



Enclosure 2a
October 20, 2015

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
Council on Elementary and Secondary Education
September 10, 2015

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Work Session was held on Thursday, September 10, 2015, at the Rhode Island Department of Education, Room 501, 255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI.

Board Chair Cottam 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 Chair McConaghy and members Callahan and Gaines would not be attending the meeting. She then called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

Present: Barbara Cottam, *Colby Anderson, Amy Beretta, Karin Forbes, Lawrence Purtill, and Joyce Stevos

Absent: Daniel McConaghy, Colleen Callahan, Jo Eva Gaines, and Marta Martinez

[*Ex-Officio, non-voting member]

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Joyce Stevos and seconded by Amy Beretta, it was

VOTED: That the Council Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the work session of September 10, 2015.

Vote: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Barbara Cottam, Amy Beretta, Karin Forbes, Lawrence Purtill, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

2. REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER

Commissioner Wagner began by reporting that at the October 7th work session, RIDE will be discussing the graduation requirements to get the Council's reaction prior to engaging directly with the field.

Next, Commissioner Wagner reported that R.I. is one of 16 states whose equity plan was recently approved by the U.S. Department of Education. Equity plans, which are mandated by the federal government, look at what states are doing in a comprehensive way to address the gaps between the qualifications and the effectiveness of their teachers. RIDE worked in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders to prepare its equity plan and the data collected shows that the highest poverty and schools with highest minority students tend to employ educators with less experience than other schools, especially at the middle school level.

He also reported that yesterday RIDE announced that it awarded around \$300,000 in grants to four charter public schools (Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep, International Charter School and the Paul Cuffee School) and four school districts (Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence and South Kingstown), to create and support partnerships with school districts and with other public schools that will enable teachers and students to expand successful practices and build upon existing strengths.

He went on to report that a week ago the College Board released SAT and AP results and that although there was improved participation by R.I. students, performance is staying flat or going down slightly. This is a trend seen nationally as a wider range of learners are being introduced to those kinds of experiences, which means that we need to address not only how to increase access, but also performance.

Commissioner Wagner ended by reporting that RIDE has finalized performance level discussions with PARCC in terms of setting the cut-scores for each of the performance levels for students in grades 3 through 8, and agreed on a timetable for release of the 2015 assessment results. Unlike Maryland, Massachusetts, Ohio and Illinois, who, for statutory reasons, are going to start talking about their preliminary results next week; Rhode Island is looking at likely mid-October to early November, as we do not believe that we have a full quality control dataset that would allow us to release the results any earlier. RIDE continues to work with the field about being transparent around what the PARCC results tell us as well as being very thoughtful and cautious about what we do with the results.

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Encl3a - Proposed revisions to the Regulations Governing the School Calendar and Length of the School Day, for the purpose of the public review and comment

Before turning the discussion over to Deputy Abbott, Commissioner Wagner went over a couple of the substantive issues that will be addressed in the proposed revisions. The first proposed change enables a two-hour delayed opening during inclement weather. The second will give the Commissioner delegated authority to grant waivers to districts of up to five days for short-term emergency closures of a particular school without requiring Council approval.

Deputy Abbott explained that the official regulations filed with the Secretary of State will be rescinded as they are a combination of the 1988 Commissioner's Regulations and the 2004 Regulations of the R.I. Board of Regents, which are outdated.

Members Beretta and Forbes suggested modifying the language in paragraphs eight and eleven to make it clear that schools shall remain open and provide at least three hours of instructional time in order to be considered a school day. They also shared concerns with districts having the authority to lengthen the school day (if it's not actual instructional time), to shorten the length of the school year.

Member Forbes asked what the rationale is for regulating when the first day of school should occur (paragraph 2).

Deputy Abbott responded that it doesn't necessarily need to be in regulation, however, the only school districts that requested waivers to have their school year shortened this past winter, all started school after Labor Day.

Chair Cottam suggested that RIDE remind districts that as they look to revise their school year calendar to be mindful of winter weather and plan accordingly.

Encl3b - RIDE Budget - FY 2017

Before turning the conversation over to Commissioner Wagner, Chair Cottam stated that this evening, the Council would be discussing one of its most important functions, the approval of RIDE's budget, which is particularly challenging this year, as the current projected FY 2017 state deficit is \$197M.

Commissioner Wagner gave a general overview of the timeline process and explained that as a strategy to generate options to address the state's \$197M budget deficit, all state agencies have been asked to go through an exercise and come up with various levels of constraint targets (2%, 5% and 7%). He went over a PowerPoint presentation and answered questions on the FY 16 Revised, FY 17 Current Service Level, and the FY 17 Constrained budgets, which need to be submitted to the State Budget Office by October 1st.

He hoped that the Council would give RIDE very clear direction and the authority to submit these targets. In doing so, it does not mean that the Governor will accept them in her proposed budget nor does it mean that the legislature will accept them in their negotiated budget; it just means that the Council gives RIDE the authority to submit these targets as potential cuts.

Chair Cottam voiced that she is hopeful that the state will not be seeing the projected \$197M deficit and although she understands that the state budget is a collective responsibility, she is concerned about the three scenarios. It is the Council's responsibility to put forth a plan that will have the least impact on educational services as possible and she looks for input from fellow Council members as to the direction RIDE should take.

Council Members voiced that they too are concerned with the deficit and trust that RIDE will do its best when figuring out where it can best absorb cuts, which will have the least impact on educational programs that affect students and families.

4. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Karin Forbes and seconded by Joyce Stevos, it was

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

Vote: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Barbara Cottam, Amy Beretta, Lawrence Purtill, Karin Forbes, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.