



Enclosure 2a
July 28, 2022

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
July 21, 2022

**COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE SECONDARY REGULATIONS**

Chair DiCenso welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Subcommittee on the Secondary Regulations. Members of the public have the option to view the meeting via Zoom Webinar, and a recording will be posted to RIDE's website. She declared a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 5:33p.m.

Present: Patricia DiCenso*, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Jo Eva Gaines,

Absent:

[*Ex-officio member]

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Subcommittee on the Secondary Regulations accepts the agenda for the July 21, 2022, meeting

Vote: 4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Patricia DiCenso, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Jo Eva Gaines,

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. REPORTS

No reports were provided at this meeting from the Chair of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education nor the Rhode Island Department of Education.

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Overview of K-12 Council Subcommittee on the Secondary Regulations

Chair DiCenso began by providing an overview of Article IV, Section 1 of the K-12 Council's bylaws which outline the process for establishing a subcommittee of the Council. The Chair of the K-12 Council can appoint K-12 Council members to serve on a

subcommittee to carry out the work of the Council. Chair DiCenso stated that she has appointed Council Member Beretta, Council Member Callahan and Council Member Gaines to serve on the subcommittee.

Chair DiCenso shared that the purpose of this subcommittee meeting is to review public comment received during the formal public comment period on RIDE's proposed revisions to the secondary regulations, therefore, an Open Forum was not included in the agenda for this subcommittee meeting.

Chair DiCenso stated that she would like to include Open Forum in future subcommittee meeting agendas. She shared here belief that it is the responsibility of the subcommittee that, before open forum is provided, the subcommittee review the public feedback received by RIDE during the official public comment period. Chair DiCenso then provided time for questions during which no Council Members asked any questions.

b. Overview of Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements

Chair DiCenso introduced Stephen Osborn, Student Opportunity Officer noting that she and Steve have reviewed the presentation prior of the meeting and emphasizing the need for the subcommittee to absorb the depth of public comment that has already happened. Steve Osborn outlined the goal for today's presentation being to provide an overview of RIDE's proposed revisions to the Secondary Regulations as well as RIDE's extensive public comment engagement process, and to review the summary public comment RIDE received during the formal public comment period.

In 2020 RIDE presented the findings of the statewide Educational Opportunity Audit (EOA) to the full Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. The EOA tells a story of the student experience in high school via student transcript analysis, student focus groups, and stakeholder (teacher, parent, and student) surveys.

Last Summer RIDE set up the Reimagining High School Working Group which met 8 times from June-November 2021 to review data, hear from guest speakers, and discuss what must be done in response to the statewide EOA data. More than 350 unique attendees participated in the working group meetings.

The goal of RIDEs proposal is to graduate students with open doors to ensure that every student has the ability to go to a 4-year college if they chose, or to work to support themselves and their families. The 3 key priorities of the proposal include (1) we must prepare our graduates to create their own future, (2) we need to increase engagement through real world relevant learning experiences, and (3) we need to change how we support our children and families.

According to the statewide EOA, 8 out of 10 R.I. high school students want to attend a two- or four-year college upon graduation, 6 out of 10 took the necessary college eligibility coursework and only 5 out of 10 students passed the necessary coursework. Our kids are not taking the academic courses to be ready to enter into a community college as well, without taking remedial coursework.

Under priority (1) “We will prepare our graduates to create their own future”, Mr. Osborn shared that RIDE is proposing that:

- Students will graduate high school having completed the coursework that will graduate them both college and career ready,
- Students will complete the FAFSA or state financial aid paperwork to graduate from high school, and
- Students will graduate having completed a resume, which is a necessary and required part of getting a job upon graduation.

Mr. Osborn shared that what RIDE has heard loud and clear is that students want more real-world relevant learning experiences that are connected to their passions and goals. According to the statewide EOA only ½ of students statewide expressed worry that they have little opportunity to pursue their passions during their high school experience and only 1 in 4 students believe their classes give them useful information for what they plan for their life and future.

Mr. Osborn then shared a statistic from Gallup (2018) that engaged students are 2.5X more likely to say they get excellent grades and do well in school and are 4.5X more likely to be hopeful about the future than their disengaged peers. Mr. Osborn emphasized the need to increase student engagement so that they can feel purpose, meaning, and value in high school.

Under priority (2) is “We need to increase engagement through real world relevant learning experiences”. Mr. Osborn shared that RIDE is proposing that:

- Students will graduate having demonstrated proficiency in civics, financial literacy, and computer science,
- Students in full time dual enrollment and CTE programs would receive additional flexibility in their schedules,
- RIDE will support high schools in offering flex credits which will provide educators the opportunity to design rigorous and meaningful, interdisciplinary learning experiences that align to the passions and goals of our kids,
- Every high school statewide will develop a policy to support work-based learning as a form of academic learning, and
- RIDE will revitalize diploma endorsements to communicate advanced levels of readiness to R.I.’s colleges, universities, and employers.

Mr. Osborn provided information from the National Center for Education Statistics which demonstrates that, *nationally*, high school students today are earning about 30% more credits than a graduate did in 1982. Mr. Osborn noted that statewide today, many high school schedules look nearly identical to how they looked in the 1980s-early 1990’s.

Mr. Osborn also shared that more students today are choosing to attend college and are taking more rigorous coursework but are also less likely to work while in high school. According to the American Community Survey youth earnings move 42% of households with income below the federal poverty level, out of poverty and that youth earnings move

33% of working-class households above twice the federal poverty line. Many of our youth are moving their families out of poverty via work but are not being supported in their schools to balance their academic and economic responsibilities.

Mr. Osborn then highlighted the SurveyWorks 2021 finding that 36% of R.I. students reported caring for a sibling, parent, or grandparent for part or most of the day. Many students are supporting their families and caring for their family members.

Under priority (3) “We will change how we support our students and their families” Mr. Osborn shared that RIDE is proposing that:

- We will create new flexibilities to support our caregiving youth and students who work. Mr. Osborn noted that students should not have to choose between their family responsibilities and their academic coursework, and that
- Our schools will provide annual updates to inform our parents on the progress of their kids on college and career readiness goals in response statewide EOA survey data depicting that 2 out of 3 parents reported not receiving regular updates their student is making toward college/career goals and 1 out of 2 parents reporting that they are not informed when their student struggles in their classes.

Council Member Gaines stated that the update to parents should be more frequent than annual.

Council Member Beretta asked what percentage of schools have a student information system accessible to parents?

Mr. Osborn shared that most schools do have a system, but the information is not being translated in a way to parents that allows them to understand the progress their student is making toward college/career readiness benchmarks.

Council Member Callahan stated that it becomes more difficult to keep parents engaged as students move from elementary, to middle, to high school.

Chair DiCenso highlighted the progress that schools have made in keeping parents more informed and engaged, but that there is still room for growth particularly surrounding communicating student progress toward graduation requirements and college/career readiness benchmarks. She acknowledged current examples of progress and support from community organizations yet emphasized that we need to see a systemic solution so that every student and family has access to the information and support they need.

Mr. Osborn concluded his summary of RIDE’s proposal, restating that the proposal is centered on graduating students with open doors, enhancing real world relevant learning to increase student engagement, and doing more to support students and families.

c. Overview of Engagement Public Comment

Mr. Osborn began to provide an overview of the engagement and public process that RIDE has conducted. The formal public comment process began on March 7, 2022. RIDE hosted 7 public hearings, hosted 4 town halls, and met with anyone willing. RIDE's proposal to revise the secondary regulations is the most commented on proposal in the history of education in Rhode Island. Members of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education attended 4 out of the 7 public hearings. Participation at the hearings ranged from 8 comments in Central Falls to 25 comments at Kingston in the Kingston Free Library. At each meeting there were on average 50 people in attendance (not all provided comment) with students and parents represented at all 7 hearings.

The 4 town halls included;

- An Arts Town Hall with the RI Art Education Association and the RI State Council on the Arts to clarify how the proposal impacts and does not impact the arts,
- A Community Conversation in collaboration with the South County League of Women's Voters in Westerly,
- A Civics Town Hall in partnership with the RI Civic Learning Coalition to discuss how the proposal impacts civics, and
- A forum with the College Crusade to provide a space for parents to ask questions about the proposal.;

In total RIDE received 433 public comments. This is 402 more comments than RIDE received the last time the secondary regulations were revised in 2016. This is a 1,297% increase in the number of public comments received. Mr. Osborn provided the following additional comparisons between the 2016 public comment process and the current 2022 public comment process:

- In 2016 RIDE received 31 comments compared to 433 comments in 2022,
- In 2016 RIDE had 16 individuals provide verbal testimony at public hearings compared to 106 individuals in 2022, and
- In 2016 RIDE held 4 public hearings compared to 7 public hearings in 2022.

Mr. Osborn shared a list on screen which summarized the different organizations the RIDE team has met with over the last 6 months regarding RIDE's proposal and highlighted the work that RIDE has done specifically with the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association (RISSA). Since January RIDE and a subcommittee of RISSA focused on the secondary regulations has met biweekly.

Chair DiCenso inquired if all individuals who were listed as members of the RISSA secondary regulations subcommittee continue to attend meetings. Mr. Osborn shared that not all members attend every meeting, but each member does receive the invitation and follow up notes from each meeting. Chair DiCenso inquired how many individuals attended the most recent working group meeting, to which Mr. Osborn shared those three individuals attended the most recent meeting.

Mr. Osborn shared about RIDE's approach to engage students through a statewide student billboard design challenge, Inside Out art project installations at 8 high schools

statewide, and the deliberate work to ensure student voice is embedded. Mr. Osborn also shared about the teacher ambassador program and the impact that the feedback from teachers will have on the action plan that RIDE will develop to support the implementation of the regulations.

Mr. Osborn stated that RIDE has the responsibility to ensure that all feedback received on the secondary regulations is heard, shared, understood by this subcommittee, and used to determine how the final proposal is refined. Mr. Osborn turned the Subcommittee's attention to the 21-page summary of public comment.

Council Member Beretta asked how information was getting from individuals whom RIDE is meeting with to the full group/organization that the individual is a part of. Council Member Callahan added her inquiry into what the understanding is of the public as to how RIDE is handling the feedback that they are receiving. Mr. Osborn shared that RIDE has consistently communicated that the process entailed RIDE putting a proposal out to public comment, RIDE has now received public comment, the goal of public comment is to revise and adjust the proposal. He stated the expectation that changes will be made to the final proposal which this subcommittee will discuss.

Council Member Callahan noted the importance of RIDE's rationale for change or no change when developing the final proposal. Mr. Osborn explained that public feedback is being used both to inform the final proposal but also to inform the action plan and implementation guidance that RIDE will develop to support the implementation of the regulations.

d. Summary of Public Comment

Mr. Osborn began to provide a summary of Public Comment by explaining that RIDE has reviewed and synthesized all public comment received in writing and verbal testimony at the seven public hearings. Mr. Osborn shared a breakdown of public comment by topic, based upon the frequency of comment received in each topic. The overwhelming majority of feedback is related to the arts. RIDE did not propose any changes to the arts but was made aware that the interpretation of the regulations in many schools and districts leads to students not taking the arts. RIDE also received a lot of feedback on world language and college alignment.

Mr. Osborn explained that aside from the arts, PE and health education, the majority of feedback RIDE received is related to the proposed requirement of college and career readiness coursework for all kids. He provided the example of the proposed world language requirement not being solely about world language, but also about whether the default expectation in high school will be that all students complete coursework that will graduate them with the ability to attend college if they want to go to college. He added that right now there is no default expectation of that being provided statewide and posed the question "Do we as a state want to change that as we move forward with the process?".

Mr. Osborn stated that RIDE is proposing to adopt a diploma aligned to college and career readiness coursework for all kids. Right now, the secondary regulations have no alignment to the college and career readiness standards. Rhode Island right now is one of seven states nationally that has no alignment with college and career readiness standards.

Mr. Osborn shared that currently statewide 1 in 3 high schools have majority of their students graduating proficient in English and Math and less than 1 in 20 high schools statewide have majority of their students graduate having completed a RIDE approved CTE program. Mr. Osborn expressed that the majority of students in the majority of R.I. high schools are graduating neither college nor career ready.

Mr. Osborn stated that public comment pointed out many valid concerns about requiring college and career readiness coursework for all students and that RIDE intends to identify the right solution for R.I. through understanding all of the public comment received, finalizing the proposal, and developing an action plan to support the implementation of the regulations that either address or mitigate the concerns.

Mr. Osborn shared that RIDE has identified several topics for future meetings of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Regulations Subcommittee on the Secondary Regulations including college and career readiness alignment.

Council Member Callahan asked where we currently are regarding college and career readiness alignment. Mr. Osborn shared that RIDE is utilizing URI and RIC general admissions requirements and provided the example of misalignment in math. RIDE is proposing to implement a requirement for Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II. Mr. Osborn acknowledged the need to redesign how these courses are currently being taught. Council Member Callahan also acknowledged the need for professional development and resources.

Chair DiCenso elevated the importance that there be a bold sense of commitment at the state level to support these proposed changes. Council Member Callahan added that there must be multiple levels of commitment. Chair DiCenso discussed how defining a goal in high school, such as algebra II, require changes middle and elementary school curriculum. She noted that when developing the final proposal, we must be mindful that they impact much more than grades 9-12.

Council Member Beretta elevated the historical challenge where some districts embrace implementation prior to high school and others that do not. She also highlighted the importance that this subcommittee is cognizant that 4-year college is not the desired path for all students. Mr. Osborn responded to clarify that RIDE does not promote one path over another and that unless the expectation is that students take these courses, students are having their futures determined at 13 or 14 years old. Mr. Osborn restated that RIDE's goal is to graduate students with the experiences needed to choose what they want to do and explained again that there are several paths that can be taken to get there.

Council Member Callahan raised the point that without certain academic experiences that are aligned to URI and RIC, students are also not being adequately prepared to enter apprenticeship programs, for example in mathematics. Lisa Odom-Villella, RIDE Deputy Commissioner of Instructional Programs expressed that it is because of RIDE's current secondary regulation requirement that students complete 4 math courses, without specifying which math students must take, that we see the lack of readiness.

Chair DiCenso read aloud a presentation slide stating "Our kids will graduate high school having completed college and career ready coursework" and narrated that the current discussion is about how the proposed math requirement prepares students for both. Council Member Beretta stated the proposed world language requirement is not required for students seeking apprenticeships and that there should be an opt-out option. Council Member Beretta and Callahan mentioned cross walking requirements for entrance into apprenticeship programs in addition to the use of RIC and URI general admissions requirements. Council Member Callahan stated the goal of preparing student to make their own choice for their future once they graduate high school.

Chair DiCenso noted that there are a lot of students and families not given the option to complete two years of world language and that students are being shut out from certain opportunities. Council Member Callahan questioned how RIDE might develop suggested course sequences. Deputed Commissioner Odom-Villella explained the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) that each student in each district is required to have which is a large component to the successful implementation of these changes. The ILP supports planning ahead and informing students from the time a student is in 6th grade.

Chair DiCenso stated that the role of the committee is to reimagine, and that we must reimagine access. Council Member Callahan questioned how the subcommittee ensure that the final regulation proposal is reflective of the conversation and stated this will require a companion blueprint on how to support implementation that includes asks for how this work beginning earlier than high school.

Chair DiCenso stated that it is possible for students to meet high school world language standards, or Algebra standards, before students enter high school. Deputy Commissioner Odom-Villella expressed the importance of ensuring those experiences are communicated on the students' high school transcripts and that not all schools are doing their transcripts the same way.

Mr. Osborn shared the example of multilingual learners who are not having their native language skills recognized because it is not being effectively communicated on their high school transcripts. He questioned how do we set a baseline minimum expectation that our students take these courses, and acknowledged the important conversation that must be had about opt in, opt out, and fully requiring these courses.

Chair DiCenso relayed the need to reimagine how we think of credit counting, and seat time. Council Member Beretta responded stating the importance of defining what the standard for proficiency is.

Mr. Osborn stated that the subcommittee will spend more time discussing college and career readiness alignment. Council Member Callahan stated that if these major topics have been identified, at future meetings the subcommittee should have this kind of conversation, and then discuss potential solutions to refining the language in the regulation and the supporting blueprint.

Council Member Callahan expressed that she could understand how based upon the current language in the regulations some stakeholders may feel some subjects are more valued than others because of the more clearly defined requirements. Mr. Osborn agreed and acknowledged that the current language in the regulation which RIDE did not propose to change and has been in place for 10-12 years is confusing and has been interpreted different locally. Mr. Osborn acknowledged the experience of teachers today experiencing the ambiguity of the regulations and that moving forward this subcommittee will discuss how to provide clarity on these things.

e. Preview of key discussion topics for meeting two

Mr. Osborn provided an overview of the topics slated for the next subcommittee meeting including:

- Continuing to discuss college and career readiness alignment,
- Arts education,
- Arts, PE, Health and "Additional Credits",
- The proposed FAFSA/State Aid requirement –
Council Member Beretta inquired why if students graduating from high school are 18 years old are we requiring a signature from an adult? Mr. Osborn responded stating that it is a requirement of the federal Department of Education. Chair DiCenso noted that there is also a FAFSA deadline that is before students graduate. Council Member Beretta elevated her concern for students without engaged parents/guardians and is worried that the proposed hardship waiver does not cover all students. Mr. Osborn clarified that this proposed requirement is not intended to keep a single student from graduating high school, it is intended to ensure that students have access and the support to get financial aid so that it is not a barrier to college.

Mr. Osborn stated that as the Subcommittee continues this conversation there are 3 approaches to college and career readiness that states have adopted. Council Member Callahan requested that we address where we are regarding alignment in future discussion.

Council Member Beretta asked Mr. Osborn to elaborate on what RIC and URI have been open to in response to the proposal.

Mr. Osborn shared that RIDE both URI and RIC have policy that recognizes if a student attends a high school that does not offer world language, that they can be considered eligible in lieu of the world language admissions requirement, but if a school does offer world language, even if not offered to all students, that they are not eligible without fulfilling the world language admissions requirement – yet Mr. Osborn graciously acknowledged the openness of both institution to expand that opportunity to more students who are not accessing world language educational experiences in high school.

Mr. Osborn expressed that there is not one way to accomplish this, and RIDE is seeking a solution that will help our students graduate in a better place.

Chair DiCenso expressed her gratitude to members of the Subcommittee and Mr. Osborn for their effort and conversation.

7. ADJOURNMENT:

Chair DiCenso concluded the Council on Elementary and Education Subcommittee on the Secondary Regulations meeting. The next meeting will be on July 28th at 5:30 PM.

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

VOTED: That the meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Subcommittee on the Secondary Regulations Adjourns

Vote: 4 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative, and 0 members abstained as follows:

YEAS: Patricia DiCenso, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Jo Eva Gaines

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.