

**BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**February 15, 2007**

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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 4:00 pm.

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**In Attendance**

J. DiPrete, C. Callahan, B. Camara, P. Guida, K. Forbes,

**Public Remarks**

- There were not public remarks.

**Chairman's Remarks**

- Ms. Sara Groh, President of the Rhode Island Association of Student Councils reported that her organization's annual State Conference held on February 11 and 12 was very successful with over 100 students in attendance. A complete report is available.
- Chairman DiPrete announced that there will be a Board of Regents work session on the Central Falls/URI plan on Thursday, March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- The Chairman commented on the positive results of the recent NECAP scores.

**Approval of Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting**

**MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the Meeting Minutes of January 18, 2007.**

**VOTE: Approved Unanimously.**

[Chairman DiPrete asked that the order of the agenda be changed to allow the Commissioner to report on Central Falls. There were no objections.]

**Commissioner's Report**

Commissioner McWalters acknowledged the presence of Central Falls' Interim Superintendent Dr. William Holland; President of the University of Rhode Island, Dr. Robert Carothers; and Chairman of the Central Falls Board of Trustees, Anna Morales. Mr. McWalters reported on the meeting with Governor Carcieri and President Carothers on the Central Falls/URI partnership. He told the members of the board that Central Falls and URI are in the process of developing a collaborative plan that will need to be signed off by the Regents and Governor. Dr. Holland and President Crothers spoke about the President's visit to Central Falls high school to meet with teachers and staff to determine what resources Central Falls needs and how the University can help to deliver those resources. The President expressed his excitement about working on the project. Drs. Holland and Carothers will be working with a planning team that will be composed of representative from AFT, district leadership, RIDE, legislators, city council members, CCRI and RIC. The plan and a contract agreement will be brought before the Board of Regents and Board of Governors for approval by July 1, 2007 and will include an assessment piece to evaluate how the plan is working over time.

Mr. Holland then gave the group an update on the progress of the Superintendent's search. There will be an appointment in early April of a new Superintendent and the search for a new High School Principal is just beginning

Members of the Board expressed their concern about being involved in the process early on. Members asked about a possible "plan B" if the URI partnership doesn't work. Commissioner McWalters told the group that the Department and Regents will stay tied to the conversation both through the authority of the Commissioner via corrective action and the URI partnership. He emphasized that if URI doesn't or can't follow through on a collaborative plan that will improve the schools, the department/Regents will be back at the table to talk about additional corrective action activities. But, any plan will take time – at least three years before any actual results are seen.

### Endorsement of Rhode Island Statewide Curriculum

Because RIDE Director of Instruction, Diane Schaefer had conducted two in-depth informational sessions on the statewide curriculum on January 11 and February 1<sup>st</sup> consecutively, she didn't review the content of the presentation at this time. She told the Regents that the Governor's office would be holding a press conference to introduce the statewide curriculum web site on February 13 and that a brochure will be distributed to libraries and families throughout the state to inform them of the statewide curriculum.

**MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, The Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Endorses the Rhode Island Statewide Curriculum, as attached.**

**Vote: Approved Unanimously.**

### Presentation on Special Education Regulations

Ken Swanson, RIDE Director of Special Populations distributed a Tentative Timeline and process for the review of the state's special education regulations, as attached. The regulations have gone through an early input process throughout October and November, 2006 and brought forward to the RIDE regulatory work group in December 2006. There will be a Regents work shop in March and the regulations will be brought to the Board of Regents for approval for public hearings on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. The public hearings will be held in April and May; and brought for final approval in June.

### Update on Proposed New School Construction Regulations

Board of Regents Finance Committee Chairman, Bob Camara told the Board that these regulations were drafted in response to the legislation telling us to "fix" the process of approving school construction. The top concerns were: ensuring equity and consistency across districts; implementing a process that would address cost issues; addressing quality of the buildings being built; and ensuring school facilities were adequately maintained to avoid future large cost renovation projects. Because RIDE did not receive any additional funding and did not have the resources in-house to perform this task, we partnered with the Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships (NEEP). Through private grant funding, NEEP was able to hire two additional consultants to assist with this project who looked at best practices in numerous other states. Aspects of Massachusetts, Vermont and New Jersey's regs were incorporated into draft Rhode Island regulations. Proposed changes include the way applications are processed and are reimbursed; the standardization of school construction; the requirement that districts adequately budget for facility maintenance; and the enforcement of compliance with the new regulations. The final draft of the regulations will be available on the RIDE web site beginning tomorrow. The regulations will come back for board approval for public hearing on March 22 and will go to public hearing on April 3 and 4. Final approval of the regs is tentatively scheduled for April 26 with the regs effective March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Chairman DiPrete made the observation that the new regulations may force the districts to work together more because they require that districts include cross district considerations on facilities analysis of existing buildings and student demographics.

### Update on Secondary Regulations

Regent Colleen Callahan updated the board on the proposed revisions to the secondary regulations as follows:

- New language added to reference middle schools and clarification of existing language;
- Alignment of literacy assessment and programming regs language with RIDE guidance documents and adjustment of deadlines;
- Adds language to specify graduation requirements – the completion of 20 core academic courses;
- Newly added section outlines the requirements of a "Regents Diploma" standards-based diploma;
- Adds a requirement for special needs and English language learners to successfully complete the proficiency based graduation requirements in order to be awarded a Regents Diploma;
- Requires demonstration through the Commissioner's Review that students have been provided access and opportunity to complete graduation requirements;
- Adds the requirement that districts have middle level advisories;
- Requires all districts to have weekly common planning time.

Ms. Callahan also reported that the Board of Regents CASP committee had met with representatives from the arts community. The group is urging that the arts are included in the core requirements for graduation. We are in the process of scheduling the next CASP meeting to speak with Career & Technical representatives and to talk about “next steps”. The proposed changes to the regulations will go to the Department attorneys and then back out for public hearings for a tentative June 28 approval.

### Budget Update

RIDE’s Director of Finance, Carolyn Dias distributed a document highlighting the Governor’s FY 2008 Budget as follows:

- Close a \$254 million projected budget shortfall and continue to drive to resolve the structural deficit;
- Implement several statewide personnel-related initiatives to generate savings;
- Achieve major savings from the state’s Human Services programs including implementing changes in Medicaid enforcement required by federal law (Rite-Care), limiting services provided by DCYF to children under the age of 18, and changing the eligibility of the Child Care Assistance Program;
- Achieve savings from the implementation of changes in the justice process that would result in decreased dependence on incarceration for non-violent offenders and an increased utilization of appropriate community-based treatment and sanctions.
- Target investments in education and economic development to position Rhode Island as a leader in science and technology.

### RIDE Highlights

- Recommended \$1.1 billion in expenditures from all funds for RIDE in FY 2008.
- The net increase consists of the following increases and decreases:
- Administration of the Comprehensive System; State School; State Education Aid; School Construction Aid and Teacher Retirement. A complete report is available.

### Legislative Update

RIDE staff member, Andy Andrade told the board that today is the deadline for submitting legislation and reported to the board on the status of the legislation submitted thus far. He highlighted the reauthorization of the federal special education regulations and gave a brief historical overview of Rhode Island’s special education regulations. A complete copy of the report is attached.

### Regents’ Committee Reports

**Administrator & Educator Quality** - Regent Forbes reported that the Administrator & Educator Quality committee is reviewing the department’s proposal on highly qualified teachers and will come to the Regents for approval for public hearing shortly.

**Finance & Personnel** – Regent Camara reported that the School Construction regulations will be brought before the board for approval for public hearing at its March 22 meeting with public hearing scheduled during the first week of April.

**PS&I** – Regent Guida, Commissioner McWalters and Deputy Commissioner D. Abbott gave the board a brief update on the status of Providence corrective action. Initial discussion with Providence concerning district intervention is beginning. Providence Superintendent Donnie Evans will be notifying the school board and Mayor tomorrow. Mr. Guida told the board that there will be a Regents PS&I committee meeting on March 7 to discuss the issue.

**State and Charter Schools Committee** – In the absence of committee chair, Gary Grove, Keith Olivera told the group that there is a State and Charter Schools committee meeting scheduled for March 21 on the appointment of the Chairman of the School for the Deaf Board of Trustees and the upcoming charter school review.

**Executive Agenda**

As per R.I.G.L. 42-46-5-(2), the meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m. for Executive Session.

The meeting reconvened to open session at 6:45 pm

**Adjournment**

With unanimous consent the meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.