

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
MINUTES OF MEETING
January 27, 2005

A meeting of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education was held at the Shepard Building - 255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903 and convened at 5:10 p.m.

In Attendance

J. DiPrete, C. Callahan, G. Grove, M. Mancieri, and K. Forbes.

[*Note: Regent Patrick Guida participated in the meeting via telephone from Washington, D.C.]

Public Remarks:

Steven Fishbach from the Children First Coalition addressed the board on the issue of Hope High School. Mr. Fishbach urged members of the board to convene an advisory committee to be made up of parents, students, and community stakeholders to develop a plan to intervene in ALL of Providence's failing high schools and middle schools, rather than to focus just on Hope High School.

Barbara Ashby, representing Providence school librarians, spoke to the board on why superintendent Johnson is allowed to continue violating section six of the BEP. Ms. Ashby urged that library staff be restored. She requested that a specific date be set for a commissioner's decision on the Providence school libraries variance request.

Peter Quesnel, a Providence Librarian distributed copies of a Scholastic Research foundation paper entitled "**School Librarians Work**". He told the Regents that there is substantial research showing a positive relationship between achievement and well staffed and equipped school libraries. He urged members of the board to read the report and act to improve Providence school libraries.

Chairman's Remarks:

Chairman DiPrete addressed the issue of the forthcoming decision on school libraries. He told members of the board that he has spoken to the Commissioner and agrees with him that the final decision should be part of a larger Providence discussion and will be addressed as such.

Chairman DiPrete expressed his disappointment that Catherine Ciarlo was unable to attend tonight's meeting to be honored as the Superintendent of the Year, but promised that the Regents will do something in the near future. He offered his congratulations and best wishes.

Mr. DiPrete also told the board that he had attended the SAT announcement at North Providence High School. He said that a student had spoken about the importance of the exams. The Chairman was very impressed by the presentation.

Discussion of Hope High School

Commissioner McWalters told members of the board that he has been able to meet with the Providence Mayor and Superintendents; NAACP leadership; Presidents of Rhode Island School of Design and Rhode Island College; and the Commissioner of Higher Education about the Hope High School reconstruction plan and building community partnerships. However, because of the weather, he had not had the opportunity to speak with everyone that he feels he needs to, so will hold off making the plan public until late next week. He spoke in detail about the process that had been used to develop the plan. Mr. McWalters then reviewed the “pieces” of the plan – Parent and Community partnerships, technology, parent outreach and interactions with teachers, central office and school operations, school issues – student advisories/personalization, parent outreach (of teachers through the advisories); flexible scheduling; program quality. The Commissioner also advised members that the plan calls for the appointment of a special master who will report directly to the Commissioner. He informed members that he would like to call a special meeting of the board to review the final document in detail.

The Commissioner would then ask that the Regents “accept” his recommendations and be ready to assist in ensuring the implementation of the plan.

Members of the board discussed the role of the special master and some specific details of the plan. They also discussed the connectiveness of the plan to the high schools regulations and how the department is assisting the rest of the system to better prepare kids for high school through the PS&I system and face-to-face meetings.

The group also discussed, in detail how the plan will be rolled out – how the department is planning to let the students, parents, teachers, and community know about what is in the plan.

It was decided that the Regents would meet on Tuesday, February 1st to review the plan in detail and consider it for “acceptance”.

Budget Update

The Commissioner reported that the Governor’s budget is now public and gave highlights, as follows:

- Science and Technology Initiative - additional \$250,000 plus two FTEs to strengthen the state’s capacity to support science and technology;

- Statewide Curriculum in English language Arts and Mathematics - \$400,000 and one FTE to begin implementation of the statewide curriculum in English language arts and mathematics;
- “Principal Leadership” Program - additional \$150,000 plus one FTE to establish a “principal leadership” program which will support mentoring future principals.
- Vision Services Program - increase funds to address the needs of the visually impaired. Additional \$250,000 in general revenues and anticipates an additional \$140,000 from local school districts to address this issue;
- Comprehensive Education Information System - additional funds totaling \$1.2 million for the Rhode Island Department of Education’s Comprehensive Education Information System to allow RIDE to continue to implement a consistent and robust statewide data collection system that will allow all districts and schools to make informed decisions based on solid, timely information;
- Adult Literacy - additional state financing of \$2.6 million for a new adult basic education initiative;
- RI Education Telecommunication Fund - \$800,000 for the RI Telecommunications Education Access Program which provides Internet access lines for all K-12 schools and libraries in Rhode Island;
- Progressive Support and Intervention - increased funds to assist schools that have been placed in “corrective-action” status.
- an additional \$15.2M targeted for professional development;
- \$2.2M - Davies, School for the Deaf and MET
- Charter Schools funded at the next level \$6M
- \$3.2M - Central Falls

Update on High School/Middle School Restructuring and New Diploma System

RIDE Deputy Commissioner, Todd Flaherty reported that the department would be offering regional workshops on the new diploma system beginning next week.

Update on Advisory Panel for Instruction

Deputy Commissioner Flaherty advised members that the Advisory Panel for Instruction (that is being charged with formulating the statewide curriculum) had come together for its first meeting.

Executive Session

As per R.I.G.L. 42-46-5-(1), the meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m. for Executive Session.

The meeting reconvened to open session at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman DiPrete reported that the board had met in Executive Session to discuss personnel issues and that the minutes of the Executive Session of January 27, 2005 be sealed.

Adjourn

With Unanimous consent the meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.