



**Enclosure 2a
June 9, 2015**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
May 14, 2015**

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education met on Thursday, May 14, 2015, at the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 255 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

Chair Cottam welcomed everyone, declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

She noted for the record that Council Members Gaines and Martinez would not be joining the meeting.

Present: Barbara Cottam, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karin Forbes, *Lawrence Purtill, Mathies Santos, and Joyce Stevos

Absent: Jo Eva Gaines and Marta Martinez

***[Member Purtill arrived at 5:40 p.m.]**

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Karin Forbes and seconded by Colleen Callahan it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the meeting of May 14, 2015

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

YEAS: Barbara Cottam, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karin Forbes, Mathies Santos, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

2. Minutes of the February 23, 2015, Council Meeting

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Mathies Santos, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the February 23, 2015 Council Meeting

Vote: 3 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Mathies Santos and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

[Chair Cottam and Members Callahan and Forbes recused themselves from this vote, as they were not in attendance at the February 23, 2015, Meeting]

3. OPEN FORUM

Before beginning Open Forum, Chair Cottam reminded the audience to limit comments to two minutes or less.

- Providence School Superintendent Lusi addressed Council Members on Providence's request for an emergency reduction of the school year and she thanked Commissioner Gist and RIDE's for their recommendation to the Council considering Providence's request. She voiced her concern with RIDE's one-hour delay policy in that it only results in buses being in even more traffic. A two-hour delay does help in that it allows districts to still meet the minimum requirement of three hours of instructional time as stated in the regulations. She further stated that Providence could have avoided closing schools for two of its nine snow days, if RIDE's directive allowing districts to implement a two-hour delay had come earlier in the season. In closing, she stated that the School Department has made adjustments to next year's school calendar to allow for a longer school year in case of inclement weather.

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 Cottam began by reporting that on the search for a next commissioner of elementary and secondary education, candidates are currently being interviewed and she expects a finalist(s) will be sent to the Board from the governor's office shortly.

Next, she reported that earlier that afternoon Governor Raimondo announced her intent to nominate Daniel McConaghy to the General Assembly as a new member to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education and that Bill Foulkes received Senate confirmation as a new member of the Council on Postsecondary Education.

She also reported that earlier in the week that along with Member Forbes she had the pleasure of bringing greetings at the RI Middle Level Educators annual dinner to recognize two grade-8 students from each middle school in Rhode Island who have demonstrated growth not only in their schoolwork, but in leadership. She also reported attending the Davies Career and Technical High School Partners in Education appreciation breakfast.

She ended her report by sharing that at its last meeting the Council on Postsecondary Education was asked to grant initial approval for College Unbound to operate in Rhode Island and to offer a baccalaureate degree in Organizational Leadership and Change. College Unbound is a non-profit degree-completion institution, an outgrowth of Big Picture Learning, which is a non-profit organization committed to the redesign of education in the United States that targets low-income, underrepresented adult learners, who have at least nine college credits, but no degree.

5. REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER

Commissioner Gist began her report with an update on the PARCC exam, which is currently in the middle of the End of the Year testing window. RIDE has been seeking lots of feedback from superintendents who have been very honest and very specific about the challenges of administration and the observations of the test. RIDE also administered a survey to 140 test coordinators in order to gather additional feedback. The feedback gathered has been shared with the PARCC consortium and discussions to address some of the concerns expressed have already taken place.

Next, Commissioner Gist reported that on Monday the National Institute for Early Education Research released *The State of Preschool 2014*, which finds that R.I. meets all ten of the quality standards for early learning, one of only five states to do so. This marks the 5th consecutive year that R.I. has met all 10 standards.

She also reported that over the past year, members of the RIDE team have worked closely with the members of a working group that was convened to discuss the R.I. system of school classifications, accountability, and support for low-achieving schools.

She ended her report by introducing and presenting Board of Education certificates to Victoria Araujo, a student at the Charles E. Shea High School in Pawtucket and Joshua Beck from South Kingstown, as R.I.'s 2015 U.S. Presidential Scholars, announced recently by Education Secretary Arne Duncan. The award honors students based on their academic success, artistic excellence, essays, school evaluations and transcripts, as well as evidence of community services,

leadership, and demonstrated commitment to high ideals.

6. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Encl 6a - Proposed Revisions to the Regulations of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Governing the R.I. High School Equivalency Program - Feedback from Public Review and Comment

Commissioner Gist introduced the topic by stating that later in the evening the Council will be asked to approve the proposed revisions to the Regulations Governing the R.I. High School Equivalency Program. The Council was provided with the feedback from the March 2 - April 17, 2015, public comment period and from public testimony presented at the public hearing held on April 14, 2015. The regulations needed to be amended to address the waiver of testing fees for individuals with limited income and RIDE's responsibility for securing funding to pay for test costs associated with the waivers. The revisions are in direct response to Senate Bill 2182A passed in 2014, which requires the Council to consider other high school equivalency exams in addition to the GED. The passage of the bill did not come with additional funding to support the implementation of the fee waiver and as such, effective the fiscal year beginning on July 1, 2015, the amount of state funds awarded to adult education programs will be reduced to cover the costs associated with the fee waivers.

Commissioner Gist then turned the conversation over to Stephen Osborn, RIDE's Chief of RIDE's Division of Accelerating School Performance, who went over the public feedback and answered questions on the revisions.

Mr. Osborn shared that this particular regulation stimulated much public interest and that RIDE has incorporated all of the feedback into the regulations. Some of the changes include allowing students who are detained at juvenile facilities, but who aren't incarcerated, to be able take advantage of this opportunity as well as allowing individuals to use both a driver's license and an identification card as a form of ID. There was also lots of public input about using existing adult education funding to be able to support the fee waivers.

Member Callahan voiced that although she understands the funding dilemma that we face, she too is concerned about the impact of the loss of adult education funding to support the fee waivers.

Mr. Osborn replied that adult education program providers will be asked to reduce proportionally some of the programs offered at the adult centers in order to accommodate the testing fee waivers.

Encl 6b – Waiver Requests pursuant to R.I.G.L. §16-2-3, entitled *Emergency Reduction of School Year, submitted by the Cranston, East Providence, Middletown, Pawtucket, Providence, and South Kingstown School Departments.*

Next, Commissioner Gist introduced the waiver requests by stating that a Declaration of State of Emergency and “travel ban” issued by Governor Raimondo resulted in the closing of schools on January 27, 2015, due to extreme weather conditions and that in accordance with R.I.G.L. 16-2-3, entitled *Emergency Reduction of School Year*, the six districts aforementioned have requested a reduction in their school year by one day during the 2014-15 school year from 180 days to 179 days, so that the districts do not have to extend the school year beyond June 26th.

She went on to note for the record that under normal circumstances she would absolutely not be recommending approval of these requests as these six school districts should have, as did the other 30 plus school districts, found a way in which to make up this day. But, given the extraordinary winter conditions this year and the fact that it is mid-May, she very reluctantly recommends that the Council approves these requests, with the understanding that going forward, districts need to make changes to the school calendars, so that they don’t find themselves in a similar situation in future years.

Member Beretta voiced her concern with RIDE not allowing districts the flexibility of a two-hour delay and feels that the Regulations on the Length-of-School-Day need to be revisited and revised. Districts need to be given the number of hours that they have to be in school in order for it to count for a school day and have them decide whether it’s a one-hour delay or a two-hour delay, as long that they have met the minimum requirement.

Council Members Callahan and Forbes were in agreement with Member Beretta’s concerns in that the flexibility of a two-hour delay would have helped districts this past winter, but would also like to see districts come up with a plan to avoid being in a similar situation in future years.

Council Member Stevos voiced that having worked in a school district where she had to count the number of hours of instruction; she is very pessimistic about how much instruction a student receives when you factor in lunch with a two-hour delay.

Chair Cottam voiced that like the Commissioner, she too does not support these requests, and reminded all districts that when planning their annual school calendars that the Board expects that they take into account the possibility of extreme weather conditions and plan accordingly

and asked that RIDE communicate that to them.

Encl 6c - Update on Strategic Planning

Commissioner Gist introduced the topic and reminded Council members that at the last meeting of the full Board they had a high-level conversation about the Board and the Councils' strategic plans and that this evening they are going to receive a more detailed update on the PK-12 strategic planning efforts. She went on to state that this planning process has had over 16,000

unique contributions through in-person meetings, public responses to surveys, detailed responses to plan drafts, and community-led conversations about public education throughout the state. RIDE has engaged approximately two-dozen community partners and almost 6,000 hours of time has been dedicated by citizens from throughout R.I. In addition to all of that work, the Ambassador Design Team has continued to work with great dedication on the strategic plan and has worked very hard to meet all of the deadlines.

She then introduced Andrea Castaneda, RIDE's Chief of Fiscal Integrity and Efficiencies, and Ambassador Design Team Members Candace Harper and David Moscarelli, who gave a brief presentation and answered questions on prototype three.

The group went over the six priority areas (Early Childhood Education; Global Competency and Competitiveness; Expand Personalized Learning Statewide;; Comprehensive Assessment Systems with Multiple Measures; Teacher and Leader Support; and Resource Investments), which are a framework for specific measurable outcomes and actions that will focus and organize the strategic plan for public education in R.I. for the next five years.

7. ACTION ITEMS

- 7a. Approval of the Revisions to the Regulations of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the revisions to the Regulations of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Governing the R.I. High School Equivalency Program**

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the Regulations of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Governing the R.I. High School Equivalency Program, as presented.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Barbara Cottam, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karin Forbes,
Lawrence Purtill, Mathies Santos, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

7b. Approval of Waiver Requests pursuant to R.I.G.L. §16-2-3, entitled *Emergency Reduction of School Year*, submitted by Cranston, East Providence, Middletown, Pawtucket, Providence, and South Kingstown School Departments

On a motion duly made by Joyce Stevos and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the Waiver Requests for one (1) day reduction of the 2014-2015 school year submitted by Cranston, East Providence, Middletown, Pawtucket, Providence, and South Kingstown School Departments.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Barbara Cottam, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karin Forbes,
Lawrence Purtill, Mathies Santos, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

8. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Karin Forbes and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

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

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Barbara Cottam, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karin Forbes,
Lawrence Purtill, Mathies Santos, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.