

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

MEETING HELD AT
Narragansett High School
245 South Pier Rd.
Narragansett, RI
Thursday, January 6, 2010 4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Attending: R. Flanders, C. Callahan, A. Beretta, B. Shimberg, A. Cano Morales, A. Davis, K. Forbes

The meeting convened at 4:00 p.m.

Commissioner's Report

Report on Lowest Achieving Schools -

Providence - Commissioner Gist reported that a letter of response regarding UP! Management-labor compact, School Reform Plans, and SIG application has been prepared and will be delivered to Superintendent Brady this week, and the Office of Transformation met with representatives of the Providence Teaching and Learning team to discuss technical support to be provided to each of the four PLA schools. Additionally, members of RIDE's Division of Accountability and Quality Assurance were recently invited to attend an executive session of the Providence School Board to discuss the status of the criterion-based hiring case and its relationship to the establishment of the UP! compact.

Central Falls - The Commissioner told the members of the Board that teaching and learning continues to be the focus of the leadership at Central Falls schools. Classroom observations continue, and interventions to assist in teacher growth and improvement have been implemented. In addition, student supports such as content-credentialed, newly hired, long-term substitutes and virtual-learning classes in literacy are in place. These measures have been undertaken to ensure that students are receiving appropriate instruction and that they will be assessed in each content area prior to the close of the next marking period. The transformation plan will be implemented even more fully in the next few weeks with the awarding of \$1.3 million in School Improvement Grant funds for Central Falls High School.

Educator Evaluation

By January 14, the first draft of the Evaluation Model will be sent to every superintendent and principal, members of the Board of Regents, and Frank Flynn and Larry Purtill and posted on the RIDE web site. Field-testing will begin shortly, and RIDE will be continuing to hold public forums and to receive questions and suggestions through an e-mail address dedicated specifically for educator evaluation. In addition to Portsmouth, RIDE will be field-testing in Johnston and will be working with the AFT Innovation districts to conduct parallel field-testing in one district. Both field-testing designs are very small (only 2-3 schools per district).

Public Remarks

The following speakers spoke on the passage of the proposed High School Regulations: Charlie Plant, East Bay Met School – Reviewed the statistical relationship between family income and math and reading scores. He urged the Regents to look at the NECAP data carefully before making it a requirement for graduation.

Patricia Hines, RIASP – Addressed the Regents on behalf of the RI Association of School Principals. She said that RIASP is grateful for the open process that the Regents and RIDE have used regarding the proposed changes to the Secondary Regulations, however requested that the Regents allow more time to communicate with families to ensure that students and parents understand the new graduation requirements and to communicate with their faculties and staffs to ensure proper training to support the requirements.

[Remarks are attached]

Robert Mitchell, Prin. Chariho High School/RIASP – Told the members of the Board that he supports multiple measures and believes the current system has to be changed to improve student proficiency. However, he is concerned about the capacity of the school systems to make the changes that they are being asked to do in the time frame that the changes must be made. Additionally, Mr. Mitchell expressed his concern that there hasn't been enough information distributed on the new evaluation model.

Jason Masterson, Prin. North Cumberland Middle School/RIASP – Expressed concerns about the length of time it will take for students who cannot show proficiency on the NECAP to have an opportunity to re-take the test. He urged the Regents to consider alternate assessments [Remarks are enclosed].

Steve Heath, Parent, Jamestown – Questioned the use of a “cookie-cutter” test to determine what students know.

Amy Leonard, Wakefield, RI [mother of five] – Told the Regents that the NECAP is both morally and pedagogically wrong.

Daniel Kelly, Prin. Smithfield High School – Spoke to the group about the impact of the proposed regulations on the students at Smithfield High School. He said that Smithfield has worked with the RIDE high-school reform office to implement a system of determining student proficiency and that to change the rules six months before the start of students' senior year is unfair. [written comments enclosed]

Richard Drolet, Prin. North Cumberland Middle School – Supports the Regents' work to raise student achievement; however, need to preserve common planning time [Remarks are enclosed].

June Vinhateiro, Kingston parent and grandparent – Told the group that teachers and schools must be held accountable; however, in order to really make a difference, the focus needs to be on supporting families and children prenatal through preschool. She emphasized that the problem cannot be fixed in high school; also, that it is “terrible” to give poor children, who are the most likely to drop out, a lesser/lower diploma than other children's.

Bill Holland, former Narragansett Superintendent – Spoke to the group about the “over-regulation” of education. He said that high-stakes testing should be part of the equation, but not a major part; it definitely should not be used to determine if a student will graduate or not. Additionally, Mr. Holland told the Regents that

labeling diplomas through a three-tier process is unfair because it separates the “haves” from the “have nots.”

A group of students from Young Voices addressed the members of the Board with their concerns about the proposed regulations including that the regs are too vague; the section on “growth” is too vague – what constitutes enough growth?; concerns about scores on the NECAP determining if a student will graduate or not; and concerns about the three-tiered diplomas. The students were: Erick Martinez, Young Voices; Dayo Owoyemi, Young Vices & Classical High School; Chabeli Gonzalez, Youth In Action; Naim Coteman-el, Young Voices; Jackie Lee, Youth In Action; Jeleny Deleon, Young Voices; and Janelly DeJesus, Young Voices.

Karen Feldman, Young Voices – Told the Regents that the proposed regulations are too vague and urged the Regents not to rush the process.

Cheryl Lafond, Central Falls Board of Trustees nominee – Thanked the members of the Board for their support for her nomination to the Central Falls Board of Trustees. [Remarks are enclosed.]

Leslie Estrada, Central Falls Board of Trustees – Expressed her gratitude to the Department and Regents for their support and expressed her support of Governor Chafee for calling for a group to come together to mediate.

James Diossa, Central Falls City Council - Urged the Regents to advocate for Central Falls students. [Remarks are enclosed.]

The following students addressed the Board on the Hope High School appeal, common planning time issue: Cynthia Jackson, Hope High School; Hollie Ostrowsky, Hope High School; and Angela Cruz, Hope High School.

Ken Fish, retired RIDE – Re: High School Regulations – Mr. Fish told the Board that using NECAP scores to “visit” consequences on kids is completely inappropriate. Additionally, Mr. Fish expressed his support for common planning time in schools.

Chairman’s Remarks

Chairman Flanders asked Shannon Donovan, the Rhode Island 2011 Teacher of the Year, to join the Regents in the front of the room to be recognized. Chairman Flanders congratulated Ms. Donovan and cited her for being a “strong advocate for hands-on learning” who, together with her students, devised a forest-management plan for the grounds of Scituate High School. The Chairman then presented Ms. Donovan with a certificate of achievement. Next, Chairman Flanders recognized Sharon Osborne on her retirement effective January 14. He presented Ms. Osborne with a certificate of achievement and a gift on behalf of the Board of Regents.

Chairman Flanders and the Board also recognized Howard Haronian on his retirement as Board Legal Counsel for 37 years. Mr. Haronian was presented with a gift from the Board.

Approval of Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting of December 2, 2010; and December 16, 2010 Work Session and Executive 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 December 2, 2010; and December 16, 2010 Work Session and Executive Session.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

UCOA Presentation

Commissioner Gist reminded the Regents that over the past three years the Department has been working diligently with school districts and the Auditor General and his staff creating and implementing the statewide Uniform Chart of Accounts that was mandated by the General Assembly. This statewide chart will be used in the day-to-day accounting in local districts to track not only the revenues flowing to school districts but also how those funds are expended. FY10 financial data in UCOA format has been received from all 52 districts and charter schools, and an intensive quality assurance process is under way to ensure the consistency and comparability of this first-year data. It is anticipated that the first set of UCOA financial data will be available in early February. This significant reform will provide an unprecedented level of transparency in financial data and will result in data that can be used to inform decisions at multiple levels. RIDE staff members Carolyn Dias and Cynthia Brown provided the Board with an in-depth update on the project.

Approval of High School Regulations for Public Hearing

The Commissioner told the group that the public hearings on the high-school regulations are scheduled. They will be held on Tuesday, January 18, at 5:00 p.m., at the Community College of Rhode Island, Flanagan Campus, in Lincoln; Wednesday, January 19, at 5:00 p.m., at South Kingstown High School; and Tuesday, January 25, at 5:00 p.m., at the Providence Career & Technical Academy.

She then asked RIDE staff member Andrea Castañeda to walk the Regents through the regulations and to answer questions. Ms. Castañeda reviewed the changes made to the document over the past month, including the changes to the definitions of Certificates and Common Core Standards on page 3; section L-6-3.3 new language on the “growth” element of the regulations; and section L-6-3.4 on the differentiated diplomas system and certificate system. The Regents discussed the “growth” element and how “growth” would be determined, how common planning time lines up with the BEP, proficiency and the criticism of the over-reliance on the NECAP assessment as a requirement for graduation, the need for more clarity on the diploma tiers, and how to identify systems that need to be put in place to ensure that students are getting what they need to graduate.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Regulations of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education K-12 Literacy, Restructuring of the Learning Environment at the Middle and High School Levels, and Proficiency Based Graduation Requirements at High Schools, for public hearing, as attached.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Member to the Central Falls Board of Trustees

Commissioner Gist told the Regents that there are requests for the approval of members to two Boards of Trustees – the Central Falls Board and the Metropolitan Career and Technical School Board of Trustees.

Cheryl Lafond is being nominated to fill the vacancy on the Central Falls Board of Trustees. She is a resident of Central Falls and has children enrolled in the Central Falls Schools.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve Cheryl Lafond to the Central Falls Board of Trustees, as presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously. [Anna Cano Morales abstained from the vote]

Approval of Member to the Metropolitan Career and Technical School Board of Trustees

Next, Commissioner Gist presented Gina Wesley-Silva to fill the vacancy on the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees. Ms. Silva is the parent of a MET School student and has a long association with television, entertainment, and journalism.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve Gina Wesley-Silva to the Metropolitan Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees, as presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Appeal - Certain Providence Students v. Hope High School

Chairman Flanders asked Regent Amy Beretta to read the decision from the Appeals Committee, as attached. After Ms. Beretta read the decision, she told the Regents that this decision was reached by a 2 to 1 vote and that she had been the dissenting vote. She asked that if the Regents vote to uphold the Commissioner's decision, as recommended by the Appeals Committee, the decision be stayed until the Board votes on the high-school regulations. The Regents discussed the status of common planning time at the school and the availability of the special visitor's report. They decided to continue the agenda items until the January 20 Board work session and indicated that they would like to receive the report before then.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Vote of the Board of Regents in the Matter of Certain Providence Students versus Hope High School be Continued until January 20, 2011.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Adjournment: With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.