



Enclosure 2b
September 20, 2016

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
Council on Elementary and Secondary Education
August 30, 2016

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Work Session was held on August 30, 2016, at the Rhode Island Department of Education, Room 501, 255 Westminister 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 she would be presiding over the meeting until Council Chair McConaghy, who had an unavoidable work commitment, arrived. She also noted for the record that Council Member Beretta would not be joining the meeting. She then called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

Present: Barbara Cottam, *Colby Anderson, Colleen Callahan, Karin Forbes, Jo Eva Gaines, **Daniel McConaghy, Marta Martinez, and Joyce Stevos

Absent: Amy Beretta and Lawrence Purtill

[*ex-officio, non-voting member]

[**Daniel McConaghy arrived at 7:05 p.m.]

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

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

VOTED: That the Council Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the work session of August 30, 2016.

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

YEAS: Barbara Cottam, Colleen Callahan, Karin Forbes, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

3. REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER

Commissioner Wagner began his report by sharing that Kristen Stringfellow, Superintendent in South Kingston, was recently selected by her peers as Superintendent of the Year.

Next, Commissioner Wagner reported that RIDE recently introduced a new feature to its website, a section called “The Student Voice” blog, to provide students with an opportunity to share their perspectives on issues concerning education.

Commissioner Wagner also reported that RIDE has held two of the four public hearings scheduled to gather public input on the Secondary School Regulations. He shared that there seems to be some disconnect around the purpose of the hearings, as individuals arrived expecting a learning meeting as opposed to a hearing for the purpose of gathering their input. He explained that there will be ample opportunity for RIDE to engage in public discourse.

Commissioner Wagner ended his report by highlighting some of the showcase celebrations that RIDE is hosting over the next couple of months:

- Statewide conference on effective instructional practices for kindergarten
- Annual Technology Conference
- First Annual Teaching and Learning Sharing Conference
- Annual Educator Recognition Celebration, coinciding with a WaterFire

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. PARCC Results

Prior to turning the conversation over to Dr. Phyllis Lynch, Director of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum, Commissioner Wagner stated that he was going to say the same thing that he said last year and the same thing that he will say next year in that this conversation around test scores needs to be anchored around teaching and learning.

Dr. Lynch joined the table and explained that, when looking at the results, it is important to keep in mind that:

- it’s about teaching and learning;
- building knowledge and understanding and being able to frame the teaching and learning conversation;
- student participation went up, but, as we start to look into school level results, we will see some differentiation there and those will better account for understanding student effort and participation;
- students are still transitioning to computer-based testing, and there is still a proportion of students still taking the tests on paper

Dr. Lynch highlighted some of the statewide data:

- R.I. met the 95% participation rate requirement with 96% of students testing in both mathematics and English language arts (ELA),
- A handful of districts did not meet the participation threshold in one or both tests, and RIDE will be working more closely with those districts to support their efforts in building an understanding among their communities to see the value of state testing.
- 81% of students took the assessments on a computer.
- A two percentage-point increase in the number of students who met or exceed expectations in ELA/literacy.
- A five percentage-point increase in the number of students who met or exceeded expectations in mathematics.
- All of the student groups made gains, with the exception of students with disabilities.

Member Callahan expressed that it would be important to see the data broken down by subgroups.

- Higher increases in performance in Geometry and Algebra I from 8th and 9th graders in comparison with 10th and 11th graders.
- Increases across many grades in ELA, but not all, and certainly not to the extent of the math performance

Member Stevos asked how taking a test on a computer affected student performance.

Commissioner Wagner answered that, while attention needs to be paid to student familiarity with digital testing devices, feedback that RIDE has received from the field is that adults cannot keep up with the kids when it comes to technology. There are reports of device-specific issues, such as keyboarding, which can be addressed by increasing familiarity with the devices.

Dr. Lynch then shared that RIDE is reintroducing the data analysis by sectors to include State, Urban (Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket), Urban Ring (Cranston, East Providence, Johnston, Newport, North Providence, Warwick, and West Warwick), State Schools (School for the Deaf, MET, DCYF, and Davies), and Charter Schools.

Dr. Lynch ended her presentation by highlighting that R.I. made progress, as the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations both in ELA and mathematics was higher in 2016 for students who took the computer-based test versus students who took the paper-based test.

Member Stevos stated that, since the SAT has been changed and aligned to the Common Core Standards, it would be worth looking at the PARCC data and compare the results.

Commissioner Wagner responded that College Board analyses in the past have been consistent with PARCC results nationwide, which is about 40% of students who are hitting college-ready thresholds on the SAT; so R.I. should be in the same ballpark.

b. Struggling Schools and Legislative Mandate for Achievement Gap

Prior to turning the conversation over to Stephen Osborn, Chief of Innovation, Commissioner Wagner introduced Brian Darrow, the new Director of RIDE's Division on College and Career Readiness.

Mr. Osborn gave an overview of the transformation efforts and strategies that transformation schools have historically gone through in R.I.:

- 2001 - NCLB was passed
- 2003 - RIDE used new accountability system to classify schools based on school performance for the first time
- 2009-2012 - RIDE implemented school improvement efforts for R.I.'s lowest performing schools, based on federally mandated school improvement models (13 schools total)
- 2012 - RIDE, like many other states, submitted and was approved for an ESEA-waiver, allowing for low-performing schools to choose from a "flex-menu" of interventions. The waiver also classified low-performing schools as either "Focus" or "Priority" schools.
- 2012-2016 - RIDE identified an additional 20 schools for intervention. The majority of these schools chose interventions from the ESEA "flex menu." By the end of the 2016 school year, 31 schools still remained in the transformation process (only 1 exited [Segue Institute for Learning] and 1 closed).
- 2017 - Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, which authorized ESEA) includes changes and increased flexibility for how RIDE identifies and supports school transformation efforts, starting July 1, 2017.

Of the current transformation schools that received a classification in 2013 (27 of 31), 85% (23 of 27) of these schools received the lowest classification of "school in need of improvement/insufficient progress," costing over \$30M since 2009.

Member Callahan voiced that she is very interested in seeing a spreadsheet outlining how that money was spent.

Board Member Cottam expressed that in some instances students have spent their entire schooling in underperforming schools.

Board Member Stevos voiced that she would like to know how many of those students graduated and went on to college.

Deputy Abbott shared that, unfortunately, schools that were identified early in NCLB could have been identified for a number of reasons, including missing one single target by two percentage points. That school got the same rating as a school that was missing every single target by 40 points.

Mr. Osborn continued the presentation and explained the definition of transformation schools (Focus – 10 out of 31 - and Priority – 21 out of 31), description, defining criteria, and exit criteria. Seven of the 31 schools are eligible to meet their respective exit criteria this year, and an additional one out of the remaining 24 schools may be rising to exit transformation in 2017. The remaining schools have not made progress to exit.

Student Representative Anderson asked that when RIDE looks at the defining criteria, if it looks at state testing, or are there other factors involved as well.

Mr. Osborn replied that at the high-school level it's a combination of state testing and graduation rates, at the elementary level it's on different variations on how students did on state assessments, but it gets into subgroup performance to ensure that there are no performance gaps between low-income students and others.

Mr. Darrow went over the data on the number of students in transformation schools by grade. He explained that more than 1 in 7 (around 19K students) in R.I. attends a "focus" or "priority" school (a 50/50 split). It doesn't mean that all of those students are low-performing; it's just that they attend a low-performing school.

Next, Mr. Darrow went over data on students in transformation schools by sub-groups (free/reduced lunch, special education, and English language learners) and pointed out that almost 1 in 4 low-income students and almost 1 in 2 English Language Learners attend a transformation school. Based on the 2015 classifications, the majority of transformation schools are in Central Falls (3 schools – 1,874 students), Cranston (1 school – 170 students), East Providence (2 schools – 595 students), Pawtucket (2 schools – 1,821 students), Providence (22 schools – 14,700 students (62%) – about 3 in 4 of R.I. students), and the R.I. School for the Deaf (63 students).

Mr. Osborn then provided an overview of the current school-improvement models (Transformation, Restart, Closure, ESEA-Flex). RIDE meets quarterly with the superintendent and the leadership team of each of the transformation schools to go over the progress being made toward their plan.

He also went over the historical perspective of how long current transformation schools have been classified as Focus or Priority.

Commissioner Wagner expressed that there is no magic answer to tackle these issues, but, rather than telling districts to write down their plans, checking with them quarterly to see that they are checking off the right boxes, which produces pretty much a compliance model, the focus needs to be on empowering leadership to build the kinds of transformation cultures in schools that will produce the kinds of results needed.

Member Stevos requested that another column be added to the list that would show teacher attendance rate, student suspensions, and who is being suspended over and over.

Commissioner Wagner replied that going forward RIDE will have data around climate and culture as well as chronic teacher and student absenteeism.

Mr. Osborn ended the presentation by sharing key findings of transformation results:

- Transformation efforts have not yielded meaningful improvements to overcome historical track record of low academic performance.
- Current school-improvement funding has not yielded results - \$30M has been spent and only 1 out of the 31 schools has made progress.
- Of the schools that have successfully improved, success was not linked to a single strategy. A school's success is derived from transformation efforts driven by a high-quality school leader and district support for the school leader, and staff to implement the transformation effort.

Commissioner Wagner voiced that RIDE has to come up with a transformation strategy as part of the new ESSA, but it will take around six or seven years to implement. In the meantime, another strategy that we can implement with a year of planning is to work with some of the already identified schools and use that to really inform our work and start to implement some of the flexibility while phasing in the new rules for the new accountability system.

Member Callahan agreed that we cannot afford to wait for the new accountability system to come into effect and that she would like to think that there is some rethinking around the strategies and ways in which we can start working with some of those schools this year.

Commissioner Wagner shared that RIDE is in the midst of submitting a request for funding around a wider appreciation of career readiness. This would look at things like apprenticeship and internship experiences not just in the CTE centers, but to career readiness as an engagement and relevance strategy potentially for all high-school students. One area that is ripe, and which is fairly different, is to bring that instructional design conversation to the transformation conversation, which can be started at the lower grades.

3c – FY 2017 Revised and FY 2018 Current Service Level Budget

Commissioner Wagner introduced the topic by stating that, at its September 20th meeting the Council will be asked to approve RIDE's recommendation of the 2017 Revised and the 2018 Current Service Level Budgets, which need to be submitted to the Governor by October 1st.

Commissioner Wagner highlighted two clusters of initiatives in the budget that RIDE is asking the Council to continue supporting:

1. Funding for students to take Advanced Placement tests and early college courses.
2. Continuation of the instructional-improvement work.

Mark Dunham, Director of Finance, explained that the budget is driven by:

- Implementation of RIDE's strategic plan, including new initiatives and the cost of core operations;
- Continued implementation of education aid through the funding formula; and
- Maintenance of on-going initiatives.

Next, Mr. Dunham went over the preliminary projections for the 2018 state budget, which has a deficit of \$185M. In order to find ways to solve the projected budget deficit, the State Budget Office has instructed departments and agencies to submit, in addition to a current services level budget, constrained budgets with increasing levels of cuts up to 8%.

Commissioner Wagner shared that rather than having RIDE go through the exercise of finding which initiatives to cut to meet the 8% compliance, what he is planning on doing is submitting the budget and letting the budget folks know that if they really need to cut RIDE's budget by 8%, they should do it across all line items. RIDE will then figure out how to manage that final number based on the department's priorities and initiatives.

Mr. Dunham explained the proposed budget increases of \$100,000 or greater:

- Education Aid Funding Formula - \$39.9M
- Categorical Aid and Stabilization Funds - \$7.8M
- New Initiatives
 - o Instructional Fellows (5) – to assist with curriculum/instruction initiatives
 - o Advanced Placement Tests Fee Waiver – to cover the cost of approximately 11,000 advanced placement tests for students
 - o Educator Excellence (2) – Fellow to support the work of developing shared site-based leadership in schools and Fellow to support the work of defining high-quality professional learning
 - o Kindergarten Entry Profile
 - ~ support large state investment
 - ~ provide assessment support, training, and technical assistance
 - ~ information will guide policy priorities and future initiatives for LEAs
 - o ELL/World Language leadership (1)
 - ~ support school personnel in implementation of proposed EL regulations
 - ~ support schools in the implementation of new USDOE toolkits for teaching ELL students
 - ~ support the growth of world language and dual language offerings in R.I. schools
 - o Career Readiness Fellows (20)
 - ~ \$5,000 stipend to support career readiness in the areas of research, policy, and strategic planning
- Funding Requests
 - o Advanced Course Network
 - ~ anticipates 50% increase in student enrollment
 - ~ Augmented by \$300,000 in permanent school fund revenue
 - o Salary/Turnover
 - ~ reduce turnover rate to 4% from 8% to allow necessary positions to be filled
 - o Technology Support
 - ~ funds to support the RIDE Instructional Management System and Educator Evaluation System used heavily by LEAs
 - o FTE to support Early Learning (1)
 - ~ staff is necessary to ensure program access and quality remains after the Early Learning Challenge grant is over, as well as manage the expenditure of funds

Mr. Dunham wrapped up by going over the FY 18 Budget Summary State Education Aid, FY 18 Budget Summary (changes in categorical programs since FY 12), and the budget timeline.

At the September 20th meeting, the Council will be asked to approve, for submittal to the Governor and the General Assembly, the proposed overall funding formula, the overall categorical amount, and RIDE’s budget, which includes the new proposed initiatives.

3d - ETS Teacher Certification Tests and Cut-Scores (Braille, ASL, ESL - Feedback from Public Review and Comment

Lisa Foehr, Director of Educator Excellence and Certification Services, reported that during the public review and comment, RIDE received only one comment each on the proposed passing score on the American Sign Language Proficiency Interview test and on the Braille Proficiency test. Since the feedback was more on wonderings and questions, RIDE will not be rethinking the recommended passing scores that it presented to the Council at the June 28, 2016, meeting.

The test that generated the most public interest was the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) test. When reviewing the feedback, RIDE felt that some of the concerns were due to the public’s misunderstanding around how the multistate studies process works. Of the 26 states that were part of the multistate studies, 12 states have already decided to recommend adopting the 155 passing score that emerged out of the multistate process. RIDE will be making the same recommendation to the Council.

Council members expressed some concerns with the feedback by members of the RI English Language Learner Advisory Council and the Rhode Island Teachers of English Language Learners. Ms. Foehr responded that she has met with the RI English Language Learner Advisory Council and has reached out to the Rhode Island Teachers of English Language Learners to schedule a meeting with their members to explain and clarify some of the misconceptions around the multistate study process.

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, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karin Forbes, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.