

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

MEETING HELD AT:

Rhode Island Training School
57 Power St.
Cranston, RI

Thursday, April 1, 2010 4:00 p.m.

Attending: R. Flanders, P. Guida, A. Cano-Morales, K. Forbes, C. Callahan, A. Davis, F. Caprio, A. Beretta

Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Gist told the members of the Board that the work session on her evaluation has to be postponed because of the inauguration of the URI President. A new date will be scheduled. She also announced that the hearings for the changes in the certification regulations will be held on May 3, in Lincoln, and May 4, in West Warwick.

Central Falls Update and Providence Update – Commissioner Gist reported on Central Falls and Providence, as follows:

- PTU and PPSD are extremely close to reaching agreement on a criterion-based hiring protocol for the entire district. This protocol will replace the "job fair" and bring Providence in line with previous orders of the commissioner as well as the new BEP.
- Superintendent Brady's choice of the Restart intervention model at four of Providence's persistently lowest-achieving schools has been approved. Providence has boldly decided to take advantage of a unique "management-labor compact" model to turn these schools around. Commissioner Gist told the board that she is very encouraged that the relations between the district and the Providence Teachers' Union have improved to the point where the superintendent is confident that the union can be a partner in these reforms and that Steve Smith is showing the consistent leadership from the union side that is needed to build immediate and sustainable reforms in Rhode Island schools.
- Regarding Central Falls, the Commissioner told the group that Dave Abbott has been representing her at both the stakeholder planning meetings and the mediated bargaining table. Judge Torres has been facilitating the bargaining with the help of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

NAEP Update ~

READING:

- Rhode Island students' scores have improved in both the 4th grade and the 8th grade.
- Grade 4 Rhode Island students are above the national average scale score in reading but the 8th-grade students are not. We are still below the national average in 8th grade reading.
- Rhode Island was one of only three states whose scores improved significantly in Grade 4. The other states were Kentucky and Washington, D.C.
 - Also, the percent of students scoring proficient or better increased 5 points, from 31% proficient to 36% proficient.
- Scale scores for grade 8 also went up by one point (not statistically significant).
- Grade 8, Rhode Island students advanced from 27% proficient to 28% proficient.

- Significant gaps remain between the scores for all students and the scores for various groups of students. The gaps between white and Hispanic students closed, as did the gap between white-black students at grade 8. Gaps between those students in poverty, with IEPs, and ELL students remained the same or widened slightly. Gaps among 4th-grade students remained relatively unchanged.
 - Among students in poverty, for example, only 17% were proficient in grade 4 and 14% in grade 8.
 - Among students with disabilities, 9% were proficient in grade 4 and 7% in grade 8.
 - Among English-language learners, 6% were proficient in grade 4 and only 1% in grade 8.

MATH:

- Rhode Island students improved significantly at both 4th and 8th grade.
- Rhode Island was one of five states to improve in both grades. The other states were D.C., Nevada, and the NECAP states of Vermont and N.H.
- Gaps continued to widen across almost all student groups, even though performance continues to improve across most of these groups.
- Hispanic students scored the lowest in the country at both 4th and 8th grade.

Public Remarks

Peter Geisser, the artist responsible for the wall mural at the Rhode Island Training School, spoke to the group about the mural and how it had been funded.

Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Flanders thanked the Training School Acting Superintendent, Kevin Aucoin, for hosting the Regents. Mr. Flanders then introduced Amber Johnson, from Classical High School, the Rhode Island state winner of the "Poetry Out Loud" competition, to recite a poem.

Approval of the Executive Minutes of February 25, 2010; Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting of March 4, 2010; and March 18, 2010 Work Session

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting of February 25, 2010; Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting of March 4, 2010; and March 18, 2010, Work Session.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of the Rhode Island Arts Standards

Commissioner Gist reminded the members of the Board that they have seen the proposed Rhode Island Arts Standards a few times now. On January 21, 2010, the Board reviewed the draft R.I. Arts GSEs, and, during that work session, RIDE staff described the multi-year process of the development of these Grade-Span Expectations. In response to the Regents regulations stating that all students must be proficient in one area of the arts before graduation, RIDE facilitated the development of the R.I. Arts GSEs through collaboration among certified arts educators, community teaching artists, arts-organization agencies, higher-education arts-education faculty members, students, and parents. On March 11, the draft Grade-Span Expectations were presented for public hearing by the Board of Regents. The results were positive on all accounts. Members of the community talked about how these GSEs address 21st-Century skills and will prepare students for the growing creative economy. Educators expressed

appreciation for learning targets that clearly address K-12 student proficiency. Additionally, they recognized that the Arts GSEs include metrics that address key concepts in arts learning as required in the Basic Education Program.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the Rhode Island Arts Standards, as attached.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Changes to English-Language Learners Regulations, for public hearing

The Commissioner reminded the Board that the next two agenda items were presented at the last Board of Regents work session and are being presented to give the Department the opportunity to reopen the English-Language Learners Regulations and the Regulations Governing Special Education. Both agenda items are for approval for public comment. The first item concerns the Regulations Governing the Education of English-Language Learners. Commissioner Gist told the members of the Board that the proposed changes are needed to clarify language, terms, and exit criteria for the field. These changes, though important, are minimal. In total, 4 clarifying alterations are being recommended: the first to define the term “English Language Instructional Program” to section L-4-2; second, to update the link in the first paragraph of L-4-9, “Coordination with Other Activities”; third, to modify the assessment requirement in paragraph two of L-4-9 “Coordination with other activities”; and the last to update L-4-16 “Exit.” These modifications were developed in full partnership with the ELL community, particularly the local directors.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve, for the Purpose of Public Hearing, Changes to English-Language Learners Regulations, as presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Changes to Special Education Regulations, for public hearing

Next, the Commissioner spoke to the Board about the proposed changes to the Special Education Regulations. She explained that approval of these changes will give the Department an opportunity to reopen the regulations to:

1. Incorporate federal-mandated language that passed after the reauthorization of IDEA and after Rhode Island adopted its new rules and regulations;
2. Reconcile the federal regulation regarding Parentally Privately Placed Students with the Rhode Island General Law that was passed after Rhode Island adopted its new rules and regulations; and
3. Address inadvertent omissions and errors. The major omission is related to informing parents of their rights regarding confidentiality and records destruction.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve, for the Purpose of Public Hearing, Changes to Special Education Regulations, as presented.

Approved Unanimously.

ESEA Reauthorization

Commissioner Gist reviewed the 2009 ESEA, as follows:

The proposed 2009 ESEA focuses on four areas: Improving teacher and principal effectiveness to ensure that every classroom has a great teacher and every school has a great leader; providing information to families to improve their students' learning; implementing college- and career-ready standards and developing improved assessments aligned with those standards; and improving student learning and achievement in America's lowest-performing schools by providing intensive support and effective interventions. The blueprint for a "re-envisioned" federal role builds on the following key priorities:

College- and Career-Ready Students:

- Supporting rigorous college- and career-ready standards, preparing college- and career-ready students;
- Rewarding progress and success; and
- Turning around the lowest-performing schools.

Great Teachers and Great Leaders:

- Elevating the profession and focusing on recruiting, preparing, developing, and rewarding effective teachers and leaders;
- Focusing on teacher and leader effectiveness in improving student outcomes;
- Supporting states and districts that are willing to take bold action to increase the number of effective teachers and leaders where they are needed most;
- Strengthening pathways into teaching and school-leadership positions in high-need schools.

Meeting the Needs of English Learners and Other Diverse Learners:

- Improving programs for English Learners and encouraging innovative programs and practices to support English Learners' success and to build the knowledge base about what works;
- Maintaining and strengthening formula-grant programs for Native American students, homeless students, migrant students, and neglected or delinquent students, as well as for districts that are in rural areas or that are affected by federal property and activities;
- Meeting the needs of students with disabilities throughout ESEA and through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

A Complete Education:

- Strengthening instruction in literacy and in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, aligned with improved standards that build toward college- and career-readiness;
- Supporting teachers and students in teaching and learning to adopt more rigorous standards that prepare students for college and a career;
- Improving access to a well-rounded education for students in high-need schools;
- Expanding access to college coursework and other accelerated-learning opportunities for students in high-need schools.

Successful, Safe, and Healthy Students:

- Providing a cradle-through-college-and-career continuum in high-poverty communities that provides effective schools, comprehensive services, and family supports;
- Supporting programs that redesign and expand the school schedule, provide high-quality afterschool programs, and provide comprehensive supports to students;

- Using data to improve students' safety, health, and well-being, and increasing the capacity of states, districts, and schools to create safe, healthy, and drug-free environments.

Fostering Innovation and Excellence:

- Providing incentives for a Race to the Top among states and districts willing to take on ambitious, comprehensive reforms;
- Developing, validating, and scaling up promising and proven educational strategies to improve student outcomes;
- Expanding educational options to increase choice within the public-school system through high-performing new schools and meaningful public-school choice.

Additional Cross-Cutting Priorities:

- Increasing flexibility in return for improved outcomes;
- Expanding programs, projects, and strategies that show results;
- Focusing on key priorities across programs.

Charter School Update

The Commissioner asked RIDE staff member Roy Seitsinger to update the Regents on the status of the charter schools. Mr. Seitsinger reviewed the two preliminarily approved projects: Trinity Academy and the Greene School. RIDE monitors the status on the project-readiness criteria. Each project is making progress on the criteria and, at this point, it is anticipated that they will be prepared to seek final approval this spring.

RIDE also received two new project applications in December 2009: the R.I. Nurses Institute Middle College and the Reis Norton Academy. The Charter Application Review Committee evaluated each of the new proposals and met to discuss their recommendations. The review committee determined that the Reis Norton Academy was inadequate, lacking in substance, and did not merit moving forward. They determined that the R.I. Nurses Institute proposal was compelling and had merit and recommended moving forward with this proposal. Both projects have been notified of the Review Committee's evaluations and recommendations. Meetings have been scheduled with each group to discuss their next steps.

Requests from existing charter schools include a request for reauthorization from the Highlander Charter School. However, the Department is in the process of designing a new protocol outlining a new *Process for the Closure and Re-chartering of Public Charter Schools*. Highlander has been notified that its school will be the first charter to undergo the new review process. RIDE has also received a request from the Democracy Prep-Blackstone Valley Charter School seeking to amend its existing charter to allow the school to expand to multiple locations under its single charter. In so doing, it also seeks to double its existing authorized enrollment. The Department is currently considering the viability and impact of the request.

Additionally, the Department has received a request from the New England Laborers/Cranston Construction Careers Academy seeking to amend its charter to expand its enrollment from 245 students to 300 students, beginning in the 2010-11 school year.

Mr. Seitsinger also reported that the RFP posting for SEA applications under the U.S.D.O.E Charter Schools Program was posted in the Federal Register on Tuesday, March 23, 2010. The closing date for submissions is 4 p.m., Friday, May 7, 2010; the

Department has established an internal deadline of April 30, 2010. Under the recently released guidelines, there are four priority areas requested by the Secretary of Education:

Priority 1 - The state provides a periodic review and evaluation of public charter schools at least once every five years to measure school progress.

Priority 2 - The state has demonstrated progress in increasing the number of high-quality charter schools that are held accountable to measureable educational objectives.

Priority 3 - The state provides for an authorizing agency other than a Local Educational Agency (LEA) or has an appeals process for the denial of a charter by an LEA authorizer.

Priority 4 - The state ensures that each charter school has a high degree of autonomy over the school's budget and expenditures.

For FY 2010, this grant competition also provides for an invitational priority. The Secretary is particularly interested in projects that are designed to expand the state's capacity to support high-quality charter schools in one or more geographic areas where a large proportion of the public schools have been identified as in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. There are urban and rural options.

RIDE staff have convened an internal project team that has been meeting and conferring with Dr. Wong, of Brown University, and his research team on this project. Staff have also been facilitating the involvement and input from the R.I. League of Charter Schools to provide input into the shape and design of the study. RIDE has received student-lottery data from each of the charter schools and has identified the State-Assigned Student Identifier (SASID) for each student in the study. Only the SASID will be provided to the researchers. RIDE has also prepared a data-sharing agreement with the Brown team that will provide it access to all pertinent data contained in the RIDE Data Warehouse, and RIDE has provided a \$5,000 grant to the Brown researchers to conduct the study.

Budget Update

- The FY 2010 supplemental budget is expected to be approved by the General Assembly soon.
- To address the current projected reduction in revenues (approximately \$30M), agencies may be required to take further reductions in the FY 2010 budget.
- RIDE staff members are currently reviewing the Department's expenditures to ensure that, if these reductions were to happen, our high-priority investments would be protected.
- The Department's FY 2011 Senate Finance Committee hearing was held last week. We expect to address the House Finance Committee in the next few weeks.

Legislative Update

Commissioner Gist reported on legislative issues, as follows:

- The State of Education Address has been rescheduled for next Wednesday, April 7, 2010, at the Rise of the Assembly (Approximately 4:30 p.m.).
- Funding formula: RIDE is meeting with key staff members from the House and Senate on the funding formula next Tuesday, April 6, 2010, at 1:00 p.m., at RIDE.

- The Commissioner will be meeting with the House and Senate leadership on the funding formula ASAP and will inform the Board as soon as a date has been established.

As per RIGL 42-46-5(a)(2), the meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m. into Executive Session.

The meeting reconvened to open session at 6:05 p.m.

Chairman Flanders reported that during Executive Session there were no votes taken.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the minutes of the Executive Session be sealed.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Adjournment: With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.