

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Meeting held at
Cranston High School West (library)
80 Metropolitan Ave., Cranston, R.I.
Thursday, February 3, 2011 - 4:00 p.m.

Enclosure 4a
March 3, 2011

MINUTES

Attending: R. Flanders (chairman), P. Guida, A. Beretta, B. Shimberg, A. Cano-Morales, A. Davis, K. Forbes

The meeting convened at 4:12 p.m.

Chairman Flanders welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the Cranston School Department for hosting it. He also noted that the meeting was being videotaped and that all meetings will be taped and posted on the RIDE Website to make Regents' proceedings open and available to all. He introduced the Governor's new Regents nominees, thanked the new Regents for their commitment, and thanked departing Regents for their service.

Commissioner's Report

Report on Lowest-Achieving Schools

Central Falls HS

- Progress of the transformation effort continues at CFHS.
- Through the addition of teacher tutoring and weekend and after-school student support, the number of juniors scoring at or above the national average on the 2010 mathematics section of the PSAT increased significantly.
- Superintendent Gallo, in collaboration with the leadership team at CFHS, launched a "Transformation Website" and blog, specifically focused on keeping the community informed about the transformation effort.
- Daily teacher attendance did show improvement in the first two weeks of January compared with December.
- We continue to get updates of daily attendance, and RIDE will keep the Regents updated on attendance trends.
- 15 teachers at Central Falls High School were placed on improvement plans as a result of evaluations that were completed late last year.
- A new round of evaluations is gathering information on the effectiveness of these supports to teachers.

Providence

- Commissioner Gist sent a letter to Superintendent Brady on January 14th, which documents several outstanding issues related to Providence's four (4) persistently lowest-achieving schools (PLAs).
- A formal acknowledgment that two PLA schools (*William B. Cooley Senior High School* and *Charlotte Woods Elementary*) have been officially consolidated with two non-PLA schools (*Providence Academy of International Studies* and *Cornell Young Jr. Elementary School*). **Commissioner Gist noted that RIDE needs this acknowledged in order to assign appropriate school codes.**

Commissioner Gist updated the Regents on:

- Revisions to the school-reform plans for each of the schools identified as persistently lowest achieving;
- Revisions to the school-improvement grant application for funds to support the transformation efforts at these sites;
- The establishment of the United Providence Labor-Management Compact EMO as a 501 (c)3 as verified by registration with the Secretary of State; and
- Clarification of the district's understanding of criterion-based hiring – determined in collaboration with PTU (as requested by the Deputy Commissioner this past November).

Commissioner Gist noted that:

- RIDE has provided the superintendent and school board a detailed timeline for critical actions.
- Commissioner has asked members of the Office of Transformation to reach out to the school department to gather information on the progress of these actions.

Budget Update –

- The FY 2012 budget process continues to move forward. RIDE had a meeting on Monday with Tom Mullaney, the State Budget Officer, and Brian Daniels and Susan Bernstein, from the Governor's Policy Office, to discuss the Regent's FY 2011 supplemental and FY 2012 budget requests.
- The state is projecting a \$290-million budget deficit in the next fiscal year, and the Budget Office is seeking additional savings to help close the budget gap.

- RIDE is currently finalizing the second-quarter expenditure report and assured the budget officer that RIDE will examine the numbers and will notify them if additional savings can be realized.
- RIDE did impress upon the budget officers the importance of implementing the funding formula in FY 2012 as planned and offered them technical assistance with the formula calculations.
- The Commissioner will continue to keep Regents informed as the Governor continues to prepare his budget, which is scheduled to be released in early March.

Legislative Update -

- There has been a slow start to the 2011 General Assembly Session. Snow has had something to do with it.
- The Senate postponed Commissioner's appearance before the Senate Education Committee to a later date. The Commissioner was to give an update on RTTT and other important education issues and answer questions.
- The Senate has introduced 11 education-related bills, while the House has introduced 17, but only 2 bills have been posted – both in House HEW next Wednesday:
 - o H5049 would mandate that all districts offer all-day kindergarten.
 - o H5175 would create a special legislative House Commission to monitor the financial impact of the expenditure of Federal RTTT Funds on local school district recipients.
 - o Commissioner Gist noted that we believe that this commission is not necessary. RIDE has an active steering committee with stakeholders representing a cross section of interests (including key staff members from the House and Senate). This is a duplication of effort.

Charter School Regulations -

- Several public hearings were held to gather feedback on the newly proposed charter school regulations.
- A comprehensive summary of all testimony, RIDE's responses to these comments, and recommendations for changes (along with written testimony from a number of stakeholders) will be included in a package provided for Regents in advance of the February 17 work session.

- The Office of Transformation also has a meeting scheduled with the members of the charter-school work group to further discuss the regulations and issues that have arisen with charter-school representatives.

High School Regulations -

Completed all the public hearings for the high-school regulations:

- 133 speakers over three sessions; and
- Received excellent, thoughtful, and informed feedback that will make the regulations stronger and better.

Commissioner Gist noted that RIDE has been listening carefully and has been working nonstop to collect, analyze, and consider all public testimony.

At the request of several of the Regents, Regents have scheduled a special three-hour work session on February 10:

- At this session, Regents will discuss the feedback received, and appropriate revisions.
- RIDE will be taping the entire meeting and uploading the video to the RIDE Website.

Commissioner's staff prepared a packet of background information to help Regents prepare for the work session on 2/10.

Regents' packet includes:

(1) Background information on NECAP and particularly the math NECAP

- There has been a lot of discussion about the technical characteristics of the NECAP and its appropriateness for the use proposed under the new regulations.
- RIDE has been in regular communication with Measured Progress, the Technical Advisory Committee, and the Center for Assessment since August.
 - Test, while not originally designed to serve in the way we have proposed, has all the technical characteristics necessary to serve in the proposed manner.
 - We do have responsibilities to ensure that students have appropriate and adequate opportunities to retake the test and to demonstrate their readiness for graduation. This is something RIDE has been working on, and Regents will discuss it at length on 2/10.

(2) Written summary of public testimony offered at meetings, which falls into three large categories: *Concerns about the Tiers, Concerns about the Timing, and Concerns about the Test.*

- *Test:* 40% of the feedback received focused on concerns about the use of standardized tests for graduation decisions;
- *Timing:* 20% of the concerns were about the timing for the current class of 2012;
- *Tiers:* 20% of the speakers were concerned about the tiers; and
- Remainder spoke about a small number of other concerns about such things as proposed changes to common planning **time**.

(3) At Regents' meeting on February 10, Regents will discuss all these issues in greater detail. However, Commissioner wants to give Regents a sense of her general recommendations, which respond to the important messages heard throughout public comment:

- *Timing:* Commissioner will be recommending that we push back the date for these new regulations to go into effect from the Class of 2012 to the Class of 2014.
 - This will provide students, districts, and schools with time to develop their systems and notify families.
 - This will also provide RIDE with time to provide additional support to districts and schools.
- *Test:* Commissioner will be recommending that we continue to use the NECAP, but that RIDE work with our assessment partners to develop a broader set of testing options for students.
 - In addition, we will also be building in some more specific regulatory provisions that will enable both:
 1. School districts to provide for a carefully managed number of accommodations, modifications, and exceptions for students with extraordinary needs or exceptional circumstances: could be students with disabilities, students with limited opportunity to learn English, and students that have recently experienced a truly extenuating life events
 2. Students for whom performance on the NECAP is inaccurate measure of their actual proficiency will **also** have access to a locally managed appeals process.
- *Tiers* – Commissioner will be recommending that we do away with the multiple diplomas and go to a single diploma with optional endorsements.

Commissioner Gist noted that she has been continuing to actively communicate with our stakeholders. RIDE has:

1. published English and Spanish versions of the full text of the regulations and parent FAQs to the Web site;
2. continued to present to stakeholders; and
3. responded to dozens and dozens of emails asking for more information.

Weather-related School closings:

- Regents are aware that regulations allow school districts to delay opening school for one hour and still be credited as a full day of school.
- A two-hour delay is permissible, but must be approved by the Commissioner.
- Due to the extreme weather conditions, Commissioner has informed the districts that she is temporarily extending the allowable delay to two hours.
- Districts will not need Commissioner's approval for a delay of up to two hours.
- This in no way affects our standards for the minimum number of hours of instruction for a school day, or the 180 day requirement.
- We have received an official request from RISSA to make this change in Regulation.
- We are looking at their request and will bring the issue to the Board with a recommendation.
- If the Board so desires, we could add the issue as a discussion item at the next work session.

Public Remarks

There were no public remarks.

Commissioner Gist made the Board of Regents aware of the topic of her dissertation.

Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Flanders asked the winners of the 2010 State Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching to join the Regents in front of the room to be recognized and presented them with a Board of Regents' certificate.

Regent Guida acknowledged and recognized the contributions of Chairman Flanders to the Board of Regents.

Chairman Flanders said that chairing the board has been a wonderful learning experience, we have a great commissioner, and he is optimistic about the future of education.

Approval of Minutes

- a) January 6, 2011 – Board of Regents Meeting
- b) January 20, 2011 – Board of Regents Work Session

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Minutes of the Board of Regents meeting of January 6, 2011; and January 20, 2011 Board of Regents Work Session

VOTE: Approved Unanimously

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Testing Results - National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

The 2009 National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEP) science assessment was administered to a selected sample of 4th-grade and 8th-grade students (about 3,000 in each grade) from across the state from January through March of 2009.

- The assessment content areas are physical science, life science, and earth & space science. Because 2009 NAEP Science is a substantially new assessment, comparison of scores with previous NAEP science assessments are not valid.

Phyllis Lynch provided a report and presentation to the Regents.

Regent Davis asked if our white/Hispanic gap was the largest in the country. Answer: Though the Hispanic scores in grade 8 were the lowest in the nation, the white/Hispanic gap was not the largest in the country.

Regent Shimberg asked how schools are selected for NAEP participation. Answer (from NAEP specialist Heather Heineke): schools selected in past continue to be selected, mainly because we have a small number of schools to choose from. The tested sample matches the demographics of the state.

Regent Beretta asked what we are doing to close achievement gaps. Commissioner Gist said that everything in our strategic plan is aimed toward closing achievement gaps. RTTT work around curriculum development, instructional management, etc., includes specific supports for assistance to students who are behind or who have special needs. It isn't one thing, but the whole plan is designed around that.

Chairman Flanders noted that it takes time for plans to work and be implemented. We will make adjustments to plan if we don't see the kind of results that we want.

Regent Cano-Morales commented on the Hispanic gap, which she called “a crater.” She called for a sense of urgency, noting that a fire has to be lit beneath the community to own this situation. She noted that the White House project for Hispanic Progress has been interested in Rhode Island, and she called upon the Commissioner to look at this opportunity to bring resources to Rhode Island.

APPROVAL ITEMS

Approval of Regulations Governing Teacher Competency in English

- The Board of Regents Regulations governing Teacher Competency in English were approved for public comment at the November 4, 2010, Board of Regents meeting and the comments were reviewed at the Regents Work Session January 20, 2011.
- These regulations establish requirements to ensure that all educators employed in the public schools of Rhode Island are competent in the English language.
- RIDE is in the process of conducting a benchmarking study of the Versant test and will present the findings to the Regents in April, when the Commissioner will recommend that the Regents adopt the test and qualifying score as required under these regulations.
- The change in content shifts the responsibility of informing the teacher and the Commissioner of the results of the evaluation from the evaluators to the superintendent or other chief executive officer.
- During the public-comment period, we received two responses. The comments include requests that these regulations include a sunset provision and concerns regarding civil rights.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Regulations of the Board of Regents governing teacher competency in English.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously

1. Approval of Member to the Central Falls Board of Trustees

Regent Cano-Morales introduced candidate Stephanie Gonzalez to the Regents. Regent Cano-Morales noted that this is the last of the vacancies on the Central Falls board. She called Ms. Gonzalez a “poster child for the American dream.” She went to Central Falls schools, graduated CFHS in 2004, and went on to Boston College. She is now a research analyst at Brigham & Women Hospital, in Boston. Her generational aspect and her youth will be a great asset to the Central Falls Board. Ms. Gonzalez addressed the Regents and said she looks forward to working on many initiatives to better Central Falls and R.I. as well.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Appointment of Stephanie Gonzalez to the Central Falls Board of Trustees

VOTE: Approved Unanimously

Adjournment: With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 5:02 p.m.