



MINUTES OF THE MEETING
December 7, 2021

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Board Chair Cottam welcomed everyone to the December 7, 2021, meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education and noted that virtual access was provided to the public. Chair Cottam declared a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

Present: *Milly Asherov, Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Jo Eva Gaines, and Marta Martinez

Absent: Patricia DiCenso and Lawrence Purtill

[*Ex-officio, non-voting member]

Chair Cottam noted for the record that Member Purtill and Commissioner Infante-Green, would not be joining the meeting, and that Member Martinez would be arriving late. Dr. Kelvin Roldán, Deputy Commissioner for System Transformation, represented the Commissioner.

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the December 7, 2021, meeting

Vote: 6 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, Jo Eva Gaines

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

[Member Martinez arrived after the acceptance of the agenda]

2. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES

a. Minutes of the November 2, 2021, Meeting

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 accepts the minutes of the November 2, 2021, meeting

Vote: 5 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative, 1 member abstained, as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Jo Eva Gaines

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 1 – Michael Almeida did not attend the November 2, 2021, meeting

[Member Martinez arrived after the acceptance of the minutes]

b. Minutes of the November 16, 2021, Meeting

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 accepts the minutes of the November 16, 2021, meeting

Vote: 5 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative, 1 member abstained, as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Jo Eva Gaines

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 1 – Colleen Callahan did not attend the November 16, 2021, meeting

[Member Martinez arrived after the acceptance of the minutes]

2. COMMISSIONER’S REPORT

Deputy Commissioner Roldán reported that Commissioner Infante-Green is in good spirits at home recovering from her recent medical procedure and that she has been participating in meetings and other engagements virtually with RIDE staff. He shared that the Commissioner is watching today’s meeting from home since she has to be very cautious about entering crowded settings. He went on to report that in recent weeks RIDE has wrapped-up the release of the most recent state assessments, which have provided the agency with a snapshot of where our students are academically and will help staff strategize on how they can better serve students going forward. Deputy Roldán went on to share that most recently, RIDE released the results of the 2021 Next Generation Science Assessments, also referred to as the NGSA, which are administered in grades 5, 8, and 11, to measure students' knowledge and practices of the Next Generation Science

Standards. This is a set of science content standards that was developed and adopted by a coalition of 26 states.

He noted that participation fell overall by 14.6 percentage points and as with other assessments administered during the pandemic, differently abled, economically disadvantaged, and homeless students, faced greater barriers to participation. However, overall student performance across all grades rose slightly from 31.3% of students meeting expectations in 2019 to 32.1% of students meeting expectations in 2021. He stressed that science disciplines are a crucial part of a comprehensive, high-quality education, and this week the importance of science is being underscored by celebrating Computer Science Education Week.

Deputy Roldán went on to share that this week serves as RIDE's annual call to action for the inclusion of computer science in K-12 education. Over the past five years, the focus on computer science for Rhode Island or CS4RI, has shifted from building awareness for the inclusion of computer science in K-12 education, to supporting the sustainability of districts' computer science programs. CS4RI is currently working with 20 high schools across the state in building a computer science pathway through a \$3.5 million U.S. Department of Education grant, as well as 13 elementary schools spanning 65 classrooms in the implementation of the Coding as Another Language K-2 curriculum through a \$700,000 grant with Tufts University. CS4RI continues to explore ways to expand computer science opportunities for all students, like through RIDE's Two Codes initiative with the College Board, in which over 1,000 students have participated in AP courses and trainings in the last two years. RIDE is providing professional development and curriculum for educators and innovating on ways to demonstrate computer science proficiency. A Rhode Island teacher endorsement for computer science has been established as well. RIDE is also pleased to report that nearly every district in the state has worked with CS4RI in some way to establish and strengthen their computer science programs with over 1,000, K-12 computer science teachers trained - for free - by CS4RI since 2017 and over 100 trained since July alone. Since 2016, Rhode Island has been celebrating Computer Science Education Week with the statewide CS4RI Summit. Last year, CS4RI supported districts with a virtual summit and shared opportunities to participate in virtual Family Code Nights. This year, RIDE is inviting our community to follow RIDE's social media channels to see how our LEAs are celebrating. Deputy Roldán suggested that the Council take a moment to visit PBN.com to read about Yovanny Vargas and RIDE's CS4RI team, which the Providence Business News recently featured about their incredible work.

Next, Deputy Roldán shared that later in the meeting, the Council would be getting an update from Providence on how they are tackling the educator workforce challenges sparked by the pandemic. As many of you know, communities across the nation are facing challenges recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers. In line with best practices, Providence has worked on an array of incentives aimed to close teacher vacancies in hard to fill areas for the upcoming school year. The district is also providing additional financial support for teachers seeking their ESL certification and working in partnership with the Rhode Island Foundation to attract more educators of colors. This is important in a district where 90% of students are of color compared to about 20% of teachers, and where 55% come from homes where English is not the primary language

Deputy Roldán went on to commend Steve Osborn and Olivia Smith of the State Strategy and Student Opportunity Office, who have worked incredibly hard to engage the community in efforts to reimagine the high school experience in Rhode Island. He expressed that engaging our community is a key pillar of RIDE's work and outlined in our newest strategic plan, *Together Through Opportunity: Pathways to Student Success*. From roundtable discussions to feedback sessions and a big activation with our partner XQ at the annual educator appreciation WaterFire, their team has done an outstanding job involving stakeholders in the shaping of the proposed revisions to the Secondary Regulations.

Deputy Roldán continued by asking the Council's help in spreading the word of the importance of vaccinations - especially right now. He noted that we are seeing an uptick in cases statewide and what remains clear is that vaccinations are the most effective tool to stop the spread of COVID-19. The best way to celebrate this holiday season is to get all your eligible family members vaccinated.

Lastly, Deputy Roldán recognized Ana Riley, Deputy Commissioner, Instructional Programs, who is joining her last meeting with the Council. Deputy Riley will be joining the Bristol Warren Regional School District as Superintendent. He noted that Deputy Riley joined RIDE in 2019 and has been an invaluable member of the RIDE team playing an essential role in our shift to distance learning and then our transition to full in-person learning this year. She will be deeply missed by all of us, but we are glad that one of our very own districts will be in good hands during a time a great need for talented and committed school leaders.

Next, Commissioner Infante Green joined the meeting remotely to publicly thank Deputy Riley for her hard work, dedication, energy that she brought to the RIDE team.

3. OPEN FORUM

Nine individuals addressed the Council, and three written statements were submitted and shared with the Council in advance of the meeting.

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Providence Update

Acting Superintendent Montañez began by expressing that school districts across the nation are facing challenges hiring teachers in the wake of the pandemic and that Providence is no exception. Both students and teachers will thrive when school are well staffed and the district has been working hard to find, attract and hire excellent educators at every level. Last week the district announced a new array of incentives for both incoming and current teachers and is hoping that these financial professional opportunities will help recruit and retain top-tier candidates. These new incentives include bonuses for new PPSD employees in hard to fill positions in every part of the academic life, including STEM and ESL teachers, as well psychologists and social workers. It also includes further incentives for experienced teachers and for those educators relocating to Rhode Island and for those who are willing to sign-up early and commit to working multiple years at PPSD. It also provides a great opportunity for teacher assistants as well.

Zackary Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Operations, shared that the district is trying to focus on the short term and how it supports staff in the current school year, but also know that hiring well, is hiring early, and making sure the district is poised for success for the upcoming school year. The incentives that the superintendent described will help support that. He expressed that what the district learned from the research on these types of incentives, is that they need to be significant and targeted and that what the district is proposing, meets both those priorities. He went on to share the different incentives on the recruitment side as well as reimbursement support available to the district's current educators. He also shared that the district has already begun a recruitment campaign for the upcoming school year and held the first hiring fair on December 1st for the hard to staff areas, with 30 of the 60 participants already applying for the upcoming school year.

Council members expressed that they applaud the idea of providing incentives, however, they are concerned with the retention part of the process, vetting process for new hires, exit interviewing, as well as the lack of onboarding support, which the Deputy Superintendent and Deputy Commissioner Roldán, addressed.

b. Charter School Renewals

Stephen Osborn, State Strategy and Student Opportunity Officer, introduced Andrew MacMannis, RIDE's new Charter School Coordinator, and Jermaine Curtis, Charter School Specialist. Mr. Osborn expressed that this evening's presentation is a culmination of about 10 months of work that took place with the charter schools. He shared the background of the charter school renewal process, highlighting that it is required by the K-12 Council regulations as well as state statute. He noted that COVID-19 continues to provide challenges to K-12 education, including the disruption to evaluating the performance of charter schools. He explained that many of the required site visits were conducted virtually in the Spring with some in-person at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. He explained that to balance with the recent conversations on state assessments, RIDE has encouraged educators to treat the spring 2021 assessment data as the new baseline for student academic achievement. Mr. Osborn shared how RIDE will balance high-quality authorization processes, as expected by the Council, with the need to support the charters, whose communities they serve have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. He shared that the proposal that has been developed for this year's three charter renewals, is what RIDE is calling a five-year earned renewal, which gives RIDE the ability to see if the COVID-19, spring 2021 data point, is an anomaly data point related to COVID, or a new trendline in terms of performance. The proposal is to grant these three schools an automatic five-year renewal if they earn three stars or higher on school accountability at any point over the next three years. Each of the schools was performing at that level pre-pandemic, and RIDE believes that each will continue to perform at that level, post-pandemic.

Council members expressed their discomfort with the recommendation that a school can automatically earn a five-year renewal after reaching three-stars after the first year even while dropping dramatically after years two and three. After much discussion, Council members agreed with the proposed recommendation for these three schools given their past performance record, but, stated for the record that it needs to be clearly communicated to the 11 schools that are up for

renewal next year that these terms will not be the standard going forward, even if the pandemic persists.

Next, the charter team gave a brief background overview of each of the schools – Blackstone Academy Charter School, serving the communities of Providence, Pawtucket and Central Falls; Southside Elementary Charter School, serving students from Providence; and The Compass School, serving communities statewide, with a high percentage of students from Kent County.

Council Members expressed the need for charter schools to foster relationships and share best practices with the traditional school districts and that it become a requirement of the review process going forward.

c. Science Assessment Results

Lisa Foehr, Chief of Teaching and Learning, and Dr. Phyllis Lynch, Director of Instruction, Assessment and Curriculum, went over the Next Generation Science Assessments (NGSA), which are administered in grades 5, 8 and 11, and measure students' knowledge and practices of the NGSA Science Standards. They highlighted that as with other assessment results, there absolutely was a COVID effect with the science assessments. They shared major takeaways, including participation rates; changes in student performance; cross-state comparisons; proficiency data; participation data by subgroups and race/ethnicity; performance levels by grade; and meeting/exceeding expectations by subgroup and race/ethnicity.

d. Proposed Revisions to the Secondary Regulations, for the Purpose of Public Review and Comment

Mr. Osborn introduced Olivia Smith, who joined the RIDE team a few months ago and who has been co-leading this initiative. He explained that this evening's presentation will include RIDE's proposal to reimagine the high-school experience through readiness-based graduation requirements; next steps for continued engagement; and hearing the Council's thoughts and reactions. He shared that in June 2020, RIDE and XQ presented the Statewide Education Opportunity Audit to the Council and that the Council challenged RIDE to identify solutions to address what we learned about the high school experience. To fulfill that task, RIDE created the Reimagining High School Working Group, made up of many great leaders of different backgrounds throughout the state, who met eight times from June 2021 through last week, with more than 350 unique attendees participating. He shared that the key question of the proposal was what do we want for our kids as a go forward. What was learned, is that families want their children to be ready to create their own future and ready to be able to write their chapter and have their life be written by their own decisions. The proposal's key priorities are: 1 - Prepare our graduates to create their own future by aligning school graduation requirements to college admission requirements, and the opportunity to graduate every single kid with a golden ticket to earn a tuition-free associates degree; 2 - Increase engagement by increasing real-world, relevant experiences - students will demonstrate proficiency in civics, computer science, and financial

literacy to graduate from high school, every high school will value and recognize work-based learning as a form of academic learning, revitalize diploma endorsements to communicate the passions and goals of our kids, and endorsements will showcase advanced levels of readiness to RI's colleges, universities, and employers; 3 - Change how we support our kids and their families – none of our kids should have to choose between academics and economics, create new flexibilities to support our caregiving youth and students who work, school will establish and publish college and career readiness goals to measure the academic progress of our kids, and the need to commit to reimagining the high school experience.

Ms. Smith went over the next steps in the process. At the December 21 meeting, the Council will be asked to vote to put the redlined regulations out for public review and comment for at least forty-five days and will include at least 4 public hearings. Additionally, the XQ Institute is working with local non-profit organizations to ensure that RIDE continues to hear from students during the public comment process. At the culmination of the public comment period, the summary of public feedback will be shared with the Council, prior to a vote for final approval.

e. National Standards for Personal Financial Education – Request for Endorsement

Kirtley Fisher, Associate Chief of Staff, explained that the June 2021 enactment of RIGL 16-22-13 requires that the State adopt Personal Finance Standards by the end of the current calendar year. The Council endorsed financial literacy standards back in November 2014, which are the national standards for financial literacy from the Council for Economic Education (CEE). Since then, the CEE and the Jump\$tart coalition combined efforts and released the revised national standards by merging CEE and Jump\$tart's standards, which use equitable and inclusive student-centered language, emphasize decision-making, and focus on concepts, instead of products. There are six standards, benchmarked at grades 4, 8 and 12 that build on each other, and each standard has learning outcomes, which are helpful to educators. Ms. Fisher highlighted that another focus was on ensuring that there was equity within the language, activities, as well as gender-neutral language. Upon release, a feedback survey was distributed and circulated with the state's Financial Literacy Community of Practice, and feedback was overall positive. The majority answered that the standards address the financial literacy needs of Rhode Island students and that the content language was accessible to diverse students and populations. Ms. Fisher acknowledged Patricia Page, former RI Teacher of the Year, who continues to help RIDE and serves as the Financial Literacy Ambassador.

5. ACTION ITEMS:

a. Endorsement of the National Standards for Personal Financial Education

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Karen Davis, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Endorses the National Standards for Personal Financial Education.

Vote: 7 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, Jo Eva Gaines, and Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

6. ADJOURNMENT:

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

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

Vote: 7 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, Jo Eva Gaines, and Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.