



Enclosure 2b
April 26, 2016

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
April 5, 2016

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education met on Tuesday, April 5, 2016, at the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 255 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

Chair McConaghy welcomed everyone, declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

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

[*Ex-officio, non-voting member]
[**arrived at 5:40 p.m.; ***arrived at 6:00 p.m.]

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Joyce Stevos and seconded by Jo Eva Gaines, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the meeting of April 5, 2016

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

YEAS: Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Barbara Cottam, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

[Members Callahan and Forbes arrived at 5:40 p.m. and Member Purtill arrived at 6:00 p.m.]

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

2a. Minutes of the February 9, 2016, Council Meeting

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Amy Beretta, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the February 9, 2016, Council Meeting

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, Marta Martinez, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

[Member Gaines recused herself from the vote as she did not attend the February 9, 2016, meeting]

3. OPEN FORUM

Tracy Ramos, Parents Across Rhode Island, noted that parents are very grateful for the Council's decision to drop high-stakes testing as a graduation requirement, but are concerned with the possibility of RIDE introducing an indicator that connects to school accountability with the percentage of students who attain a Commissioner's Seal in each school.

Terri Adelman, Executive Director of Inspiring Minds, expressed her concerns with the new ways of giving autonomy to the schools, especially when it comes to managing and funding the transportation of students to out-of-district schools.

Documents provided to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education by Open Forum speakers are on file at the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

4. REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Board Chair Cottam began by reporting that last week Commissioner Wagner gave his State of Education Address before the General Assembly and that she was pleased that so many individuals from the education community were in attendance to show their support.

Chair Cottam expressed her appreciation to the two co-chairs of the Funding Formula Working Group, a superintendent, a representative from RI-CAN, and some teachers, who gave testimony last week at the House Finance Committee hearing on Article 11 and Governor Raimondo's Fiscal Year 2017 education-budget proposals. She was unable to attend, but did provide written testimony.

5. REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER

Commissioner Wagner began his report by expressing that although empowerment is getting the most attention from the State of Education Address, empowerment in itself won't necessarily do much if there isn't really a comprehensive strategy around extending the standards work by getting just as close to universal access to advanced coursework as we possibly can. This will require not only our high schools to readjust how they are doing things, but also our middle and elementary schools, and if there is a value, then we should build something around access to advanced coursework into our accountability structures as we take the opportunity to revisit those through the reauthorization of the federal law.

It is not enough to just throw students into advanced coursework; we also have to take a look at how we do student engagement and how we approach schooling. Coupled with that, if you have a strategy around advanced learning opportunities and you have a strategy around engaging students, then you need to give autonomy and flexibility to the people who are closest to the students to implement that kind of strategy. To do or not do the empowerment package is completely voluntary, as well as any of the components within the empowerment package. The plans need to be approved at the local level.

He also shared that he has been having many conversations with various stakeholders about CTE. High-quality CTE programs are a perfect example of the kinds of advanced learning, high-quality learning experiences that can really open up options for students while preserving academic offerings. At the April 26th meeting of the Council, RIDE will be reporting on its meetings with the CTE Board and the CTE Trust (two bodies that were created in statute back in 2014) about ways to implement what was in the statute and what their role should be in advising the Council on the allocation of discretionary funding and approval of new CTE programs. The CTE Board was created to inform statewide CTE policy and the CTE Trust as a mechanism to bring in more resources to high-quality CTE programs.

6. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Recommendation of new member to the R.I. School for the Deaf Boards of Trustees

Prior to the discussion, Chair McConaghy welcomed Amanda Montgomery, Chair of the R.I. School for the Deaf Board of Trustees, and Danielle Loughlin, also a Trustee, who came to show their support for the new member being recommended this evening.

Recognizing that both Trustees had to leave for a 6:30 p.m. meeting of their Board, Chair McConaghy noted for the record that, as posted on the agenda, there would be a discussion on the recommendation, followed by a motion to approve, and then resume discussion items.

Commissioner Wagner stated that he fully supports the recommendation by the R.I. School for the Deaf Board of Trustees to appoint Mr. Octavian to fill one of three current vacancies on the Board. Mr. Octavian could not be at this evening's meeting, but Amanda Montgomery, Chair of the Board of Trustees, was available to answer any questions. Mr. Octavian is deaf, and his appointment will satisfy the requirement that five deaf or hard-of-hearing members be seated on the Board.

Member Martinez asked whether there is a R.I. residency requirement for appointment of members to the R.I. School for the Deaf Board; Commissioner Wagner answered that there is not.

7. ACTION ITEMS

a. Approval of new member to the R.I. School for the Deaf

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the appointment of Octavian Robinson, to the R.I. School for the Deaf Board of Trustees, as presented.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

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

NAYS: 0

[Member Purtill arrived at 6:00 p.m.]

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS (continued)

a. Secondary School Regulations

Commissioner Wagner introduced the topic and noted that RIDE recently concluded 22 statewide stakeholder meetings as well as two community meetings in order to engage the public in the emerging vision for revising the Secondary School Regulations. Considering that this is such an important issue for students and the state, Commissioner Wagner stressed the need for taking the time to listen to public feedback and not rushing through the revisions. He then went over the four issues that the Council has to consider:

- Diploma with Commissioner's seal endorsement;
- Diploma with pathway endorsement;
- Relax the number of required classes from 14 to 12; and
- Going from two required performance-based tasks to one.

Mary Ann Snider, Chief of the RIDE Division of Teaching and Learning, joined the table and picked up on the discussion that occurred at the March 31st special work session on the Secondary School Regulations. She went over some of the decisions where there was widespread consensus to ensure that they accurately reflect what was discussed and agreed upon.

Proposed commendations for endorsements:

- Optional Commissioner's Seal - Statewide comparable skills in mathematics and literacy from a menu of assessment options;
- Optional Student Pathway Endorsements - demonstrated learning in topic of interest.

She also went over the five topics where there was no clear consensus at the March 31st work session:

- Coursework requirements - add flexibility to substitute up to two required content-area courses to provide room for students to pursue individualized pathways;
- Performance-based Diploma Assessments - Reduce number of performance-based assessments from two to one;
- Proficiency-based diploma system - Anchor successful completion of coursework requirements on student demonstration of LEA-defined proficiency level aligned with high-school content standards and allow students on the alternate assessment to receive a diploma, as determined by LEA;
- Certificates - Maintain availability of certificate as an option for students not receiving a diploma. Require certificates to document students' specific skills and knowledge;
- Commendations - Re-purpose "commendation" as an umbrella concept to be further defined by the Council

Member Beretta voiced that she is concerned with the flexibility that would allow students to substitute electives for up to two required content-area courses, including mathematics. Considering the mediocre results on the most recent state assessments, she stressed the importance of schools' having safeguards in place to ensure that parents and school counselors are involved when students are making decisions about course selection.

Commissioner Wagner stressed that there will be a hard requirement that the requirements in place when a student enters the 9th grade must remain the requirements until that student graduates.

Member Gaines voiced, and others concurred, that a Commissioner’s Seal should be reserved for those students who have met all of the requirements (minimum of 20 courses plus a performance-based diploma assessment) and who have gone above and beyond.

b. Woonsocket Career and Technical Center Transfer

Commissioner Wagner explained that over the past seven years RIDE has been working on getting local communities to assume total responsibility of the state-owned, locally operated Career and Technical Centers, with Woonsocket being the last of the transfers.

RIDE has been working with the City of Woonsocket and the Woonsocket School Department for the last three years in getting all of the necessary documentation ready for the transfer. The last step is Council approval.

8. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Joyce Stevos and seconded by Jo Eva Gaines, it was

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

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

YEAS: Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karin Forbes, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, Lawrence Purtill, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.