



Enclosure 2a
May 11, 2021

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
April 6, 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 April 6, 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 Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the April 6, 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 March 9, 2021, 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 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

3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Infante-Green began her report by thanking the staff who will be presenting this evening on Advance Placement testing success; RIDE's new data dashboard; the upcoming release recommendations from the LEAP Taskforce; and the status of early childhood education in Rhode Island. Commissioner Infante-Green also recognized the representatives from the School Librarians of Rhode Island (SLRI), who later on the agenda will be presenting the set of school library standards they have developed.

Next, Commissioner Infante-Green reported that the Governor's 2022 budget request fully funds the funding formula calculation and level funds categorical aid for the second year in a row. It is approximately \$20M short of full funding and includes three important positions at RIDE (Education Specialist for Social Studies, School Improvement Specialist, and a Digital Communications Manager), to support the ongoing work.

Commissioner Infante-Green reported on the RIDE Site-based Management initiative that is being led by Deputy Commissioner Roldán and his team to operationalize the requirements articulated in the Education Accountability Act of 2019. RIDE has been working with superintendents, school committees, school leadership, as well as parents and community members to gather their insights and feedback on the guidance and on how to operationalize School Improvement Teams. She thanked East Providence Superintendent Crowley for working with the team and providing significant feedback on the guidance.

Commissioner Infante-Green also reported on the PrepareRI Readiness Project, an initiative that RIDE and the public colleges have been working together on since 2018, to streamline the connection between RI's K-12 system and our postsecondary partners. Numerous tools have been developed to help schools and students navigate the transition between the two systems, including a transition to college eGuide, the statewide FAFSA initiative and the RISE tool, which show which early college opportunities map onto college majors in Rhode Island for major-aligned credit. She shared that many students have had their college plans disrupted by the pandemic, so RIDE is partnering with the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC) and a team of researchers on a new initiative to help high school graduates enroll in college. RIDE is hosting six college interns, who are conducting direct outreach to the approximately 4,000, 2020 graduates who had expressed interest, but who did not matriculate this past fall.

Commissioner Infante-Green introduced Anthony Cottone, RIDE's Chief Legal Counsel, to address the ongoing matter with the RI Vision Education Services Program (RIVESP) contract with the Sherlock Center at RI College (RIC). Counsel Cottone explained that during the term of the current contract, a few school districts (Bristol Warren, East Providence, Newport, and West Warwick) elected to utilize the Perkins School for the Blind to provide some of the services to their visually-impaired students, which had been previously provided by the Sherlock Center. In addition, Cranston, Coventry and Providence have started using their own teachers to provide the services, a trend that will most likely accelerate following the recent decision, making the relevant services eligible for Medicaid reimbursement. He explained that the Sherlock Center is no longer the sole source of qualified providers for the relevant teaching and consultation services. Those services that had been provided under the RI Vision Education Services Program, are subject to the State Purchases Act, which mandates that the services have to be sent out to bid for competitive sealed offers and limited to vendors with a Master Price Agreement with the State. He explained that this change does not mean that the Sherlock Center will not be able to bid on the contract nor does it affect the services per se; it simply is the manner by which the now expired contract is going to be awarded, pursuant to State law, as they are no longer a sole source.

Member Davis asked about the timeline for awarding of the new contract.

Commissioner Infante-Green replied that bid applications are due back to the State by April 20.

Member Beretta asked that as part of the bidding process if there will be an assessment on the quality of the bidder/services being offered, how much it is factored in versus the price, and what kind of assurances parents are going to have that there will be a minimum quality standard for bidders.

Chief Legal Counsel Cottone replied that although price will be one factor, the quality and the availability of the services are key factors as a panel will be looking at comparability and meeting a need.

Member Martinez asked if there will be a pause in services.

Commissioner Infante-Green replied that the current services will continue through August 31, 2021.

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 received three (3) written comments, and 25 individuals (parents, students, educators, and healthcare providers) 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.

After public comment, Chief Legal Counsel Cottone asked if he could separate some of the issues raised around the quality of the services and RIDE's need to comply with State Procurement Law. He emphasized that RIDE does not have a choice with regard to the applicability of the law as this is no longer a sole source contract. Supported by the fact that many districts have employed alternate service providers, makes it clear that it is no longer a sole source. He explained that the Sherlock Center was notified a year ago that this would happen and the current contract was extended so that the Center could get into a position where they would be able to enter into a Master Price Agreement (APA) with the State.

Commissioner Infante-Green shared that the legislation used to fund this program, but that the funding has diminished throughout the years. She noted that she, along with Rhode Island College (RIC) President, Frank Sanchez, will be reaching out to the legislature to see if a line item can be created to continue funding the Sherlock Center. Commissioner Infante-Green also made it clear that any service provider who comes to service students in Rhode Island, must be certified.

Council Member Callahan asked what the Sherlock Center needs to do in order to be an applicant and how the Council/RIDE might be able to help. She asked that the matter be placed as a discussion item on the next Council meeting agenda.

Commissioner Infante-Green shared that RIDE has been meeting with the Sherlock Center and RIC to talk about what steps they need to take in order to be able to apply.

Member Purtill asked that since funding has been eliminated over time, if the Sherlock Center has been getting their money from federal grants over the past few years. He also asked what the parameters are for the RFP going forward – is it one for everybody or if a line item was reestablished and the RFP went out again, could it be for multiple providers, where the Sherlock Center continues and other districts go out and hire their own providers.

Commissioner Infante-Green replied that currently the Sherlock Center is running a deficit as the current funding they are receiving is not enough to run the Center, therefore, a line item is necessary in order for it to continue to operate.

Chief Legal Counsel Cottone responded the Center is being funded by IDEA funds as well as the fees for services that they charge to the districts.

At this juncture, Chair Cottam expressed the need to stop the discussion to avoid violating the Open Meetings Law, as the matter was not officially posted as a discussion item.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Update on the Advanced Placement (AP) Courses in Rhode Island and Data Dashboard

Spencer Sherman, RIDE's Chief of Innovation, framed the discussion by sharing that providing students with rigorous, college-level coursework for high school students, is a key way to achieve RIDE's Excellence in Learning priority. He highlighted that Rhode Island has the highest state improvement in AP pass rate of any state in the country over the past 10 years and is now above the national average, after being below for a number of years.

Next, Mr. Sherman shared the data on AP participation and pass rates, by district, from the class of 2010 compared to the class of 2020. He stressed that one of the great strengths in Rhode Island is that the State is not just focusing on AP courses, but on a broader array of initiatives to ensure that students are being served. Through the statewide PrepareRI initiative, RIDE has expanded college and career readiness opportunities beyond AP, including college-level coursework, career and technical education, and computer science classes.

Chair Cottam credited educators, teachers and all those associated with these programs and efforts for their hard work and for staying the course, which will make students rise to the occasion if they are given the expectations. She shared that she is very optimistic that with our work on the curriculum that we will see in future years a melding of all programs and would love to see 70% of students get a head start jump.

Member Beretta requested to see the AP participation and pass rate slides super imposed upon one another. She expressed that she would like to see some of the urban districts with schools that have been successful in getting a high participation rate and a high accomplishment rate, mentor another urban district on how they did it and what was useful, and share the formula that worked for them.

Member Callahan gave kudos to RIDE staff as well as the higher education partners, who have played such an important partnership role in this great cross-council work.

Next, Scott Gausland, RIDE's Director of Network and Information Systems, and Liz Teixeira, RIDE's Director of College and Career Readiness, presented the PrepareRI dashboards, an array of workstreams and key initiatives (AP, Dual Enrollment, Concurrent Enrollment, CTE Programs, CS4RI, and ACN) on RIDE's Data Center page, the one-stop shop to access data that RIDE has made available for the public to see how individual districts and schools are performing.

b. The Learning, Equity & Accelerated Pathways (LEAP) Task Force – Update

Considering the time, Chair Cottam entertained a motion to move the LEAP update to the next meeting of the Council.

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education move the update on The Learning, Equity & Accelerated Pathways (LEAP) Taskforce to the next meeting of the Council

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, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

c. Update on Early Childhood Care

Lisa Foehr, RIDE’s Chief of Teaching and Learning, framed the discussion by sharing that Rhode Island Pre-K is another collaborative effort across multiple state agencies - Department of Human Services, Department of Health, The Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Office of the Governor, and RIDE. She highlighted that the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Strategic Plan’s core objectives are shared across all of the agencies, with RIDE’s primary role as overseeing the Rhode Island Pre-K initiative and expanding high-quality seats across the State. She highlighted that Rhode Island Pre-K began in 2009 and has been consistently ranked top in the nation for quality by NIEER, since 2010.

Next, Lisa Nugent, RIDE’s Pre-K Specialist, went over the NIEER’s benchmarks, highlighting that although Rhode Island has always gotten 10 out of 10 of the NIEER benchmarks, it ranks 35th in the nation for access to four year olds; 12th in State spending; and because we have partnered with Head-Start, we rank 3rd in the nation for all reported state and federal spending; and have embarked on a path to move towards universal Pre-K.

d. School Library Standards – Request for Endorsement

Ms. Foehr introduced three individuals from the School Library Association - Sarah Hunicke, School Library of RI Advocacy Chair and School Librarian at Portsmouth High School; Dr. Mary Moen, Professor and Coordinator of the School Library Media Program at the University of Rhode Island; and Deanna Brooks, President of the School Librarians of Rhode Island, who have been working for many months with RIDE to be able to put forward a set of School Library Standards for endorsement in Rhode Island.

Ms. Hunicke shared that standards-based education provides academic standards for what students should know and be able to do, and the group is here because it knows that Rhode Island is ready to recognize and endorse the School Library National Standards Framework for Learners. She provided some contextual information about the value of school libraries and librarians, whose roles and responsibilities have evolved over the last few decades to meet the needs of today's initiative; the shared foundations and key commitments of the AASL National School Library Standards (2019); and cross-walks with other content area standards that have already been developed, including a cross-walk with the Rhode Island Social Emotional Learning Standards, developed by a student at the University of Rhode Island.

Next, Dr. Moen went over the results of a follow-up online survey that was administered to 200 Rhode Island school librarians after the professional development day that was held in 2020 on the AASL National Standards, asking if they align their instruction to the AASL National School Library Standards. Dr. Moen also spoke of how the AASL Standards are already being used to guide the School Library Curriculum in Rhode Island, developed in 2020, which includes grade-level benchmarks for the four curriculum standards that are critical to student academic success – Inquiry and Design Thinking; Multiple Literacies; Social and Civic Responsibility; and Personal Growth and Agency.

Next, Ms. Brooks went over the sampling of responses from the School Librarians of Rhode Island online survey, which reflect how well the National Library Standards align with the Rhode Island Core Standards at each grade level. She also highlighted the benefits of having a standards-based library instruction – set clear and measurable goals; inform instruction and curriculum development; help measure achievement; and are already being used by Rhode Island certified and URI pre-service school librarians. She concluded the presentation by proposing on behalf of School Librarians of Rhode Island, that the Council endorse the AASL National School Library Standards.

Member Almeida expressed appreciation for the work that was done and the value that he saw in his time as both a superintendent and principal what school librarians do for the staff and students and how valuable they are.

Member Callahan echoed Member Almeida's comments on how valuable and special library media specialists are.

e. Recommendation of Nominee to the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees

Commissioner Infante-Green nominated Katie Marcotte to fill one of four current vacancies on the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees and attested that she possesses the leadership, strength and commitment to advance the school’s goals and mission, and urged the Council to consider RIDE’s recommendation of her appointment.

6. ACTION ITEMS

a. Approval of Request for Endorsement of the School Library Standards

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 endorses the American Association of School Libraries Framework for Learners as Rhode Island’s School Library Standards

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 Nominee to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the recommendation of Katie Marcotte to the Rhode Island 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: 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]

**c. Approval of the Appeals Committee Recommendation on the matter of
James Viner v. North Kingstown School Committee**

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

VOTED: That in the matter of James Viner v. North Kingstown 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,
and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: Lawrence Purtill

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

7. ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines 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 Purtil

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.