

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

SPECIAL WORK SESSION MINUTES – COMMON CORE

Thursday, June 24, 2010
2:30 – 4:00 p.m.

The Rhode Island Department of Education – Shepard Building
5th Floor – Peter McWalters Conference Room
255 Westminster St. – Providence, RI 02903

Regents attending: R. Flanders, P. Guida, A. Davis, B. Shimberg, K. Forbes, C. Callahan, A. Beretta, P. Guida

Meeting convened at 2:37 p.m.

Review and Discussion of Common Core

Governor Carcieri attended the meeting for the purpose of participating with the Regents in the discussion about the Common Core. The Governor gave opening remarks.

Commissioner Gist explained that this work session was scheduled to ensure that the Regents have a full understanding of the Common Core standards as well as Rhode Island's membership in the assessment consortia. The Commissioner then invited Mary Ann Snider to talk about the transition between Rhode Island's current standards and NECAP assessment to the new standards and assessment systems. Ms. Snider told the group that while the transition away from current standards and NECAP assessment may be difficult, the new standards and assessment systems will provide increased benefits to Rhode Island.

The group discussed the timetable for transitioning to the new system. Ms. Snider reported that a proposal from the Partnership for Assessment Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) was submitted to USDOE and is expected to be funded. Rhode Island will move from fall testing to spring testing and there will be "through" course assessments (tests that are given in pieces throughout the year so that they can be scored and feedback given to educators more quickly).

Next, the group discussed how the assessments will be scored. Regent Callahan commented that giving teachers the option of scoring their own tests will provide them with a great professional development tool. Ms. Snider said that all of the states agree that assessments need to be more technology-based and by 2014-15 assessments will be delivered online, including writing assessments.

The Regents also talked about how to engage teachers in the development process so that there is more buy-in. Ms. Snider spoke about the need for assessments to be instructionally relevant for teachers. RIDE will be committed to working with teachers to ensure they understand the system and PARCC will provide training modules for teachers as part of the consortium's RTTT assessment grant. Regent Callahan also offered the services of the RI Federation of Teachers to help to engage teachers in this work.

The group talked about the importance of ensuring that schools are equipped with the technology they need. The Department is seeking grants to fund technology in the schools. It is a possibility that the Department may be able to use the "E2T2" grant to achieve better/more use of technology.

The group also discussed the alignment of curricula to standards and assessment; communication about the changes expected of teachers and schools; and how to ensure that all schools' curricula are aligned. The Regents then talked about how the Common Core compares to Rhode Island's current standards. Ms. Snider assured them that the Common Core standards presented are at a level/rigor higher, or equal to Rhode Island's standards. She explained that currently there are only English Language Arts and Mathematics Common Core standards, however science standards are being developed.

Regent Davis asked if there will be a common student identifier to help Rhode Island track students who move from one district to another and to determine the effectiveness of educator preparation programs. Ms. Snider explained that Rhode Island has a student identifier but is looking at using a national student identifier that will allow us to send course assessment data along with a child regardless of where he/she moves.

Governor Carcieri told the group that on the assessment side, the Governors have been discussing that they want to be sure that the assessments are comparable for the two consortia likely to be funded by the federal government. Achieve is going to establish a task force to look at both assessments to ensure comparability. Commissioner Gist added that CCSSO was also working on trying to get everyone to agree on one consortium, but it ended up being two. She said that over time, they may merge together, but the fact that standards are the same and both are committed to high levels of rigor, it should be comparable. The Commissioner told the Regents that of all the areas of the strategic plan, this is the one area that would be impacted the most if Rhode Island does not get RTTT funding. The group then spoke about how the implementation of Race to the Top will be rolled out (assuming that Rhode Island receives funding). Mary Ann Snider reported that the department is working with superintendents and will be holding seminars and training sessions. It was suggested that the department should also reach out to parents and the public.

Next the group talked about the Board Exam Consortium led by NCEE. There will be 5-10 pilot sites for Board Exams. Similar to how high-performing countries do their assessments, this will allow students to demonstrate proficiency earlier in high school so that they can move on to college earlier. So far a dozen districts have expressed interest in participating.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:52 p.m.