



**Enclosure 2a**  
**January 29, 2019**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**  
**January 14, 2019**

**COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

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Chair McConaghy welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, noted for the record that Council Member Callahan would not be joining the meeting, and that Board Chair Cottam would be joining the meeting late. He declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

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

**Absent:** Colleen Callahan

[\*Ex-officio, non-voting member]

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

**1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA**

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

**VOTED:** That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the January 14, 2019, Meeting

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

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

NAYS: 0

[Barbara Cottam arrived after the approval of the agenda]

**2. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES**

**a. Minutes of the December 18, 2018, Meeting**

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 minutes of the October 23, 2018, Meeting

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

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

NAYS: 0

[Barbara Cottam arrived after the approval of the agenda]

### **3. OPEN FORUM**

Six individuals spoke in support of The Learning Community's request for charter renewal.

Two individuals spoke in support of the Times2 Academy STEM Academy's request for charter renewal.

One individual spoke in support of the Segue Institute for Learning's request for charter renewal.

Two individuals spoke in support of The Hope Academy's request for charter renewal.

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

After introducing Cecelia Pelkey as RIDE's new Chief Legal Counsel, Commissioner Wagner shared that the recent release of the RICAS scores are prompting a level of engagement and conversation that previous assessments never did, and the sense of urgency that has transpired is a good thing, as the goal was to do exactly that. He explained that for whatever reason, comparing communities to next door communities in Massachusetts, has grabbed peoples' attention in a way that comparing to the PARCC Consortium never did. He explained that when RIDE released the scores, it was very deliberate in its messaging by asking folks not to oversimplify the cause and point fingers and place blame. However, people are blaming the Commissioner when the work has never been about him. He strongly urges the Council not to take the bait and not to be part of the distraction, because for a variety of reasons, people want to desperately talk about anything other than the very challenging work of improving teaching and learning in the State of Rhode Island.

Commissioner Wagner ended by stressing that with an inevitable leadership transition, there is a need to stay focused on the work and stay the course. A new Commissioner will bring new shiny ideas, but the ideas are very clear. There is a need to invest in kids early on through early learning, pay attention to strong foundations (3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading, 5<sup>th</sup> grade fractions), a strong curriculum, and pathways for both teachers and students that take seriously not only participation, but also engagement.

## 5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

### a. Charter Schools - Requests for Renewals

- Blackstone Valley Prep (BVP)

Prior to turning the conversation over to Steve Osborn, RIDE's Chief of Innovation, and Paula Barney, RIDE's Charter School Coordinator, Commissioner Wagner framed the conversation by sharing that for the first time the kernel (same four metrics and same four combination of metrics that form the school accountability report cards) of charter school authorization is the exact same kernel as the statewide school accountability system. He stressed that the system is still in transition, and some systems, in particular the growth scores at the high school level, is very much still in full implementation process.

Ms. Barney gave a quick overview of the 10-month process that led to today's discussion. She reminded Council members that this is the second year of implementing the updated charter performance framework. All charters, including the ones up for renewal this year, go through an annual academic performance review, which this year is aligned to the new star rating system. As part of the new process, Council members have an opportunity to ask questions directly of the school leaders regarding authorization decisions related to the renewals.

Mr. Osborn walked Council members through BVP's recommendation and explained that BVP's six schools are being recommended for a five-year renewal, but given that the high school has not had a graduating class included in school accountability, if the high school does not become at least a 3-star school by the fall of 2020 accountability release, the school will go through another site visit by RIDE, and pending the outcome, the school's 5-year term will be adjusted. All of the schools have demonstrated strong academic results, including the high school. However, because the high school has mixed results in other indicators, such as low progress in language attainment for EL students and overall student growth, it received a 2-star rating on the statewide accountability system and a tier 4 final designation.

Commissioner Wagner commended BVP's leadership for the great achievement at the elementary and middle schools. However, because of the very different experience at the high school level, he feels that it is worth calling out the issue and incentivizing it.

Council Members shared their concerns with how the growth component is weighed compared to the actual performance component and how it lacks common sense; the Council's lack of understanding of how the star-rating system works and the calculations behind it; and the Council's involvement once the high-school goes through its renewal site visit in the fall of 2020.

Jeremy Chiappetta, BVP's CEO, was given the opportunity to weigh in on the recommendation and voiced that the system is nuanced and complex and that BVP is urgent about getting better. His leadership team will meet whatever bar is in front of them and he hopes that everyone is transparent about what those bars are. He realizes that this is a first-year system and expressed that whatever growth mechanism the Council and RIDE ultimately decide to use, it should not penalize high-achieving students.

#### 5a2. Segue Institute for Learning

Ms. Barney went over Segue's recommendation for a five-year renewal and pointed out that overall the school met expectations and received a 3-star designation on the statewide accountability system, primarily due to student growth in both ELA and mathematics. Ms. Barney pointed out that RIDE and the school recognize that there remains areas for improvement for achievement overall, including English Learner language attainment. She shared that Segue is one of a few charter schools that has set school-specific goals focused on continuous improvement of school culture and climate.

Council Members commended Segue for staying the course and getting to a five-year renewal status.

#### 5a3. Southside Elementary Charter School

Mr. Osborn went over Southside's recommendation for a three-year renewal and highlighted that the school's academic performance was within the range that the sending district (Providence) performed. The school had a total of 22 tested students (K-3) and, for that reason, RIDE believes that the best recommendation is a three-year renewal to monitor the school as it grows and reaches its full grades (K-5), 144 student population. The growth measure could not be calculated, since the 2017-18 was the first year with tested students. The school has met all of its financial organizational goals and was in compliance as of the last school year.

#### 5a4. – The Hope Academy

Ms. Barney went over The Hope Academy's recommendation, highlighting that this is a school that is coming to an end of its first charter term and is being recommended for a five-year renewal, with sustainability conditions. The school received a 3-star rating and met the charter expectations. Ms. Barney shared that because the 2017-18 school year was the first year academic performance could be evaluated since it was the first year the school had tested grades for the state assessment, the growth measure could not be calculated. As far as the sustainability conditions, despite having a recruitment policy, the school did not actively recruit students, most notably from North Providence, compared to over 130 Providence applicants. The school has responded that they will actively recruit more students from North Providence.

Council Members voiced their concerns with the inconsistencies of awarding a school without any growth measure data, a 5-year renewal and no site visit, while a school that performed consistently well does not get the same designation. They once again stressed that there is a "common sense" piece that is not sitting well with them and that it needs to be addressed.

Commissioner Wagner clarified that during a life-cycle of a school, it is not uncommon for the conditions of the first renewal to be a bit different than the conditions of a subsequent renewal, because typically during the first renewal the school is still in growth cycle. He stressed that there are no inconsistencies and shared that one of the BVP schools that does not have enough data, benefited from less information, and is piggybacking on the other schools' recommendation for a 5-year renewal. To help clear up any misunderstandings on how the accountability system works, Commissioner Wagner offered to have a presentation on the Accountability System and RIDE's approach to School Accountability at the next Council meeting.

#### 5a5. The Learning Community

Mr. Osborn went over the Learning Community's recommendation for a 5-year renewal. He shared that over its 15 years of existence, the school has consistently achieved at a high-level. However, the school received a 2-star rating due to the language attainment for English Learners and in ELA growth. The school is being recommended for a 5-year renewal as a result of the school's track record and data that triggered the 2-star rating.

Commissioner Wagner shared that a lot of thought went into seeing whether or not BVP and the Learning Community warranted the same recommendation, and that it was a close call. However, because of The Learning Community's long-standing track-record, it warranted a different recommendation.

## 5a6. Times2 STEM Academy

Ms. Barney went over Times2 STEM Academy's recommendation for a 3-year renewal, with sustainability conditions. She shared that first and foremost, the academic performance of the school in this most recent year approached expectations. However, over the course of the school's charter term, the academic performance on the statewide accountability system has slowly been going on a downward trend. This is a Providence, in-district charter school that is being rated as a 2-star school and is performing the same as its sending district in ELA and mathematics, while the standard is to outperform the sending district. Ms. Barney went over the four sustainability conditions, highlighting that by June 30, 2019, Times2 must identify a change manager and provide RIDE a detailed plan demonstrating how the charter will meet the needs of all students and fulfill its mission, and present a plan that will address each of those items (a - h). Also, within the next twelve months and no later than December 31, 2019, Times2 must provide evidence of plan implementation, including actions steps taken, documentation, and results. The school has already provided some progress on some of the issues. However, RIDE is looking for a holistic plan that can be presented to the Council. In addition, the school must provide RIDE with ongoing progress reports for the duration of the charter's term, as well as a complete financial audit for fiscal year 2019, no later than December 31, 2019.

Commissioner Wagner noted that this is an in-district charter as opposed to an independent charter. He shared that RIDE has heard concerns from the district as well as from the teachers at the school who are members of the Providence Teachers Union, and from parents, that the district/charter relationship may not be working out. Commissioner Wagner indicated that RIDE thought long and hard about a renewal recommendation and decided that a 3-year renewal with sustainability conditions gives the school an opportunity to address the issues before a decision is made about the partnership between Providence and Times2.

Council Members suggested adjusting the wording in the recommendation to convey the urgency and the magnitude of the sustainability conditions. They also asked that the Council receive a progress update after the June 30 deadline and again leading into, and not after, the December 31, 2019, deadline.

Max Foster, Chairman of the Board of Directors at Times2 STEM Academy, addressed the Council. He shared that the school is taking a step back before moving forward and that the goal is to restore the school's glory of days past. The school has been working with RIDE to address the specifics of the findings and has a pretty good road going forward. The school will try to make those connections with Providence, but if it cannot be accomplished, the school will find alternate means.

Rudy Mosley, Executive Director at Times2 STEM Academy, also addressed the Council and shared that when he was hired about three years ago, he was charged with evaluating what was going on at the school and making changes. He expressed that the reality is that not everyone likes change and that people respond to change in varying ways. He ended by stating that the school's main goal is ensuring that students succeed, as attested by a former student who addressed the Council earlier in the evening.

**6. ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.**

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 adjourns.

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

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

**NAYS:** 0