



Enclosure 2a
April 6, 2021

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
March 9, 2021

Pursuant to Governor Raimondo's Executive Order 20-75, this was a remote meeting.

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Board Chair Cottam welcomed everyone to the March 9, 2021, remote meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. She declared a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Remote Participation: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, *Brandon Feliz, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

Absent: 0

[*Ex-officio, non-voting member]

Public access was provided to attendees of this Zoom webinar in compliance with the Open Meetings Act and the provisions of the Executive Order; contact information was provided for those experiencing technical difficulties.

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Michael Almeida, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the March 9, 2021, remote meeting

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

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES

a. Minutes of the February 9, 2021, Meeting

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Michael Almeida, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the minutes of the February 9, 2021, remote meeting

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

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Infante-Green shared that it had been an exciting day as Governor McKee announced the vaccination plan for educators. She expressed her gratitude and acknowledged the hard work and collaboration of many individuals, who made it happen.

4. OPEN FORUM

Chair Cottam noted that individuals interested in providing public comment were encouraged to submit written comments to the Council in advance of the meeting. The Council did not receive any written comments, however, two parents signed-up to speak and voiced their concerns with the State's decision to not renew the contract with the 14 vision services providers at the Sherlock Center after June 2021, as well as the lack of transparency by the State.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. The Learning, Equity & Accelerated Pathways (LEAP) Task Force - Update

Deputy Commissioner Riley framed the discussion by reminding Council members that the work is always tied to RIDE's mission and vision, particularly to the top three priorities - Equity, Excellence in Learning and Engaged Communities, and as the work continues, it is spilling over to the other two priorities - World Class Talent and Governance Structures. She went over the Task Force's approach, goals and takeaways from the current Rhode Island data, highlighting

that student enrollment and attendance have declined, especially for multilingual learners, differently abled students, students of color, and those students living in poverty. Fall interim assessments indicate that students are behind compared to where they typically are, especially for the early elementary grades, and among subjects assessed, students are further behind in mathematics than in reading/English language arts (ELA).

Next, Dr. Kelvin Roldán, Deputy Commissioner, System Transformation, reported on the takeaways from last year's Summer Academy for Interactive Learning (SAIL) programs, where 14,000 Rhode Island students participated in over 6,000 learning opportunities, provided by 75 different providers. Dr. Roldán also shared that RIDE worked with Dr. Jennifer McCombs from the RAM Corporation, who presented a pretty significant longitudinal study on Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs) over an eight-year period. In partnership with Dr. Matthew Kraft from Brown University, the Task Force also worked on focusing on what high-dosage, efficient and effective tutoring and mentoring looks like. Dr. Roldán ended the presentation by sharing the Task Force's meeting cadence over the next 30 days, with a target date of March 23 to deliver the final report of recommendations to the Commissioner. The recommendations will be utilized to develop guidance as well as the application process for districts to apply for federal stimulus funding. RIDE will also be offering statewide summer programming and will assist districts who cannot on their own offer summer learning programs, partner with other districts, to reach as many students as possible.

Member Callahan expressed that she has been hearing from districts that there is a concern that this should have happened yesterday.

Deputy Riley responded that RIDE has already engaged with different providers who are on the Task Force, to ensure that there is some alignment.

Member Gaines asked if in the research RIDE analyzed past practices with summer programs as there hasn't been any improvement in student performance, even though summer learning has been provided for a number of years.

Deputy Roldán replied that RIDE analyzed the work that was provided last summer, which produced pretty positive outcomes and reviewed the outcomes of that data as well.

Commissioner Infante-Green added that RIDE is also looking at what is happening during the day and sees this as an opportunity to look at the system as a whole as there are things that have to happen for these partnerships to be effective.

Member Beretta expressed that there are some districts that have historically not offered options to students and those districts happen to be those places where there is incredible learning loss. She expressed that in addition to reaching out to the districts, it is critical that this opportunity is being shared with families and students directly so that we are not relying solely on districts to share the information.

Commissioner Infante-Green replied that there are groups on the Task Force that represent families as well as feedback-loops that happen outside of the sessions with families and students on what they want to see happen.

Member Purtill concurred with Member Beretta in that communication is going to be key and the sooner the better. He voiced that he's been hearing anecdotally that there is going to be a real pushback this summer to say that kids have been through a lot this past year and that they need time off, that parents need time off, and to give them the time off and start again in the fall. He asked that as these programs are promoted, to consider the fact that kids need to have some fun as well. He suggested joining with recreational programs, such as the Boys and Girls Clubs and other programs that are already in existence, and split their time between studies and recreation. He suggested looking beyond the academics and focusing on the social emotional aspect and to make this something students really want to do.

Member Davis expressed that RIDE should seek the help of an agency to assist in the development of a real campaign around this to make it appealing for the students, as well as help parents understand why this is so important and what the loss has been.

b. Update on Providence

Chair Cottam introduced the Providence Team – Harrison Peters, Superintendent; Khechara Bradford, Deputy Superintendent of Learning; Dr. Olayinka Alege, Network Superintendent of Secondary Schools; Zachary Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Operations; and Matthew Bubley, Turnaround Strategy Manager, to give an update on Providence's turnaround progress.

Superintendent Peters began by expressing his gratitude to Commissioner Infante-Green for her leadership and guidance. He shared some of the efforts and changes in the district from what many believed was the status quo. He noted that the district is changing the student experience by offering culturally relevant and responsive learning opportunities, as well as consistent rigorous curriculum. PPSD is changing the workforce through focused professional development and improved recruitment practices; changing the school culture through greater emphasis on social emotional and wellness supports; changing staff expectations and community engagement and outreach; and most importantly, changing the mindsets about what students are really capable of. He noted that the focus of this evening's presentation will center on the future and the great foundation that is being built through a community-driven and Turnaround Action Plan (TAP). He expressed that the TAP is a very valuable document and gave credit to Commissioner Infante-Green, who led an extensive community engagement process that put this roadmap together – Excellence in Learning, Engaged Communities and World-Class Talent, as well as Efficient District Systems, to help guide decision-making.

Next, Deputy Superintendent Khechara shared some of the work that PPSD has been engaged in, and moving forward with, in putting student voice at the center of all of the district's redesign efforts, specifically around the excellence in learning.

Next, Secondary Network Superintendent Olege went over the support schools and leaders are receiving. He noted that one of the changes in the district structure is the addition of the network teams, which provide boots on the ground support and coach school leaders, as well as job-embedded professional learning for teachers.

Next, Superintendent Peters went over the Engaged Communities pillar and expressed that the district has worked hard over the last year to strengthen the relationships with the community by giving them a greater voice, bringing them into the decision-making process, really standing-up their beliefs and their wishes, and the footprints of the schools.

Next, Deputy Superintendent of Operations Scott presented on World-Class Talent. He went over the key priority areas that PPSD focused on to address the staggering number of vacancies at the beginning of each school year - launched a national recruitment campaign and fixed some of the broken processes in the hiring system; accelerated the hiring cycle; nearly doubled the percentage of teachers of color hired compared to previous years; provided teachers with financial support to gain ESL certification; and increased on-the-job professional learning for every teacher. He also shared some of the adjustments that were made to reorganize the Central Office in a way that will support schools and impact classroom teaching and learning, as well as some of the upcoming priorities - renegotiating major vendor contracts; updating the enrollment system; improving the annual budgeting process at the school level; and automating the payroll process.

Matt Buble, Turnaround Strategy Manager, shared that his job is to ensure that the district is getting it all done. He explained that a system that is this complex and involves this many stakeholders, there has got to be best practices to achieve outcomes - break it up into phases; individual ownership for each part of the work; a single place that folks can look at internally on where they are and how much progress is being made; and the right kind of conversations on the right cadence.

In closing, Superintendent Peters acknowledged the great team that PPSD has assembled, who are on a serious momentum as they transform the school district. He is very optimistic that the work will get done.

Chair Cottam commended the PPSD team for the work that has happened over the last 16 months and expressed that it gives her hope for the children and their future, for the state, the economy, and closing the social and equity gap. She stressed the two areas that have been important in her conversations - Algebra and Curriculum. She has heard postsecondary, the private sector and the trades, talk about the limited opportunities a student has after high school if they don't have mathematics competency. It is really a cornerstone, especially with the technology movement of our world; it is just critical.

She also shared how thrilled she is that the gold-standard core curricula has already been implemented at the elementary and middle school level in English Language Arts. She expressed that school year 2024-25 is too long of a wait to implement curriculum, as another generation of children would have been lost. To her curriculum is the center of learning and along with teachers, there is nothing else that matters. She also shared her observation of the accountability aspect of measuring and tracking, because what gets measured, gets achieved.

Member Almeida commended PPSD's leadership team and expressed how inspired he is by the work that is currently happening in the district with respect to accountability and performance measure indicators. As a former consultant and teacher at PPSD, he noted that there are great teachers in the district, who work extremely hard, but what he found during his time there is that it was a lot about leadership. He admires the current administration for bringing those leaders together to facilitate conversations and collaboration about the work and the performance indicators and accountability, which he believes is what the district needed.

Member Callahan echoed that the work is amazing and quite comprehensive. She expressed how important curriculum is and asked how the implementation of the curriculum is affecting those students who are distance learning. She asked how the data on teacher satisfaction on the professional development offerings was collected, how people responded, the questions that were asked, and requested that the information be shared with Council members.

Deputy Superintendent Bradford responded that when the district received the materials from the American Reading Company at the beginning of the school year, the first task was figuring out how to adapt to the new COVID reality. The district made a lot of the core curriculum resources available to students, digitally, supplemented with online reading programs, so that the students can logon and have access to additional digital books. One of the benefits of the ELA and mathematics curriculum adoption is that the district has good informal check-ins for learning that are ongoing with the curriculum company, access to progress measuring and monitoring tools, and other supports, such as summer learning opportunities, targeted at certain student populations. She explained that professional development is housed within the management of professional development system, where the district publishes professional learning opportunities for teachers to register. There is a record of who attends which session and participants are able to let the district know their satisfaction, how well it met their needs, how knowledgeable the facilitator was, etc.

Superintendent Peters explained that by bringing teachers back five days before school started, the built-in professional development days throughout the year, weekly professional development opportunities, as well as Saturday feedback sessions, has been a game changer. He also suggested that at a follow-up presentation, the district will share the data that the district collects at the coaching cycles.

Members Gaines expressed how great it is to hear what is happening in Providence and that she has hope, which she hasn't had in a long time. She echoed the importance of strong teachers and how strong teachers need strong leadership. She also commended Commissioner Infante-Green for bringing on board individuals who know what they are doing and know how to inspire others.

Member DiCenso voiced that the district's plan to build an in-house program for ESL certification is very hopeful to her, as it is a way to make teachers feel supported and have what they need right where they work. She agrees that this helps solve the district's problem of dealing with the need for additional ESL certified teachers and asked if this model will eventually be shared with the rest of the State, as the need for more ESL certified teachers isn't just a Providence issue. She also expressed how impressed she is to see such a dynamic team setting goals, holding themselves accountable, pushing it to the building level, and supporting teachers and families.

Commissioner Infante-Green voiced that RIDE is looking at introducing the ESL certification initiative, statewide, however, Providence made a substantial financial commitment to their teachers, which changes how teachers are supported. The district was not in a good place for its multilingual learners when the Department of Justice came in and placed the district under corrective action about three years ago, but during a recent monitoring visit, it was reported that the progress happening at PPSD is like night and day.

Member Davis also thanked the team for the hard work and asked if there is anything the Council can do support them.

Superintendent Peters expressed that the work is difficult and some unpopular decisions have had to be made to ensure that students have a chance at life. He lives by the mantra, that if we don't tell adults the truth, than we are lying to children, and the Council has been the recipient of some truth telling. The team appreciates having the Council and the Commissioner's support, commitment and patience.

Commissioner Infante-Green noted that part of the role of RIDE and the district has been to remove the beaurocracy and move forward almost by any means necessary to place kids front and center and support the teachers who are there every day supporting the work. She also shared that the Superintendent intents to place guidance counselors at every elementary school and is reorganizing the district in alignment with what is important.

Member Purtill agrees that mental health, especially at the elementary level, has been such a need over the past several years, and everything and anything that can be done, should be done. He also concurred that having great building leaders is critical and encourages that level of professional development. He commended the district for addressing the number of teacher vacancies at the beginning of the current school year and asked what is being done to retain first and second year teachers.

Superintendent Peters replied that effective teachers stay with great leaders and you retain great teachers by having great leaders who care for them, who make them feel empowered, and who give them choice and voice. Part of the team's role is to make sure that the district's theory of action has strong leaders. The district has received a \$10M grant to develop an internal pipeline of leaders, because it values that.

Student Representative Feliz expressed that he too is hopeful for Providence's future. He asked who the students joining the summits are, how they were appointed and how they were notified. He voiced that often times students on these groups are hand-picked, leaving out underserved populations.

Deputy Superintendent Bradford explained that the student summits are open to any Providence student who wants to join. The message was initially shared with the Providence Student Council as well as with the 9th grade Student Advisory Groups to garner their support and to get the word out. The information was also shared with all principals at the elementary and secondary level as well as on social media. The goal is to engage students to be part of the process and to listen and learn from them as the district designs for the future of learning. Student groups were designed with all students in mind to ensure that there is a wide diverse voice and that all underserved communities of learning, and those who may feel disenfranchised, are being represented.

c. Request for Endorsement of Academic Standards for Core Subjects

Deputy Riley framed the discussion by sharing that RIDE's commitment to the unified strategic direction is directly tied to the evening's discussion on standards and in the strategic plan, and is tied to the priorities to achieve its mission. The Excellence in Learning priority is the commitment to provide a strong foundation of standards and curriculum, which to build for all students in Rhode Island. In addition to RIDE's own commitment to creating a coherent system, legislation supports and requires the same expectations through standards, curriculum and instruction. To achieve that type of coherence and vision, RIDE's academic strategy emphasizes four areas – strengthening Rhode Island's academic core standards; strengthening supports for teachers and leaders; improving intervention practices in classrooms across the State; and preparing students for college and career success, which are all necessary to achieve a system of high expectations with opportunities for all.

Next, Dr. Phyllis Lynch, RIDE's Director of Instruction, Assessment and Curriculum, went over the process that RIDE will take every four years to review and update the standards for the core subjects – mathematics, English language arts (ELA), science and technology, history and social studies, world languages, and the arts. This year, RIDE will be updating the social studies standards, aligning the high school mathematics standards to the high school courses, as well as developing the curriculum framework documents. Dr. Lynch also went over the responses to the statewide survey that RIDE administered to garner feedback on current ELA, social studies and mathematics academic standards.

Next, Lisa Foehr, RIDE's Chief of Teaching and Learning, went over RIDE's engagement with the Content Advisory Committee, whose participants were highly engaged in discussion centered on the standards, legislation, the feedback from the surveys, and how to address the themes that emerged – cultural and gender references, student readiness, and illustrative examples of work. RIDE's recommendation to the Council is for endorsement of a new set of ELA and mathematics standards, called the Rhode Island Core Standards, which genially maintain the foundation of the Common Core State Standards and include the addition of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

Member Beretta asked if the Rhode Island Core Standards are being shared with districts as they make decisions on which curriculum to purchase.

Ms. Foehr responded that RIDE is 100 percent confident that the subtle changes and explanations that are on the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks that Rhode Island is interested in adopting, are aligned, and in many ways, help enhance the work that RIDE is already doing.

6. ACTION ITEMS

a. Endorsement of Academic Standards for Core Subjects

- Rhode Island Core Standards for English Language Arts/Literacy
- Rhode Island Core Standards for Mathematics

On a motion duly made by Karen Davis and seconded by Amy Beretta, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education endorses the RI Core Standards for English Language Arts/Literacy and RI Core Standards for Mathematics

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

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

[Member Martinez departed the meeting prior to the Action Items]

b. Approval of the Appeals Committee Recommendation on the matter of Tracy Andrews-Mellouise v. East Providence School Committee

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Michael Almeida, it was

VOTED: That in the matter of Tracy Andrews-Mellouise v. East Providence School Committee, the Commissioner's decision is affirmed, as presented

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

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines,

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: Lawrence Purtill

[Member Martinez departed the meeting prior to the Action Items]

7. ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion duly made by Michael Almeida and seconded by Amy Beretta, it was

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

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

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.