

**RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
MINUTES OF MEETING – JANUARY 09, 2008**

A meeting of the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education was held at the Shepard Building - 255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903 & convened at 4:00 p.m.

In Attendance:

R. Flanders, A. Beretta, C. Callahan, R. Camara, A. Davis, K. Forbes, P. Guida, and G. Grove.

[Chairman Flanders asked that the order of the agenda be changes to accommodate members of the group, “Young Voices” already assembled. There were no objections.]

Members of the group, “Young Voices” introduced themselves and spoke to the Regents about their program. They explained that the student organization was founded in December, 2006 to advocate for the students in the Providence schools. Every member of the group has participated in a seven-month leadership academy to learn advanced research, public speaking, and debating skills. The Academy prepares youth to partner with adults, helping them to shape policies that will succeed at improving the lives of all young people.

Public Remarks

Attorney Vincent Santaniello urged the Regents not to approve the recommendation of the Board of Regents’ Appeals Committee in the appeal of Gorman versus the Jamestown School Committee.

Lisa Blais, from the Education Partnership submitted a document on contract analysis on behalf of the Partnership, called “Is your teacher contract a tool your school board uses to improve student achievement?” She urged the Regents to use the document as a resource as they considered their recommendations on collective bargaining.

Chairman's Remarks

- Judge Flanders updated the Regents on the work of the Governor’s Task Force on Collective Bargaining and informed them that two more sessions are scheduled – January 16 and 29. He told the group that the Regents are trying to have recommendations by February.
- The chairman talked to the group about Board committee assignments. He asked that board members provide input on current committee structure and assignments before the next meeting of the Board.
- Chairman Flanders congratulated Regent Grove for his ten-years of service to the Board and presented him with a plaque.

Approval of Minutes

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, the minutes of the Rhode Island Board of Regents Meeting of December 19, 2007 be approved as presented.

VOTE: Approved unanimously.

Approval of Changes to Certification Processes -

a) Increase in Fees

The Director of the Office of Education Quality and Certification, PaulaJo Gaines, presented the agenda item for consideration. She explained to the members of the Board that all the fees collected for certification goes into the general fund and the last time certification fees were increased was in 2005. At that time, some of the increase came back for the development of the I-Plan process but was later put back into the general fund. For the Board's information, Ms. Gaines reviewed an annualized cost comparison of fees to other New England states.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve, for the Purpose of Public Hearing, the Increase in Certification Fees and Transactions for Educators.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

b) Application Processes

Again, Ms. Gaines introduced the agenda item. She explained that as part of the Comprehensive Redesign of Certification, renewal licensure for educators has become a technology-based process. Initial licensure and the renewal of licensure for those employed in non-public schools, remains a paper-based application process. In order to support the Regents' commitment to transition from RICERT to IPLAN, we must now initiate the collection of teacher licensure data electronically rather than paper form.

RECOMMENDATION: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve, for the Purpose of Public Hearing, the Adoption of Mandatory Electronic Application for Educator Certification/Licensure.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

c) Approval of Changes to Certification Regulations/Evaluation of Credits

Ms. Gaines told the members of the Board that her office is currently working under two sets of regulations, the old regulations (pre- January 2005) and the I-Plan certificate regulations. She explained that at current staffing levels in the Office of Educator Quality and Certification, it is taking approximately six months to process, evaluate and issue an educator's certificate. The most immediate and effective action to prevent an increased certification timeline is to amend renewal requirements for those educators who are subject to certification regulations that took effect prior to January 1, 2005. A change in these regulations would allow educators to renew their certificates by the completion of credits in any content area.

Commissioner McWalters explained that some of this request is in response to the certification work load, however a bigger part is that it will improve the system by allowing teachers to take courses that they feel they actually need in the classroom.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve, for the Purpose of Public Hearing, Certification Regulations to Allow the Renewal of Certificates by the Completion of Credits in ANY Content area.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Appeal Items

Providence Teachers' Union, et. al. versus Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, et al, Appeal of the Grant of a Variance to The Providence School Board to Section 300.552 (B) (1) of the Regulations Governing the Education of Children with Disabilities

Regent Beretta read the Commissioner's recommended decision.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, in the matter of Providence Teachers' Union, et. al. v. Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, et al Appeal of the Grant of a Variance to the Providence School Board to Section 300.552 (B) (1) of the Regulations Governing the Education of Children with Disabilities, the Decision of the Commissioner to Grant the Subject Variance is Affirmed.

VOTE: Approved 7 - 0 (Regent Callahan recused herself from the vote.)

Anne Gorman versus Jamestown School Committee (Appeal of August 2, 2006 Commissioner's decision).

Again, Regent Beretta reviewed the decision, but told the members of the Board that the Appeals Committee had a split vote on the recommendation. Regent Forbes was the dissenting vote and told the Board that she supported the decision of the Commissioner in this matter because all school committees know they have to notify teachers by March 1 if they don't intend to renew their contract and the Jamestown school committee didn't meet that deadline. The group discussed the issue of the difference between "dismissal" versus a "decrease" of hours. Legal Counsel for the Board, Howard Haronian reminded the group that the Regents appellate authority is limited to a determination of whether the decision is potentially arbitrary, discriminatory or unfair. He also told them that to his recollection, this is the first case in which the question of whether a reduction in teaching service constitutes a dismissal for purposes of triggering the notice provisions of RIGL 16-13-3 has been directly raised and argued.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT in the Matter of Anne Gorman v. Jamestown School Committee (Appeal of August 2, 2006 Commissioner's decision) the Decision of the Commissioner is Overturned.

VOTE: APPROVED 6-2 (Regent Callahan and Regent Forbes voted against the motion).

RI Board of Regent Minutes

January 9, 2008

Page 4 of 4

Presentation on Learning First Alliance/Rhode Island

John Golden, the Executive Director of the Rhode Island Association of School Principals and Anne Seitsinger, the Executive Director of NCPE talked to the group about the Learning First Alliance/Rhode Island (LFA/RI). They told the Regents that the LFA/RI is made up of associations and groups from Rhode Island including the Association of RI Special Education Administrators, National Center on Public Education & Social Policy, RI Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals, National Education Association Rhode Island, RI Parent Teachers Association, RI Assoc. for Supervision and Curriculum Development, RI Association of School Committees, RI Association of School Principals, RI Middle Level Educators, RI School Superintendents' Association, RI Skills Commission, and RI School Counselor Association. Ms. Seitsinger told the Regents that the group was formed to help the public better understand school related issues.

BOR Committee Reports

Educator Quality – Regent Karin Forbes told the group that there are two public hearings scheduled in February regarding RI's Educator Certification Regulations and Fees, one on February 12, at the Shepard Building and one on February 26 at the Community College of Rhode Island - both from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm.

CASP- Regent Colleen Callahan reported that there will be two public hearings on the Secondary Regulations scheduled in March, one on March 4 at Toll Gate High School and the other one on March 6 at the Paff Auditorium, Shepard Building - both from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm.

State & Charter Schools – Regent Grove, chairman of the State and Charter Schools Committee talked to the group about the cap on the charter school legislation and his hope that it would be removed during this legislation session. He also told the members of the board that a federal charter school planning grant is scheduled to end if someone doesn't apply for it. He urged the Regents and department to apply for it.

Commissioner's Report

- Commissioner McWalters reported to the Board that the Urban Task Force has scheduled its first meeting in January. Regent Angus Davis will represent the Board of Regents;
- He reported on the release of the school classification - Continue to see improvement in the elementary system, but there is still a large gap between the urban and suburban districts and we won't see any real increases in the state scores until we close the gap.

Executive Agenda

There was no Executive Session.

Adjournment

With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m