

Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary & Secondary Education
Minutes of February 5, 2009

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, P. Guida, C. Callahan, A. Cano-Morales, K. Forbes, B. Shimberg, A. Beretta, F. Caprio
[Commissioner McWalters was unable to attend this meeting because of a commitment in Washington.]

Public Remarks

There were no public remarks.

Chairman Remarks

Chairman Flanders asked RIDE staff member, Clark Greene to update the group on the status of the work on the Board of Regents priorities. Mr. Greene distributed a handout and reported on the following: Hiring a new Commissioner; Implementing the new secondary regulations with clarity and guidance for districts, parents, and students; Strengthening educator quality through development of evaluation tools; Completing the revision of the Basic Education Plan; Developing standards for high quality early childhood programs; Articulating guiding principles for an equitable and predictable education funding formula that Regents can support; Defining the scope of management rights and completing the Regents work on collective bargaining. A complete update is attached.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Flanders presented the minutes of the January 8, 2009 meeting.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the Minutes of January 8, 2009.

VOTE: Approved unanimously.

Approval of Member to Central Falls Board of Trustees

As the Chair of the Central Falls Board of Trustees, Regent Anna Cana-Morales brought forward the name of Bryan-Keith Nordan for consideration as a member to the Central Falls Board of Trustees. She told the members of the Regents that the Central Falls Trustees had recruited Mr. Nordan for their Board feeling that, as a UCAP teacher who had grown up in Central Falls, he would be an asset to the Trustees.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Appointment of Bryan-Keith Nordan to the Central Falls Board of Trustees, as Recommended by the Board of Regents' State and Charter Schools Committee.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Extended School Year Standards

Kenneth Swanson, Director of the Office of Diverse Learners, presented the agenda item for consideration by the Board. He told the Regents that as part of the approval of the special education regulations in December, 2007, Department staff, along with shareholder representation which included parents, teachers and administrators had reviewed all applicable laws, a variety of state standards, and other relevant information to develop the extended school year standards, as attached. The Regents had held a public hearing on the standards and had received 15 written comments – all overwhelmingly supporting the standards.

Members of the Board questioned the provision of the standards that extended school year services be provided based upon the unique needs of a child with a disability. Specifically, the Regents question was aimed at the news that the Meeting Street School would be closing during the summer because of the change to the requirement of the 230 day school year. Mr. Swanson told the members of the Board that the school districts would be responsible for ensuring that students requiring more than 180 days, as per their IEPs, would have access to appropriate programs.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Rhode Island Extended School Year Standards, as presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Endorsement of Guiding Principles for Education Aid Foundation Formula

Regent Patrick Guida, who chaired the Regents work group on the guiding principles, told the members of the Board that the group had received input from RIPEC, the School Committee Association, the Superintendent and Principals associations on the DRAFT principles. Mr. Guida then reviewed each of the guiding principles, as follows:

- (#1) The group discussed the addition of language, "...Return on investment of public funds should be calculated against performance measures established by the Board of Regents." The Regents discussed how to define "return on investment" and what will (or could) the Regents do if they don't get what they think they should get on their investment. Deputy Commissioner David Abbott spoke to the group about the "system," as described in the newly drafted BEP that requires that student needs are tracked.

MOVED AND SECONDED: Delete: "...Return on investment of public funds should be calculated against performance measures established by the Board of Regents"; add additional language as follows: "Performance measures established by the Board of Regents shall be considered in any calculation regarding the return on investment of public funds."

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

- (#2) No changes.
- (#3) The group discussed the concept of "the money follows the student" and the addition of the word "school". No changes.
- (#4) Discussion of where PreK fits into the document and decision made to make PreK part of the funding formula.

MOVED AND SECONDED: Add language, as follows: changed "K-12" to "PreK -12"; and add "...as established, or to be established, by the BEP."

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

- (#5) No changes.
- (#6) Discussion of extended learning time; add language on "extended learning time".

MOVED AND SECONDED: Delete "and credit recovery programs"; and add "...extended learning opportunities, and pre-kindergarten programs."

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

- (#7) The group discussed the reference to "collective bargaining reforms" and if the reference needs to be included to the principles. It was decided that the reference be deleted.

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, "...collective bargaining reforms and..." be deleted; and "...or regional.." be added.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

- (#8) the group discussed RIPEC's input into this section. The members of the Board decided that the reference to the Department of Revenue should be deleted from this bullet.

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, "be resolved by the Department of Revenue and..." be deleted from this bullet.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

- (#9) Discussion of "Inequities" in the local tax structure versus "Disparities". The group decided to use "Disparities".

MOVED AND SECONDED: Delete "Inequities" and replace with "Disparities".

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

- (#10) No changes.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Adopt, as amended, the Guiding Principles for Education Aid Foundation Formula.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Nutrition Standards

RIDE Finance department staff member, Becky Bessette, the Coordinator of Child Nutrition Programs, presented the agenda item for consideration. Ms. Bessette gave an overview of the proposed standards which will impact the breakfast, lunch and snacks currently served through RIDE's school meal programs. There would be an increase in servings (and variety) of fruits and vegetables, a shift from white/refined grains to whole grains, a limit on sugars/sweeteners, a sodium limit, the addition of legumes (dried beans or peas) and the provision of 1% or skim milk.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Rhode Island Nutrition Requirements 2009, as presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Release of NECAP

Mary Ann Snider, the Director of Assessment and Accountability, distributed a package of information on the 2008 NECAP scores. She highlighted the sections of the package outlining NECAP school trends for reading and mathematics for grades 3 – 8; disaggregated data by grades and schools; and comparison results for Rhode Island, Vermont and New Hampshire. Ms. Snider emphasized that 83% of elementary and middle schools had gained between 3% and 25% more students scoring at proficient or above since 2005; that 13% have had no substantial change in the percentage of students scoring at or above proficiency; and that 4 % have between 3% and 10% fewer students scoring at or above proficient. She also reported to the Board that 61 schools' results indicated that between 75% and 96% of their students are proficient or higher on the first year of NECAP testing and that these same schools now have proficiency rates ranging between 74% and 97%; 6 of these schools had proficiency rates at or above 90% in 2005; now 14 schools have proficiency rates at or above 90%. She emphasized that students are doing better and the gap between the urban and rural areas is closing. The Regents focused their attention on how to address those schools that are performing at low levels, especially those schools in urban areas. Ms. Snider talked to the group about the work with the Dana Center.

Discussion of President Obama's Stimulus Package

RIDE staff member, Clark Greene distributed an analysis of the education sections of the House version of the President's stimulus package. The hand out is enclosed. He reminded the group that the package is still being debated in Congress and is, therefore, subject to change; that there are also smaller targeted/competitive funds controlled at the Federal level that are aimed at technology, Charter and other items. The items under discussion include the dollar amounts and any controls on the distribution of funds which is unclear at this point.

Commissioner's Search - Update

Regent Amy Beretta reported that the due date for applications for the Commissioner's job was January 3. The search committee had received 35 completed applications and next week the committee would be reviewing the applications and choosing which ones would be invited in for interviews. Any member of the Board that would like to attend that meeting is welcomed. Following the selection of the final four to seven applicants, the names will then be forwarded to the members of the Board of Regents to interview for the final selection.

Budget Update

Deputy Commissioner David Abbott told the Board that the Director of Finance, Carolyn Dias, was unable to attend the Board of Regents meeting because she is at the State House testifying on the Governor's Supplemental Budget. Additionally, he reported that the Governor will not submit the FY 2010 budget until the stimulus package is resolved.

Legislative Update

Clark Greene distributed a legislative report for the bills posted between January 26 and January 30, 2009.

BOR Committee Reports

Finance/Personnel - Regent Betsy Shimberg announced that there would be a Board of Regents Finance/Personnel Committee meeting scheduled to meet with RIDE professional 2012 union members. The Regents will also discuss the budget during that time. Additionally, she had met with RIDE staff and attorney Sandra Lanni to begin work on the details of the close out of Commissioner McWalters' contract.

Regent Patrick Guida reported that he had attended the NASBE Governmental Affairs Committee meeting held in Washington. The Committee had focused much of their discussion on the President's stimulus package. They also learned that more than likely, NCLB will not be reauthorized this year. Additionally, the group is looking at the issue of national standards.

Regent Karin Forbes, who also attended NASBE as a member of the Power of Partnerships and the Graduation Rate study group, reported that the group had a very informative session discussing why students drop out and how parental involvement in their child's achievement can lower that rate.

Commissioner's Report

Deputy Commissioner David Abbott reported that the BEP will go out Monday and that RIDE won a grant from USDOE, in partnership with Higher Education.

Adjournment

With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.