



Enclosure 2
May 14, 2015

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
February 23, 2015

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education met on Monday, February 23, 2015, at the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 255 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

Chair Guida welcomed everyone, declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 5:01p.m.

He noted for the record that Chair Mancuso and Members Callahan and Forbes would not be joining the meeting and that Member Purtill would be joining the meeting late.

Present: Patrick Guida, Amy Beretta, Jo Eva Gaines, *Lawrence Purtill, Mathies Santos, and Joyce Stevos

[*Member Purtill arrived at 6:05 p.m.]

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Joyce Stevos and seconded by Jo Eva Gaines it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the meeting of February 23, 2015

Vote: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Patrick Guida, Amy Beretta, Jo Eva Gaines, Mathies Santos, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

2a. Minutes of the January 5, 2015, Council Work Session

On a motion duly made by Joyce Stevos and seconded by Amy Beretta, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the January 5, 2015 Council Work Session

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

YEAS: Patrick Guida, Amy Beretta, Jo Eva Gaines, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

[Member Santos recused himself from this vote, as he was not in attendance at the January 5, 2015, Work Session]

2b. Minutes of the January 12, 2015, Council Meeting

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the January 12, 2015, Council Meeting

Vote: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Patrick Guida, Amy Beretta, Jo Eva Gaines, Mathies Santos, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

3. OPEN FORUM

Before beginning Open Forum, Chair Guida went over some ground rules and reminded the audience to limit comments to two minutes or less.

- Three individuals spoke in opposition to the proposed revisions to the Secondary School Regulations
- Fourteen individuals spoke in favor of the Beacon Charter School for the Arts amendment request

Documents provided to the Board of Education by Open Forum speakers are on file at the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

4. REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Chair Mancuso was not in attendance.

5. REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Chair Guida began by stating that although he is bitterly disappointed that he is not going to have the opportunity to continue serving on the Board, it has been an honor to work with his fellow Board members over the last 14 years. He commended former Education Commissioner McWalters and Commissioner Gist for their accomplishments and contributions to education and to the State of Rhode Island. He also credited the Commissioner's dedicated staff and teachers and administrators at the district level for the great strides that Rhode Island has made and in accomplishing many important initiatives.

6. REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER

Commissioner Gist began her report by thanking Chair Guida for all of the years of service and for being a critically important part of the Board of Education in all of its forms since 2001. She also thanked Chair Mancuso and Member Santos for their years of service.

She went on to give an update on her imminent departure as she takes on the role as the new Superintendent of the Tulsa Public Schools, a district in the city where she was raised and where her family still resides. Although the sitting superintendent will not be retiring until the end of June and her contract does not begin until July 1st, she would like to have some transition time beforehand.

She reported that just last week some of our partner states in the PARCC consortium began administering the first PARCC online assessments. Other than a few minor glitches, early reports indicate that the process seems to be proceeding smoothly. Rhode Island decided that this would be a baseline year and that the PARCC results would not be used to make any big decisions but rather to inform families about how students and schools are doing.

She also shared the Race to the Top grant summary report that was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education, which highlights what was accomplished over the five years of implementation, what was learned in the process, and what lies ahead.

She ended her report by sharing that the National Council on Teacher Quality released its annual report and that it rated Rhode Island first in the country (tied with Florida and Indiana) based on our state's policies for teacher-preparation programs. They gave Rhode Island a grade of B+, tops in the country and unchanged from last year, an improvement from 2011 when it received a grade of D+.

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Encl 7a - Update on Strategic Planning

Commissioner Gist introduced the topic by reminding folks about the strategic planning process, which started with a statewide survey that received responses from almost 11,000 Rhode Islanders. As a next step in the process, the Design Team has developed the first set of prototypes; a set of values that will anchor and guide the strategic plan.

She then turned the conversation over to RIDE staff members, Andrea Castaneda, Jeremiah Newell, and Piedade Lemos (one of the members of the community-based design team that is developing the Strategic Plan and a world language teacher in Providence), who presented the Council with a draft of the first set of values that the team developed based on the feedback received from the thousands of Rhode Islanders surveyed.

Chair Guida commended the team for the work thus far and suggested including the concept of internationally benchmarking our achievement so that we may be able to do a reality check of our performance as it relates back to the performance of our competitors around the world. Member Gaines concurred with Chair Guida's suggestion.

Member Stevos asked whether or not students/young people have been involved in the conversations. Ms. Lemos responded that there are four students on the Design Team, so the team is getting input and perspective from them. Member Stevos also voiced that being that this plan is all about students; it seems that we are hearing predominantly from the adults and that she would like to see a strong student voice so that we can hear the strand of what students are saying about their experiences. Ms. Castaneda responded that while the four students on the team are very vocal and engaging, she agrees that it is not the same as engineering student voice into the process. She went on to say that the Design Team received a somewhat limited student response on the survey and that it assured the Council that it would go back and create rich and engaging experiences to deepen the student voice. Part of the work that is being launched in March is the education exchange sessions being run by about 25 community organizations, many of which are student-held organizations. They will be holding two-hour engaging sessions and are inviting exclusively youth throughout the state to join the conversation.

Encl 7b - Proposed revisions to the Regulations of the Board of Education Governing the R.I. High School Equivalency Program for the Purpose of Public Review and Comment

Next, Commissioner Gist introduced the proposed revisions to the R.I. High School Equivalency Program Regulations, which the Council was being asked to approve for public review and comment. She turned the conversation over to Stephen Osborn, RIDE's Chief of Accelerating School Performance, who gave an overview of the legislative mandate that puts forward two key changes to the regulations. One change requires RIDE to do a Request for Proposal for other high school equivalency exams in direct response to the increase costs in the GED when it transitioned to a digital test in 2014. The other change in the legislation requires RIDE to implement a fee waiver process where no low-income individual or anyone going through financial hardship will be forced to pay for a GED test. The bill did not come forth with in any additional funding, but RIDE is working with the Governor's Office to secure funding to help support the waivers.

Encl 7c - Proposed Revisions to the Secondary School Regulations

Commissioner Gist began by reminding Council members that back on September 8, 2014; they had approved, for the purpose of public review and comment, proposed revisions to Rhode Island's Secondary School Regulations. The revisions primarily postpone the use of standardized assessments as part of the required Rhode Island's proficiency-based graduation system until 2020. At the January 5th Work Session, RIDE shared the feedback gathered from the five public hearings held all across the state and one of the areas of feedback was from a local superintendent asking for clarity around having the ability to use the state assessment or other standardized assessments as a graduation requirement between 2017 and 2020, which is currently allowed in state law. The way it was written in the first draft of the regulations, it wasn't very clear, and, in an effort to clarify and to reduce potential confusion, RIDE added a sentence to section L-6-3.3 "LEAs may choose to use the state assessment or other standardized assessment as one of the local graduation requirements prior to the 2020 date set-forth above but no earlier than for the class of 2017." The added sentence isn't changing anything that isn't already allowable under the law, but there is a sense that by changing the regulation from what was required until 2020 with state law saying that it could be done as early as 2017, without a statement like this it could leave a gray area where there is confusion or disagreement between communities and school districts about what was allowable. Commissioner Gist ended by reminding Council members that prior to 2014 there were districts in the state (Chariho, Westerly, East Providence and Smithfield) that chose to be early adopters and excelled in preparing their students and implemented when they were ready. Historically, RIDE has set a baseline, but nothing prevents districts from shooting higher and setting higher expectations, which goes back to that local control and autonomy that the Board has emphasized and that the Commissioner values.

Chair Guida voiced that he is also aware that some of the superintendents had expressed the interest to use the PARCC prior to 2020 and agrees that they should have this level of autonomy. He wonders that considering the fact that the Common Core Standards are the standards that are being assessed on the PARCC, how we can really prevent districts from implementing it anyway.

Member Purtill shared that normally he would lean toward local-making decisions, but he is concerned that if one district is using PARCC as part of their graduation requirement and another one isn't, if we aren't setting up two different types of diploma systems based on the standardized tests and that it could lead to some problems.

Commissioner Gist answered that there has always been differences among expectations from district to district, because we believe in that kind of local autonomy. She also wanted to clarify that this is not just the PARCC assessment and that the bill passed by the legislature said that any assessment at all that is of a standardized nature. The Board's regulation does not prevent that, but rather clarifies it.

Member Stevos shared that she read the regulations in-depth, and wonders how RIDE monitors districts to ensure that every student has an ILP (Individual Learning Plan) as required by the regulations. Commissioner Gist answered that in previous years districts were monitored by a visiting team made up of RIDE staff and educators from different districts that would go into the districts and do a deep analysis, but that due to lack of resources, that it is no longer possible. Then leading up until 2014 with the graduation requirements, the oversight was accomplished by getting data and reports from the districts and staying in communication with them that way. Since there are different ways of measuring what makes a great high school, RIDE recently created a dashboard, a tool that allows districts to really analyze and self-reflect on where they are and where their community expects them to be, and are able to show how they are doing in serving the diverse needs of all the different students that attend their schools. Part of the school profile that RIDE is putting together, will have different supports, mechanisms and strategies that RIDE supports to help schools increase their performance.

Encl 7d - Beacon Charter School for the Arts - Amendment Request Follow-up

Commissioner Gist introduced the topic by reminding Council members that at their January 12th meeting, they voted to table RIDE's recommendation permitting the Beacon Charter School for the Arts to expand, due to some questions around the school's inconsistent performance in mathematics. She went on to commend the school for all that they have accomplished and in how they are preparing students for life. They have an incredible strong culture, and although that matters, she realizes that it is not enough. Beacon also gets results and has one of the highest graduation rates and the second lowest absenteeism rate in the state, and has been a commended school for the last three years. They truly recognize where they are, know their data and where they need to improve.

Since Stephen Osborn had to depart, Commissioner Gist requested that enclosure 7f be moved up on the agenda.

Encl 7f – Proposed Regulations for Dual Enrollment – Feedback from Public Review and Comment

Commissioner Gist introduced the next topic and reminded Council Members that on December 1, 2014; the Board of Education approved, for the purpose of public review and comment, a proposed draft of the Regulations for Dual Enrollment. The proposed draft regulations were developed with input from the public postsecondary institutions and other stakeholders. The public review and comment period occurred between December 22, 2014 and January 31, 2015, and the public hearings were held on January 15th, January 20th and February 5th.

Stephen Osborn joined the conversation and went over the detailed summary of the feedback from the four speakers who attended the public hearings. Overall the feedback was supportive of the guidance provided by the full Board and the Councils, and RIDE has taken that feedback and incorporated it into the next draft of the regulations. The new draft reflects that the definition of low-income eligibility will be defined by RIDE and also clarifies that the waiver for low-income students will cover not only tuition but fees as well. Another key change is that the institutions of higher education will determine the eligibility criteria, which will be developed and published annually through the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between RIDE and the Office of Postsecondary Education. He also shared a draft of the list of the proposed courses being offered, which will be eligible to be taught on the high school campuses if the high school has qualified teachers to teach the courses.

Encl 7e – Revised Certification Tests – Feedback from Public Review and Comment

Commissioner Gist introduced the topic by reminded Council members that at their January 12, 2015, meeting that they had approved, for the purpose of public review and comment, the proposed regenerated certification tests and passing scores. As a reminder, the Education Testing Service (ETS), which provides most of Rhode Island's licensure tests, has regenerated four additional tests (Education of Young Children 5024, Elementary Education: Reading Language Arts Subtest 5002, Elementary Education: Mathematics Subtest 5003 and Family and Consumer Science 5122). Rhode Island educators participated in the multi-state validation studies for the regenerated tests to establish the passing scores. During the 30-day public comment period, RIDE only received one public comment, which was positive.

ACTION ITEMS

- 8a. Approval of the Revisions to the Regulations of the Board of Education Governing the R.I. High School Equivalency Program, for the Purpose of Public Review and Comment**

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Joyce Stevos, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves, for the purpose of public review and comment, the proposed Regulations of the Board of Education Governing the R.I. High School Equivalency Program, as presented.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Patrick Guida, Amy Beretta, Jo Eva Gaines, Lawrence Purtill, Mathies Santos, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

8b. Approval of the Proposed Amendments to the Secondary School Regulations

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the proposed amendments to the Secondary School Regulations, as presented

Vote: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 1 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Patrick Guida, Amy Beretta Jo Eva Gaines, Mathies Santos, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: Lawrence Purtill

8c. Approval of the Beacon Charter School for the Arts Amendment Request

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Joyce Stevos, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to approve the Beacon Charter School for the Arts amendment, permitting the school to expand to serve grades 6 through 8, and enroll an additional 174 students across grades 6 through 12.

Vote: 4 members voted in the affirmative and 2 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Patrick Guida, Amy Beretta, Jo Eva Gaines, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: Lawrence Purtill and Mathies Santos

8d. Approval of the Regenerated Certification Tests and Cut-Scores

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Lawrence Purtill, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the regenerated certification tests with the recommended cut-scores, as presented.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Patrick Guida, Amy Beretta, Jo Eva Gaines, Lawrence Purtill, Mathies Santos, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

11. ADJOURNMENT

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education adjourns.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Patrick Guida, Amy Beretta, Jo Eva Gaines, Lawrence Purtill, Mathies Santos, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.