



Enclosure 2a
July 21, 2020

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
June 16, 2020

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Chair McConaghy welcomed everyone to the June 16, 2020, virtual meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. He declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

Present: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, **Lauren Griffiths, Marta Martinez, Daniel McConaghy, and Lawrence Purtill

Absent: Gara Field
Jo Eva Gaines

[**Ex-officio, non-voting member]

Next, Chair McConaghy noted that today's meeting is the last for Lauren Griffiths, Student Representative on the Council and Chair of the Rhode Island Student Advisory Council. Lauren will be studying International and Public Affairs at Brown University in the fall.

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 Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the June 16, 2020, virtual meeting

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

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Marta Martinez, Daniel McConaghy, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES

a. Minutes of the May 12, 2020, Meeting

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the minutes of the May 12, 2020, Meeting

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

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Marta Martinez, Daniel McConaghy, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

b. Minutes of the May 27, 2020, Meeting

On a motion duly made by Lawrence Purtill and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the minutes of the May 27, 2020, Meeting

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

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Marta Martinez, Daniel McConaghy, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

3. OPEN FORUM

Chair McConaghy reported that the Council had received one comment, which was shared with Council members in advance of the meeting and that it will be entered into the official meeting record.

Correspondence previously submitted to Council members are on file at the RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE).

4. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Chair McConaghy noted that the Report of the Commissioner would be moved to later on the agenda as Commissioner Infante-Green was in a meeting with the Governor and Superintendents, which was running late.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Reopening of Schools – Update

Ana Riley, Deputy Commissioner for Instructional Programs, gave an update on the reopening of schools and began by sharing that on June 10, Governor Raimondo and the Commissioner announced several key steps to fulfill the state's commitment to safely reopen public K-12 schools in the fall. She stated that the Governor's goal is for all districts to plan on returning to in-person learning on August 31 and the primary element is a statewide calendar for all public school districts to use during the 2020-2021 academic year, which RIDE will update and share throughout the school year in response to the unfolding public health situation. She also shared that RIDE is working with the RI Department of Health to develop a full range of school-reopening scenarios – from everyone back in the classroom, to a temporary return to distance learning, to a mix of in-person and distance learning. To help school leaders prepare, RIDE is developing specific planning guidance that will be shared with districts, charters, and state-run schools by Friday, June 19. Districts will use this guidance to develop local plans and submit them to RIDE by July 17 for review and feedback, not approval. Once the plans are submitted, RIDE will continue to coordinate with district leaders on implementation and will communicate regularly with education leaders, teachers, families, and students over the next several months. She stated that in this unprecedented time, RIDE recognizes the sense of urgency to plan for the safe and sensible reopening of physical school buildings. Utilizing the framework created by Opportunity Labs (Return to School Roadmap), the Re-entry Planning Team created a Reimagining RI Education: Reopening Plan Framework for SY20-21, which was created to immediately assist LEAs and schools as they begin to plan for the reopening of schools. RIDE is also exploring professional learning opportunities to support district teams as they work through the details of this framework and plan for the start of a new school year.

Commissioner Infante-Green joined the meeting at this time.

b. Delegation of Authority to Commissioner to Temporarily Waive Certain Requirements of the Regulations Governing the Certification of Educators in Rhode Island

Lisa Foehr, RIDE's Chief of Teaching and Learning, explained that due to COVID-19, testing centers had to close for a period of time, and although they are starting to reopen, they are not operating at 100 percent capacity. RIDE needs to be able to continue to issue certificates and needs the flexibility in order to give educators who have been impacted by the virus, additional time to complete some requirements, which are necessary to renew their certificates.

Member Callahan shared her concern that this waiver does not become a way to open the door to individuals who are not certified under the current regulations.

Ms. Foehr assured her that this flexibility is only to provide additional time to educators who may have not been able to complete an assessment, in instances where courses were cancelled, for those individuals who were unable to complete the certificate requirements, and the renewal of certificates.

c. SurveyWorks Results 2020

Chantry Lopes, Member of the Commissioner's staff along with Peg Votta, Member of RIDE's Office of Data and Technology Services, went over the results of the 2020 Rhode Island's School Culture and Climate Education Survey. The survey, which is administered annually, gathers direct and honest feedback from teachers, families and students, about their experiences in the State's public schools. They attributed the steady increase in response rates year-over-year to RIDE's promotion of the survey to not only increase participation, but also for school communities to see the value in utilizing the tool to ultimately improve education. Topics covered in the student survey include school rigorous expectations, risk/protective outcomes, school teacher-student relationships, social-emotional learning, valuing of schools, school climate, school safety, school belonging, school engagement, and state initiatives. Topics covered in the parent and families survey include social-emotional learning, school climate, school safety, family support, family engagement and state initiatives. Topics covered in the educator survey include educating all students, teacher efficacy, social-emotional learning, school climate, frequency of professional learning activities, resources, professional learning, school leadership, and state initiatives.

Member Beretta recommended encouraging districts and individual schools to post the survey results on their local websites and getting the results out to their communities.

Council members asked how many times a year a school has parent teacher conferences, if it is the same statewide, whether all teachers attend, if the option to attend is part of the collective bargaining agreements, and if conferences need to be held in person or can they utilize other platforms.

Commissioner Infante-Green responded that parent teacher conferences are not the same across the State and not all teachers attend. She shared that this is an issue that Rhode Island needs to address as a State and that she has had conversations with many school districts and parents who share their frustration of not having consistent protocols around parent teacher conferences. She stated that if parents are unable to make an in-person conference, they should be accommodated in other ways.

d. Presentation on the Education Opportunity Audit

Nicole Campbell and Keith Dysarz from the XQ Institute, the nation's leading organization dedicated to rethinking the high school experience so that every student graduates ready to succeed in life, joined the conversation and provided an overview of the XQ+RI Educational Equity Audit – Putting Equity at the Center of High School Transformation in Rhode Island.

Ms. Campbell began by explaining that XQ-RI started as a partnership with RIDE and the State about 18 months ago, with a focus on building a community-centered, student-centered, school-redesign process. The goal was to invite, students, parents, community members, teachers, and school leadership, together, to reimagine what their high-school could look like. The main focus of the Opportunity Audit was to keep equity at the center of school transformation as well as thinking about equity in the lens of course access and rigor. Eighteen Rhode Island high schools went through the process of examining the journeys students take through high-school, identifying often hidden patterns in readiness for college and career, by gathering data from student transcripts from RIDE (2,253), to understand student course taking patterns; end-of-year surveys (4,891) of students, parents, and teachers; to understand the correlation between parent, student and teacher experience; and the most important part, end-of-year student focus groups (18), where students were convened to understand what they saw and what was their perceptions of their experiences. Of Rhode Island's 10,903 seniors in the class of 2018-19, 2,253 were part of this statewide audit, representing one-third of the State's high schools. She went over how the audit defined college eligibility (as required by URI and RIC), career-ready (complete three or more courses in the same field), and college-ready (completing advanced coursework, achieving 3.33 grade point average, and scoring 1010 or higher on SAT or 19 on ACT).

Next, Mr. Dysarz gave an overview of the findings and what it means to be college and career ready in Rhode Island to be able to apply to the University of Rhode Island and Rhode Island College. He noted that eight out of ten students in the cohort want to attend college, with six out of ten actually having enrolled in the college prep courses they need to be considered college eligible, and only five out of ten actually passing the courses, with considerable differences in gender and race. On Career Readiness, nearly all students in the cohort took CTE classes, but less than one-third completed a three-course career pathway, consequently, not meeting the threshold. On College Readiness, he noted that only 19% of students (2 out of 10) in the cohort met basic college eligibility requirements, varying for different student subgroups. He emphasized that only one in ten black males who are not low-income, are about as likely to complete advanced courses as white males who are low-income, noting that we cannot hide behind any notions that poverty is a proxy for race. He ended by sharing that of every 100 students in the cohort, only four are ready for college and career, 26 are ready for career but not college, and 55 are not ready for either college or career, with more than half, and even more black and brown youth, not prepared for college nor career.

Ms. Campbell ended the presentation by going over what the policy implications are and what can be done – changing course requirements; making the courses required for college admissions the default curriculum for all students, but allowing students and their parents to opt-out; changing diploma requirements to include both courses required for college and a 3-course CTE sequence; redesigning courses by identifying those with high-failure rates to support everyone, particularly students of color and low-income students; engaging faculty from the State’s public colleges with high school teachers to redesign high school courses; building on Rhode Island’s Advanced Course Network to expand the availability of high-level courses; increasing the number of 8th graders completing Algebra 1; sponsoring initiatives to close opportunity and achievement gaps for the most underserved populations; making sure changes work for ALL students, not just some; and putting equity at the center of high school transformation in Rhode Island.

Member Beretta asked how this body of work will come before the Council to consider on a go forward basis so that they can ask more detailed questions and flesh out some of the various options that are being presented, and whether it will be the Council’s choice or RIDE’s.

Commissioner Infante-Green replied that today’s presentation was only about the data and the importance of the work that needs to be done moving forward. Decisions have not been made on what that will look like or how the work will be carried out.

Member Davis thanked RIDE and the Commissioner for their hard work and expressed that she can no longer just sit and listen to the issues, take a vote and hang up and not doing anything until the next meeting. She asked what more can the Council do as a body and as individuals to support and make these changes happen, because if it doesn't happen now, it never will.

Board Chair Cottam also thanked the team for sharing the data, which is a continual representation of the assessment results from last year that devastated everyone. She expressed that like other Council members she is also frustrated and that we need to act responsibly, stay focused and move swiftly. While the equity gaps sickens her, she is also noticing that any actions that are taken will help white students, who are woefully behind as well.

Member Callahan expressed that this is a priority for the Council and that it is critical that this conversation be kept front and center and that the Council needs to be kept involved in working with RIDE to ensure that change occurs.

6. ACTION ITEMS

a. **Approval of delegation of authority to Commissioner to temporarily waive certain requirements of the Regulations Governing the Certification of Educators in Rhode Island**

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education delegate to the Commissioner of Education, as of this date, the authority to temporarily waive any certification requirements in the Regulations Governing the Certification of Educators in Rhode Island relating to professional development units and testing as she deems necessary to address the impact of COVID-19, and to take appropriate interim measures to implement any such temporary waivers. This delegation of authority shall remain in effect until January 1, 2021.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 1 member abstained, as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Marta Martinez, Daniel McConaghy, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

At this time, Commissioner Infante-Green gave her Report of the Commissioner with an update on District Accountability. She reminded the Council that in 2019 the Rhode Island General Assembly passed the Education Accountability Act, which places several new demands on RIDE and the districts – creation of a district accountability system; districts must create and submit three-year strategic plans in a manner defined by RIDE; and districts must submit annual RICAS Action Plans.

As an agency, RIDE has established the System Turnaround Division at RIDE to design the system and ensure compliance with the State law; established a core cross-departmental team that is composed of Deputy Commissioner Dr. Kelvin Roldán, Jennifer Carney, Pascale Thompson, Scott Gausland, and Rachel Peterson, who are working with others across the agency to design the system and usher the process.

RIDE has also worked with the Comprehensive Center and West Ed to conduct national scans on states' district accountability rating systems, metrics and criteria, and subsequent implications for districts and communities; made some preliminary recommendations to the Commissioner to ensure that RIDE is focused on delivering on a system that is clear about it wants in an accountability system and how the agency plans to support districts in improvement efforts; began to run modeling scenarios to understand how it would actually work to ensure fairness and reliability; shared some initial thoughts with Rhode Island's Technical Advisory Committee, comprised of national experts, who provided initial feedback.

During the summer, Deputy Commissioners Roldán and Riley will be working with RIDE staff to engage with LEAs across the State to share initial thoughts and discuss potential implications that will inform the design of the district accountability system. Given that there will be no RICAS results for the 2020 academic year, the goal is to soft launch the district accountability system this fall to give districts a sense of how the system would work. This means that the launch will not be officially in effect until Fall 2021, after the next assessment period in the 2020-21 school year. In addition, RIDE will be using the summer and year to design the district assessment and strategic planning process, in alignment with the district accountability system, and the RICAS annual plans.

Commissioner Infante-Green ended her report by sharing a video on the launch of the Teacher Recruitment Campaign for the Providence School District.

7. ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Marta Martinez, 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: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Marta Martinez, Daniel McConaghy, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.