



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**  
**October 3, 2017**

**COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

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Chair McConaghy welcomed everyone to the October 3, 2017, meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, declared a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

**Present:** Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, \*Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

**Absent:** Thalia Philippe - Ex-officio, non-voting member

[\*Arrived at 5:38 p.m.]

**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 meeting of October 3, 2017

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

Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

YEAS: 5

NAYS: 0

[Member Callahan arrived at 5:38 p.m.)

**2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**2a. Minutes of the September 12, 2017, Council Meeting**

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Lawrence Purtill, it was

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the September 12, 2017, Council Meeting

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

Amy Beretta, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, and  
Marta Martinez

YEAS: 5

NAYS: 0

[Members Callahan, Gaines, McConaghy, and Purtill, had to recuse from the vote, as they did not attend the September 12, 2017, Meeting of the Council]

### **3. OPEN FORUM**

Eight individuals spoke in support of the petition advanced by the American Civil Liberties Union of Rhode Island requesting that the Council adopt regulations relating to rights and protections for transgender and gender nonconforming students:

Andrew Bramson, President and CEO of the College Crusade, spoke on

Materials provided to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education by Open Forum speakers and/or submitted to be shared with Council members, are on file at the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

### **4. REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER**

Commissioner Wagner began his report by reflecting on the natural disasters that have occurred in Houston, Florida, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. He stated that as students from these areas of disaster may relocate to Rhode Island, RIDE is ready, willing and able to embrace them and ensure that they receive the educational services that they need. There is a large Puerto Rican community in Rhode Island and it is likely that a number of families will relocate without documentation. RIDE will make sure that their educational opportunities are not limited and they receive the necessary services. Commissioner Wagner stressed that as American citizens, Puerto Rican families have strong legal protections over their rights, and Rhode Island will make sure to have the capacity to address the needs of these families and students.

Commissioner Wagner ended his report by announcing that Rhode Island has received a six-million-charter school grant. He stated that the major focus of the grant is not to just use federal funds to help with charter schools, but also to use the funds to setup systems and processes for the sharing of best practices. RIDE's goal is to make sure that all students, regardless whether they attend charter schools or traditional schools, are getting the best education they are entitled to receive.

## 5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

### a. Policy Relating to Rights and Protections of Transgender and Gender-nonconforming Students

Commissioner Wagner shared that following the last Council meeting he met with members of the advocacy community, the RI American Civil Liberties Union (RI-ACLU), as well as with superintendents of districts who currently do not have policies in place regarding transgender and gender-nonconforming students. He shared that his take away from the meetings is that everyone wants the same thing; safety and an affirmation of everyone's identity in making sure that when an affirmation is made it is welcomed.

Commissioner Wagner expressed that we are very fortunate that Rhode Island is one of the states that has statutory protections protecting civil rights and that gender identity is a protected class within the state's statutory civil law. It includes the protection of equitable, nondiscriminatory access to public facilities that RIDE interprets as including school restrooms and locker rooms. However, statutory protection is not sufficient to guiding communities with a full range of issues and that is why RIDE issued guidance in 2016. Commissioner Wagner stressed that he will use the full force and power of the agency to investigate and address any reported instances of discrimination that are in violation of that statute.

Commissioner Wagner went over the ACLU's petition offering two alternative versions of a regulation for the Council's consideration and action, one general and one more detailed: Have RIDE take its guidance document, package it up, and adopt it as a statewide regulation; or pass a regulation that would require all school districts to have a policy in place. Commissioner Wagner believes that the second option is the better option where the approach would be to set a standard and give communities the space to figure out how to achieve that standard, make it challenging, and hold people accountable to meeting that standard.

Commissioner Wagner closed by stating that there are two ways to approach this type of regulation. One being through the authority to protect students and the other being through the authority to assert and enforce civil rights. Both of these authorities fall under the purview of the Commissioner and the agency and not the Council. RIDE will draft a policy, which will be shared at the next meeting of the Council.

### b. RIDE's 2018 Revised Budget, 2019 Current Service Level Budget, and 2019 Constraint Budget Proposals

Commissioner Wagner began by introducing the budgets, which the Council will be asked to approve at the next meeting.

Next, Mark Dunham, RIDE's Director of Finance, gave an overview of the budgets. The 2018 RIDE revised budget will include a request to increase the budget by \$.1M in order to pay for Advanced Placement tests for low income students. It will also include a request to increase funding by \$.15M to pay for SAT/PSAT tests for public school students as these tests become a required part of the state ESSA plan. The 2018 revised budget, without changing, will include several line item changes to better align expenditures.

The 2019 current service level budget is the 2018 enacted general revenue budget plus target adjustments. The budget items that were adjusted as part of the target adjustment process include employee benefits increasing by 2.3%, the education aid funding formula increasing by 1.5%, and teachers' retirement increasing by 5.2%. The current service level budget will increase by \$19.8M bringing it to \$1.180B. Although RIDE will continue to advocate for increase in all categorical funding, increase in funding for early childhood care and English learners (Els) are included in the proposed budget.

Next, Director Dunham described the new initiatives, which are current service level items above budget targets. First is to reduce the salary turnover requirement to a realistic level from approximately 8% of a salary to 4%. Another initiative is to provide funding of .1M in order to provide Advanced Placement test fee reimbursement to families that economically qualify. Other initiatives include the restoration of the Advanced Course Network funding of .1M, and a higher increase in funding for early childhood care by \$1.1M, and for Els by \$2.5M.

Next, Commissioner Wagner reflected on some initiatives that were added to the current service level budget, including providing best practice toolkits for teacher professional learning, as well as creating a master teacher fellowship program in ELA, math, science, and social studies. Commissioner Wagner reflected on the growing population of English Language Learners, which requires program models and practices to strengthen English Language Learner teaching and learning.

Commissioner Wagner ended by reflecting on the 2019 Constrained Budget, which RIDE has formulated to meet the required 10% agency reduction target. The proposed reduction of \$1.9M includes \$1.4 towards reducing state funds for external grants to provide Adult Education Services and \$.5M to reduce RIDE budget through a transfer of all current school construction FTE costs to fees supported by construction budgets.

**c. Draft Rhode Island Social and Emotional Learning Standards – Request for Endorsement**

David Sienko, RIDE’s Director of Student, Community and Academic Supports, presented the draft Rhode Island Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) standards for Rhode Island K-12 schools, for Council endorsement. RIDE worked with the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) to develop the standards, which provided RIDE with a series of recommendations. This resulted in the creation of the SEL community of practice and an advisory committee that has prompted an SEL listserve of over 300 members. In addition, some “promising practice forums” have been organized at Rhode Island College, where Rhode Island schools can display practices they desire to share with others. Mr. Sienko stated that this is a unique opportunity for RIDE to frame standards for SEL upon which schools can build strong strategies to address students’ needs.

Mr. Sienko concluded by stating that October will be an opportunity to advance the conversation surrounding sharing successes and practices on how implementing these standards positively affect school climates. The expectation is that Grade Span Expectations (GSEs) will be developed at each grade level and there will be different guidelines for where a child should be in regards to SEL. This would include helpful resources for educators to use in order to answer any questions on how to adequately assist a child at a specific age.

**d. ESSA and School Improvement – Update**

Steven Osborn, RIDE’s Chief of Innovation, provided an overview of RIDE’s new approach to school improvement for 2017-18 under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA enables more flexibility for states to design school improvement solutions that best respond to their community’s needs. RIDE’s ESSA school improvement strategy involves working closely with school district leaders by reflecting on successful and unsuccessful practices in schools undergoing school improvement. School improvement decisions will be informed by RIDE’s new robust accountability system and as part of this process; RIDE will identify the lowest 5% of schools based on proficiency and growth.

Next, Mr. Osborn shared a Theory of Action, which encompasses what successful school improvement requires:

- Collective, shared responsibility amongst all stakeholders – RIDE, districts, school leaders, educators, and the community;

- Greater flexibility and autonomy at the local level to foster improvement and innovation;
- Authentically engaged communities and families at all stages of the school improvement process; and
- High standards for school improvement outcomes that reward successful school improvement and initiate action if expected performance outcomes are not met.

Next, Brian Darrow, Director of College & Career Readiness, discussed the five key changes that will lead to school improvement:

- Positioning districts as the key lead of the school improvement process, with support and technical assistance from RIDE;
- Catalyzing community members – through Community Advisory Boards – to have a clear and authentic role in the school improvement process;
- Establishing exit criteria that instantly rewards schools that make improvement;
- Redesigning the conditions of continuously low-performing schools to help every student and educator succeed; and
- Rethinking school improvement funding to go from a compliance-oriented administrator to an outcome-oriented investor.

Council members expressed their frustration with the ways in which RIDE has approached school turnaround over the last several years and proposed taking action in order to cause change. They also recommended doing an assessment on those schools that went from priority to rising status to find patterns and commonalities, to understand what it truly takes to turn a school around, and then offer additional support and share best practices with underperforming schools.

**e. Nomination of Members to the Appeals Committee of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education**

Chair McConaghy announced the names of the Council members who will serve on the Appeals Committee of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education: Amy Beretta as the Chair of the Appeals Committee, Jo Eva Gaines and Marta Martinez as members of the Appeals Committee, and Barbara Cottam to serve as the alternate member.

**6. ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

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

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

YEAS: Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Jo Eva Gaines, and Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

[Member Purtill departed at 7:00 p.m.]

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.