

**RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
MINUTES OF MEETING – FEBRUARY 6, 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 4:10 p.m.

In Attendance:

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

Chairman's Remarks

- Chairman Flanders announced the Board of Regents committees, as follows:
Appeals Committee – Chair A. Beretta, K. Forbes, B Camara, A. Davis;
Finance/Personnel/Evaluation Committee – Chair R. Camara, C. Callahan;
State & Charter Schools – Chair. A. Davis, A. Beretta; Programs/School Improvement – Chair P. Guida, K. Forbes, C. Callahan.

Approval of Minutes

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, the minutes of the Rhode Island Board of Regents Meeting of January 9, 2008 be approved as presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Public Remarks

David Anderson from the Ocean State Policy Research Institute distributed a document “Removing Inflation from Rhode Island Public School Achievement Test Scores”. He told the members of the Board that this organization analyzes achievement tests and has been hired in various high schools around the state to evaluate their achievement. Mr. Anderson distributed a document “Towards Competent K-12 Schools/How Rhode Island might rebuild its public schools”.

Paul Grimes from United Healthcare of New England addressed the Board on issues related to health benefits in Rhode Island School districts including costs, benefits, and competition.

Approval of Members to the Rhode Island Vision Education and Services Program (RIVESP) Advisory Board

RIDE Director of the Office of Diverse Learners, Ken Swanson and Regent Amy Beretta (in her capacity as a member of the BOR State & Charter Schools Committee) brought the agenda item forward for consideration. Ms. Beretta told the group that the nominees had been brought forward for consideration at the December State and Charter Schools committee meeting, but had been sent back at the request of retired Chairman, Gary Grove to determine if any of the nominees are minorities. It was determined that the group does include minority

representation. The group is as follows: Christopher Butler, Executive Director of In-sight; Terrence Chapman, visually impaired person; Judy Ludsten, Exec. Director of Educational Programs Cranston School Dept.; Hope Houston, Librarian RI Talking Books; Gloria Stuart, Blind/low vision specialist TechAccess of RI/ person with a visual impairment; Themmi Evangelatos, parent of a person with a visual impairment; Greg Waldorf, O.D., RI Optometrist/ parent of a person with a visual impairment; Paul Loberti, Vice-Chair RI Parents of Blind and Visually Impaired Children/ parent of a person with a visual impairment; Elizabeth Frampton, President RI Parents of Blind and Visually Impaired Children,/parent of a person with a visual impairment; Richard Gaffney, President National Federation of the Blind of RI/person with a visual impairment; Stephanie Russo, parent of a person with a visual impairment.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Appointment of Members to the Rhode Island Vision Education Services and Programs, as presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Review of Special Education Regulation Protocols and Guidelines

RIDE Director of the Office of Diverse Learners, Ken Swanson gave an overview of the background of the passage of the new special education regulations passed by the Board of Regents at its December meeting and the drafting of the follow-up protocols.

RIDE Deputy Commissioner, David Abbott explained that the protocols are to provide the districts with the requirements to back up the special needs regulations passed at the December 19, Board of Regents meeting. He said that the Commissioner will review district plans for criteria pertaining to the following requirements: proposed staffing patterns, the basis for the assignment of personnel, evaluation of the staffing plan, general funding of special education and related services, qualifications of teachers, teacher assistants, and related service personnel, the physical space used for educating students with IEPs, submission of a high school redesign plan and any other matter concerning the delivery of FAPE in the LRE to students with disabilities. A copy of the staffing protocol plan was distributed.

Budget

RIDE Commissioner, Peter McWalters spoke to the members of the Board about the severity of the proposed funding cuts and said “for the record” that some education initiatives/Board of Regents’ goals will have to be sacrificed to accommodate the reduced budget. He urged the Regents to “take a stand” on their priorities.

RIDE Director of the Office of Finance, Carolyn Dias reviewed the Governor's FY 2008 Supplemental Budget. She explained that the Governor's plan is designed to cover the projected \$151 million budget shortfall in the current fiscal year. She reviewed issues and concerns for 2008, as follows:

- Financing of the Administration of the Comprehensive Education Strategy (ACES) reduced by \$743,740;
- The Governor's budget reduces RIDE's personnel budget and across the board reductions in other budget categories totaling \$608,233. For the second year, RIDE will be forced to postpone critical work in order to assure a balanced budget at the year end.
- State Schools - General revenue supports for the Davies School and the School for the Deaf decreases from the enacted level. Both schools have notified the department that due to teacher contractual agreements and the instruction day regulatory requirements the school will not be able to achieve the savings.
- She also talked about Education Aid, School Construction Aid and Teacher Retirement.

She then outlined the Governor's FY'09 Recommended Budget --

- Close a \$384 million projected budget shortfall;
- Implement several statewide personnel-related initiatives;
- reduce the number of state employees;
- Achieve savings and efficiencies;
- Reform the state's Medicaid program;
- Achieve savings from the implementation of changes in the justice process and reform the state pension system

The Regents expressed their concerns about the impact of the proposed cuts and how student achievement will be affected.

High School Reform Update

RIDE Director of the Office of Middle and High School Reform, Roy Seitsinger distributed a report on the Middle and High School Redesign and update. Dr. Seitsinger reported that so far thirty districts have received preliminary approval; and the remaining districts have had their approval withheld until further evidence has been received. The group discussed how this work will improve student achievement.

Board of Regents Committee Reports

- Regent Colleen Callahan, Chairman of the CASP Committee reported to the Board that there have been two public hearings scheduled on the Secondary Regulations – March 4 at 5:00 p.m. at Toll Gate High School in Warwick and one on March 6 at 5:00 p.m. at the Shepard Building Paff Auditorium.
- Regent Karin Forbes, Chairman of the Educator Quality Committee told the Board that two hearings on certification issues will be held – the first on February 12 at 5:00 p.m. in the Shepard Building Paff Auditorium and the second one on February 26 at 5:00 p.m. at CCRI Warwick.

Commissioner's Report

Commissioner McWalters told the group that he is getting ready for the budget hearings and is working on legislation on the state aid formula, the urban task force and transportation.

Executive Agenda

There was no Executive Session.

Adjournment

With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m