



**Enclosure 2a**  
**December 9, 2015**

**MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION**  
**Council on Elementary and Secondary Education**  
**October 7, 2015**

**COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

---

The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Work Session was held on Wednesday, October 7, 2015, at the Rhode Island Department of Education, Room 501, 255 Westminster Street, Providence, R.I.

Chair McConaghy welcomed everyone to the Work Session of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, declared a quorum present and noted for the record that Council members Callahan and Martinez would not be attending the meeting. He then called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

**Present:** Daniel McConaghy, \*Colby Anderson, \*\*Amy Beretta, Barbara Cottam, Karin Forbes, Jo Eva Gaines, Lawrence Purtill, and Joyce Stevos

**Absent:** Colleen Callahan and Marta Martinez

[\*Ex-Officio, non-voting member]

[\*\*Arrived at 5:35 p.m.]

**1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA**

On a motion duly made by Barbara Cottam and seconded by Karin Forbes, it was

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the Work Session of October 7, 2015.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Daniel McConaghy, Barbara Cottam, Karin Forbes, Jo Eva Gaines, Lawrence Purtill, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

[Amy Beretta arrived at 5:35 p.m.]

## 2. REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER

Commissioner Wagner began by reporting that R.I. is very fortunate that one of its principals, Alan Tenreiro, Principal at Cumberland High School and R.I.'s Principal of the Year, was recently recognized as the 2015 National Principal of the Year. This announcement is very timely as empowering school communities and the role of the principal and of those who support our students and the mission of the school is emerging as one of the key priorities for this year as we go through the Strategic Plan and move from the vision of the plan into action. This will also help amplify our impact in this work as people see that R.I. is serious about the principal and teacher leadership in general, and that we have a national recognized voice in that conversation.

Next, Commissioner Wagner reported that last week he joined Chair Cottam in D.C. to attend the National American Federation of Teachers conference, which focused on the opportunities and the challenges of educator evaluations. He went on to share that if teacher evaluations are being used to support teaching and learning, then we are in the right track, but if that isn't the case, then we should reevaluate what we are doing. One of the themes that came up at the conference was how vital the voice of R.I. school districts is in the conversation, and how innovative and ahead of the curve they are in the national conversation.

He also reported that earlier in the day he attended a kick-off meeting in Boston of the XQ Super School initiative. This is a nationwide initiative that will provide support and ultimately funding for high school teams that go through a visioning process to reimagine what the next generation high school will look like and he encourages R.I. high schools across the state to join a team.

He went on to report that at the recent WaterFire event, RIDE launched a crowd-sourcing, fundraising mechanism where individuals can donate funds to support R.I.'s Teacher of the Year program.

Commissioner Wagner ended his report by reminding Council Members of the screening of the Most Likely To Succeed document film being held tomorrow at the Providence Career and Tech Academy, and also the Innovation Powered by Technology Conference being held on Saturday, at the R.I. Convention Center.

### **3. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

#### **Encl3a - School Building Authority Capital Fund - Update**

Before turning the discussion over to Andrea Castaneda, Chief of the Division of Fiscal Integrity and Effectiveness, Commissioner Wagner gave an overview of the purpose of the discussion, which is to give Council members the opportunity to ask questions on the construction projects that school districts submitted to the School Building Authority (SBA) for review, and which the Council will be asked to approve at their October 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Ms. Castaneda began by reminding Council members that in the last session of the General Assembly two significant things happened that have enabled RIDE to really take a step forward with school facilities and funding for facilities' improvement. First was the establishment of the School Building Authority within RIDE and the second is the \$20M Capital Fund.

Ms. Castaneda then turned the conversation over to Joe da Silva, RIDE's School Construction Coordinator, who gave an overview of the FY 2016 Capital Fund competition, eligibility and funding criteria, and the SBA's role in the approval process.

#### **Encl3b - Amendment to Memorandum of Agreement for Pawtucket School Department**

Ms. Castaneda explained that at the next meeting, RIDE will be asking the Council to consider a no cost increase amendment to the \$46M Immediate Health and Safety school construction project approval granted to the Pawtucket School Department on September 8, 2014. The amendment is a redistribution of funds to the previously approved projects to now include work at St. Leo's School. St. Leo's was recently acquired by Pawtucket and is being used as a swing space for other district school facilities undertaking major upgrades.

#### **Encl3c - PARCC Assessments - Review and Update**

Commissioner Wagner began the conversation by sharing his strong feelings and vision on assessments. He stated that separate and aside and apart from the fact that assessments are required by federal law, there needs to be a common measure of whether our students are making progress on standards that are meaningful and are preparing them to the world that they are about to enter. Our current set of standards and learning expectations are tied to the things that our children need to know when they leave the PK-12 system and go and apply for jobs and college. When talking with parents, he has learned that a lot of their objection to assessments is around the excessive test preparation and the reduction of the curriculum to the assessments where the tests have become the curriculum. He personally

believes that the best preparation for a test is in great teaching, particularly with the current standards, which are more complicated and require higher level thinking.

Commissioner Wagner then turned the conversation over to Mary Ann Snider, Chief of Educator Excellence and Instructional Effectiveness, who shared a PowerPoint presentation on the goals of the PARCC Assessment and the information and reports that schools and parents will receive as RIDE prepares for the release of the data results.

Commissioner Wagner concluded the discussion by pointing out that this conversation is just one measure of academic readiness and that nobody would imagine that academic readiness, as demonstrated in a single test, is the whole of college or career readiness. The first thing to acknowledge is that it's just one measure at one point in time, and the second is to acknowledge that academic readiness is just a component of overall readiness, which includes essential skills, such as the ability to work together in groups, collaborate, problem solve, persist in difficulty, and all of those other kinds of things that we want for our students. Although a meaningful and important measure, we need to be careful how the results are treated.

### **Encl3d - Graduation Requirements - Review and Update**

Commissioner Wagner gave a general intro to the topic by stating that RIDE is on track for the class of 2020 having a graduation requirement that includes the use of a state assessment with some backup processes if the student needs it. He explained that the graduation requirements' conversation precedes Race to the Top and goes all the way back to 2002 and that the reason for the introduction of a state assessment as a graduation requirement is really because of the notion of what a diploma really means. Currently, diploma requirements are implemented at the local level and we all know that the meaning of Algebra as a course, or the meaning of a letter or number grade, differs from district to district. The problem is that when a diploma is based solely on the implementation of local criteria there is the risk that when a student goes and applies to a college or a job, the employer or the admissions officer could unfairly be judging that student merely by where he or she lives and the reputation of their high school or community. The only reason to introduce a measure such as a standardized assessment into a diploma is just to give a comparable measure and to eliminate the worry that students are being prejudged by the reputation of their high school. The goal of achieving a meaningful diploma is currently slotted through the PARCC Assessment, but it may also be achieved by allowing students to demonstrate readiness through other meaningful options, while maintaining the original intent to have a diploma mean something with a certain level of rigor and standard attached to it. He cautioned that if we are going to make a change to the graduation requirements that it needs to be done this school year, as current eighth graders, who are on a path with the current graduation requirements, know what the expectations will be

when they transition to the ninth grade.

Commissioner Wagner then turned the discussion over to Mary Ann Snider and Stephen Osborn, who walked Council members through a PowerPoint presentation on the regulatory history, policy principles, and the current state and local graduation policies of the graduation requirements.

### **Encl3e - Charter Schools - Update on 2014 charter renewals with conditions**

Commissioner Wagner introduced the last topic and reminded Council members that back in October 2014 they voted to renew the charters of four of our charter public schools (Academy for Career Exploration [ACE], Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts [TAPA], New England Laborers Construction and Career Academy, and the Greene School). All four schools had their charters renewed for up to five years with conditions and have since met those conditions, except for TAPA and ACE, who still have one outstanding condition. While both schools have financial management practices in place and have made progress, there are several remaining deficiencies that will need to be validated in the annual independent audit completed by a certified public accountant that will provide evidence that these deficiencies have been corrected. RIDE is providing support to both schools and will report back to the Council after the December 31, 2015, deadline, when the schools submit their FY 2015 annual independent audit to RIDE.

Member Beretta suggested RIDE provide periodic updates on charter schools so that Council members stay informed.

## **4. ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion duly made by Karin Forbes and seconded by Jo Eva Gaines, it was

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education adjourns.

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

**YEAS:** Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Barbara Cottam, Karin Forbes, Jo Eva Gaines, Lawrence Purtill, and Joyce Stevos

**NAYS:** 0

The meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.