RIDE, the RI Student Loan Authority (RISLA), and community-based organizations, to elevate awareness of federal financial-aid not only for graduating high-school students but also adults who are interested in reengaging in the postsecondary education system.

Commissioner Dann-Messier ended her report by sharing that OPC recently received funding from the Walmart Foundation to expand the RI-BEST program, a RI adaptation of the national I-Best model. The I-BEST model is considered to be the gold standard of adult education, which aims to meet employer needs for a skilled workforce, and increases access to postsecondary pathways for working adults. In partnership with RIDE and the Governor's Workforce Board, a sub-granting process will be put in place to establish up to four additional RI-BEST at work projects, delivering training to a total of 250 incumbent learners in service sector industries. The grant will provide \$500,000 over 18 months.

## 5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Before turning the conversation over to the evening's presenters, Chair Cottam stated that today's discussion items would focus on the collective work that RIDE, the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, the state's colleges and university, and other stakeholders. This is a collaborative effort to prepare all students for the future, set them up for success, as well as bridge the gap between high school, college, and careers in Rhode Island.

### a. Governor's Education Budget Overview

Chair Cottam introduced Art Nevins, Governor Raimondo's Education Policy Advisor, who gave a broad overview of the Governor's Fiscal Year 2020, budget, with a focus on the PK-20 education budget.

Mr. Nevis stressed that this year's proposed budget request includes key investments that the Governor believes are essential to improve Rhode Island's educational system, while closing a combined FY20 projected operating deficit of \$200M.

Mr. Nevins began by going over the Governor's bigger budget priorities across the state, and emphasized the number of investments to build a foundation in the education system for improving academic performance in the state:

- \$30M increase in Funding Formula Aid – the single largest increase in the state budget
- \$2.25M increase in ELL funding
- \$100K to support High-Quality Curriculum Reform
- \$10M to begin expansion to universal, high-quality Pre-K programs
- \$500K to support increases in dual and concurrent enrollment
- \$250K increase for Advanced Course Network
- \$200K to continue expanding the Commerce P-TECH program
- \$50K for RIDE to increase professional development opportunities for CS4RI
- \$590K to support mental health professional development and training opportunities for teachers
- \$55K in state sub-grant funding for eligible public schools to adopt universal free breakfast and lunch
- \$225K need-based aid fund for SNAP eligible college students
- State Appropriation Increases of \$1.6M at URI, \$1.2M at RIC, and \$1.5M at CCRI, subject to performance funding
- \$1.8M to further develop "URI Online" to provide online and blended learning opportunities aimed largely at non-traditional students and community college graduates
  - this online infrastructure will enable CCRI and RIC to use the platform and services in the future
- \$1.9M to maintain funding the Promise scholarship at CCRI

- Budget proposal includes the expansion of the Promise program to RIC and to adults attending CCRI – in her State of the State Address, the governor also committed to expand the Promise program to URI by the end of her term

Mr. Nevins ended the presentation by highlighting the Rhode Island Capital Plan projects at the three public institutions of postsecondary education and at the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner.

### **b. PrepareRI College Readiness Project Overview**

Stephen Osborn, RIDE’s Chief of Innovation, began the presentation by sharing that this project, under the leadership of Chair Cottam, represents a strategic partnership between K-12 education and the state’s three public institutions of postsecondary education, to ensure that every student graduates from high school ready to enroll in credit-bearing coursework and on a path to on-time college completion. He emphasized that for the first time last year, The PSAT and SAT were administered statewide at the high school level to directly see how ready students are to be able to walk across the graduation stage and into our colleges.

Next, Mr. Osborn went over the timeline when the conversation started:

- November 2018 – Convened cross-agency leaders to be able to talk about what we should do and what we should commit to do together
- December 2018 – Drafted Readiness Project Plan to start to develop work streams over the following six months – He emphasized that these are not work streams that will be able to be fully accomplished over the next six months, but will likely help set the agenda and a way for everyone to be able to partner and work together over the next five to ten years.
- January – May 2019 – Implementation

Mr. Osborn also went over the three areas (Readiness, Matriculation, and Communication) and six different issues that the group is working on:

1. Academic Readiness (math, reading, and writing) and Alignment of Requirements
2. Alignment of High School Graduation Requirements
3. CTE College Credit
4. FAFSA
5. Communication
6. Major-aligned college credit

Mr. Osborn turned the presentation over to Spencer Sherman, RIDE’s Director of the Office of College and Career Readiness, which houses the PrepareRI initiative. Mr. Sherman began by giving kudos to the folks at URI and DataSpark (housed at URI), who conducted the research on how many students who start at a public high school in RI earn a postsecondary degree at any public and private college, anywhere in the country. The research was centered on national data and the RI DataHUB, a statewide longitudinal database, including data from RIDE, OPC, and

other state agencies. He presented data on the pathway of RI's 2007-2008 high school freshman class, and the analysis indicating whether those students completed high school (81%), enrolled in postsecondary education (72%), or completed a postsecondary degree (34%), at any point in 10 years. He emphasized that too few students (34%) complete high school and earn a postsecondary degree; completion gap is particularly large for our most vulnerable student populations (students of color [21%], low-income students, and students with IEPs [9%]); and completion is a bigger issue than transition – less of a drop-off as students transition from high school to college (-9 percentage points) versus within high school (-19 points) or postsecondary (-38 points). Mr. Sherman shared that the next step is to look at the predictors of college success that appear in high school, how the system can help students with those predictors before they drop out, and look for successful models in RI that can be expanded statewide.

Board members expressed concern with the validity of the report given that there are so many variables that are not taken into account, as well as the implications that it can have on communities. They also questioned whether this data already exists and why time is being spent on the predictors, instead of working on finding solutions to the problems.

Commissioner Wagner replied that PK-12 practitioners do not have access to this level of data on how their students perform, which will help guide conversations at the local level to change the lives and pathways of students. This report is also an attempt to be responsive to the feedback from the Board over the last couple of years that students are not coming to the postsecondary system prepared to do college level work.

Next, Paula Szulc, Associate Commissioner for Student Success at OPC noted that for many years everyone at RIDE, OPC, at the three RI public institutions for postsecondary education, on the Board, and at the high schools, have recognized that student academic and non-academic readiness for success in college is a concern. She shared that OPC and the postsecondary institutions are delighted to be a partner with RIDE to collaboratively address this statewide challenge by providing data, expertise in content areas, and exploring different models to increase students' academic readiness. In addition, the postsecondary institutions are working hard on non-academic readiness to make sure that all students who aspire a postsecondary education are aware of the non-academic federal, state, and institutional resources that are available to them.

Mr. Osborn also acknowledged the very exciting collaboration and conversations that have transpired between RIDE, the local high schools, and the academic leaders at the three public postsecondary institutions, to build the bridge between secondary and postsecondary education. The three academic leaders (Don DeHayes from URI, Sue Pearlmuter from RIC, and Rosemary Costigan from CCRI) highlighted the two priority areas (reading and mathematics), which their faculty have identified and collaborated on with high school faculty to ensure that high school students are well prepared for postsecondary success in the areas of study that they are interested in. They also stressed the critical need for these conversations to include Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. As CTE programs are being developed in high

schools, there is a need to ensure that those students are taking college preparatory classes that prepare them for postsecondary level coursework, and that students and families understand the options that they are pursuing and/or limiting themselves to.

Board members praised the work that is being done, but voiced their concerns with the absence of certain information on the current timeline. They would like to see how the data is going to be shared and with whom, when conversations are going to occur between K-12 and postsecondary folks, how those conversations are going to be facilitated, and the need to involve guidance counselors, and anyone else who deals with student mental health issues, in the conversations. They also suggested listing computer science data separately from the mathematics data section.

### **c. Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Overview**

Paula Szulc, Associate Commissioner for Student Success at OPC, began her overview of the FAFSA initiative by stating that any discussion of the FAFSA completion in RI begins with OPC's three key priorities: increasing attainment, eliminating equity gaps, and ensuring affordability. She noted that in order for RI to reach the Governor's ambitious attainment goal of at least 70% of Rhode Islanders earning a degree or credential by 2025, all students need to know that federal financial aid can make their postsecondary dream a reality. She stressed that Rhode Island houses the largest gap in New England between the workforce needed and the current workforce and that the federal financial aid can help close this attainment gap. In an effort to target high school seniors, OPC partnered with RIDE, RISLA and other community-based organizations for greater effectiveness, organized events, offered incentives, and launched the FAFSA dashboard, which allows visitors to see and compare FAFSA completion across high schools in Rhode Island.

### **d. School Accountability and Report Cards Overview**

Commissioner Wagner went over the components of the RI Accountability System – performance measures, which drive school improvement; star ratings, which provide a user friendly summary of the information; and school improvement, to identify and support RI's lowest performing schools based on overall and sub-group performance. He also went over the measures that will be used to evaluate school performance:

- Academic performance
  - o Achievement
  - o Growth
  - o English Language
  - o Science
  
- Student success
  - o Student absenteeism
  - o Teacher absenteeism
  - o Suspension rate
  - o Exceeding expectations

- College and career readiness
  - o Graduation
  - o Graduate proficiency
  - o Diploma plus

Board Member Duffy questioned why “exceeding expectations” was lumped in with the unrelated categories of absenteeism and suspension as it should naturally belong in the academic achievement category and easily identifiable when looking at a report card. He stressed that as a Board member and as a parent, he sees it as the single most important factor when looking at how a school is doing. He reiterated that after several years of discussion and finally getting a recognizable 20% goal of excellence in exceeding expectations, the report card should reflect that change in the Board’s priorities.

Commissioner Wagner replied that the system went through two years of public engagement, but because the system was built in-house, RIDE will continue to engage, and as feedback is received, components of the system can potentially be changed and updated.

**6. ADJOURNMENT:**

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Rachelle Green, it was

**VOTED:** That, the Rhode Island Board of Education adjourns.

**Vote:** 10 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

**YEAS:** Barbara Cottam, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Dennis Duffy, Jo Eva Gaines, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Marta Martinez, Lawrence Purtill, and Jeffery Williams

**NAYS:** 0

The meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.