



Enclosure 2a
March 5, 2019

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
February 4, 2019

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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

Present: *Amy Beretta, **Christopher Bove, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Jo Eva Gaines, and Marta Martinez

Absent: Gara Field
 Daniel McConaghy
 Lawrence Purtill

[*Arrived at 5:35 p.m. and departed at 6:35 p.m.]
[**Ex-officio, non-voting member]

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the February 4, 2019, Meeting

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

 YEAS: Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Jo Eva Gaines, and Marta Martinez

 NAYS: 0

[Amy Beretta arrived after the approval of the agenda]

2. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES

a. Minutes of the January 29, 2019, Meeting

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Karen Davis, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the minutes of the January 29, 2019, Meeting

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

YEAS: Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, and Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

[Member Gaines had to recuse herself from the vote as she did not attend the January 19, 2019, Meeting]

[Member Beretta arrived after the approval of the minutes]

3. OPEN FORUM

Board Chair Cottam reported that no one had signed up to speak.

4. REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER

Commissioner Wagner announced that RIDE launched the official kick-off of a RFP for districts, non-profits, higher education partners, and other local and national providers to join the Educator Course Network to support teacher learning.

Next, Commissioner Wagner shared that the annual application for new charter schools will be posted on the RIDE website on February 15th, with proposals due in July.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Accountability System - Student and Teacher Chronic Absenteeism

Commissioner Wagner explained that today's presentation on student and teacher chronic absenteeism is the second of a three part conversation on the components of our accountability system. He then invited Stephen Osborn, who lead's RIDE's Division of Innovation, and Rachel Peterson, Research Specialist at RIDE, to give an overview on how teacher and student absenteeism indicators are calculated, how those indicators are included in school accountability, how RIDE ensures data quality, and the type of supports RIDE provides to schools and districts to help reduce student and teacher chronic absenteeism.

Ms. Peterson began by going over how the student absenteeism indicator is calculated and noted that RIDE has been reporting student absenteeism since the 2011-2012 school year. She explained that a chronically absent student is a student who misses 10% of school days or more (18 days for a continuously enrolled student). To get the percentage of students who are chronically absent in a school, the number of chronically absent students is divided by the average number of students enrolled over the full school year. She shared that different cut-scores are applied to the different grade spans due to the fact that high school students are generally absent more frequently than elementary and middle school students.

Council members expressed concerns with the way in which cut-scores are applied to the different grade spans, and the fact that there is no difference between excused and unexcused absences when calculating student absenteeism. They also asked whether the component as is, is weighted enough to place pressure on school districts to address the issue, and RIDE's role in communicating to parents the importance of school attendance.

Commissioner Wagner explained that at some point there will be the same cut-score for all grade levels, and as far as communicating with parents, RIDE is not the party that should be engaging with families and teachers on these kinds of issues, as it should not be signaling that attendance is RIDE's problem to solve.

Next, Mr. Osborn went over how the teacher absenteeism indicator is calculated. He shared that this conversation began about four years ago when the United States Department of Education released an inaugural report indicating that Rhode Island had the highest rate of teacher absenteeism in the country, with more than one in two teachers chronically absent. In response to that data, RIDE formed a task force to not only look at the issue, but also address concerns over the quality of the data reported, as states have different ways of defining and reporting absences. Rhode Island is the first state to include teacher absenteeism as a part of its accountability system, and in the most recent report, RI has the third highest rate of teacher absenteeism.

Council members shared concerns with how the data is being recorded at the local level and how that data is being defined and ultimately reported.

Commissioner Wagner explained that districts code their own data and it may very well be that coding was done inaccurately. However, districts were required to validate and sign-off on their data collection in July 2018 and RIDE followed up with them on any noticeable concerns

and regularly reminded them to check their data. He recommends sticking with the data set for a couple of years until people get used to it and have a better understanding of how it is used. In the meantime, RIDE will continue to support schools and districts in better understanding their data and learning how and where value can be added. When there is a good level of data quality and better evidence, decisions will be made on whether to modify the data set.

b. Virtual Learning Day Plan – The Learning Community Charter School

Commissioner Wagner introduced the topic by highlighting that in 2017 a bill passed into law allowing for the possibility of a virtual learning day and giving the authority for approval to the Council. He expressed that he sees this as both an opportunity – potentially figuring out how to deliver quality educational services at a distance and on scale - and a risk – how to figure out how to deliver quality educational services at a distance and on scale. To date, RIDE has received six proposals and out of an abundance of caution, it has decided to only bring one recommendation (The Learning Community), on a pilot basis.

Next, Mary Ann Snider, Deputy Commissioner, introduced RIDE Specialists, Holly Walsh, Alice Woods, and Jacqueline Branco, who worked on reviewing the proposals, and shared that out of the six submittals, the Learning Community's proposal was the only one that represents a good effort at getting close to what RIDE envisions a good plan to be. Deputy Snider expressed that RIDE has concerns with the law, particularly as it pertains to students who are very young, those at academic risk, and those with learning disabilities. She shared that The Learning Community is also wrestling with the issue of those students who require additional supports throughout the day, and in trying to imagine how they would be independent learners at home, even with the very best structures around them. RIDE has been getting some pressure from the General Assembly, who feel that the agency is being overly harsh in the review of the submitted proposals. RIDE met with The Learning Community and agreed that the proposal would be approved for one day versus the three days that the law allows. The school would enter into a partnership where RIDE will examine the differential impact on students, gather some evidence and data, and bring in the six schools who submitted proposals to brainstorm on what can be learned collectively, and how RIDE might change its own rubric and make any further decisions going forward.

Council Members expressed that this is a good opportunity to learn from, however, they have some concerns. They had questions around how much work will be assigned to and required from the student, ensuring students are being supervised at home, the value of play and recreation on a day off from school, the equity of technology, and the need to collect good data and how some of that data will be measured.

Commissioner Wagner cautioned against thinking of this as being an opportunity to replicate the school day, but rather to think of it as an opportunity to figure out how to work through some of the dynamics that are currently in place. With technology, he sees no reason why at some point in the future instruction could not be delivered virtually, as long as the technology is equitably distributed.

c. Recommendation of Nominee to the Central Falls Board of Trustees

Commissioner Wagner introduced Glendaliz Colon, the nominee to fill a vacancy on the Central Falls Board of Trustees.

He explained that this is an-at large vacancy currently held by Ron Pitt from RI College, who is stepping down at the end of the month. He noted that Stephanie Gonzalez, another Trustee who currently holds a Central Falls specific seat, has asked to move into the at-large seat vacancy, so Ms. Colon would fill the Central Falls specific seat vacancy.

Ms. Colon is a Central Falls resident, an alumnus of the district, and a mom of four students in the district.

6. ACTION ITEMS:

a1. Approval of Nominee to the Central Falls Board of Trustees

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 approves the recommendation of Glendaliz Colon to the Central Falls Board of Trustees, as presented.

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

Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Jo Eva Gaines, and Marta Martinez

YEAS: 5

NAYS: 0

[Member Beretta departed from the meeting prior to the approval of the Action Items]

a2. Provisional Approval of the Learning Community Charter School Virtual Learning Day Plan Proposal

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 provisionally approves The Learning Community’s Virtual Learning Plan Proposal for one-day during the 2018-19 school year, and requires the Learning Community to submit evidence to RIDE of the Plan’s efficacy in providing quality instruction to the school’s elementary students, students with disabilities, and English language learners. Based on lessons learned, RIDE will adjust the approval rubric.

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

Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Jo Eva Gaines, and Marta Martinez

YEAS: 5

NAYS: 0

[Member Beretta departed from the meeting prior to the approval of the Action Items]

7. ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

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

YEAS: Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Jo Eva Gaines, and Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

[Member Beretta departed prior to the adjournment of the meeting]