

The Children's Cabinet
Monday February 26, 2018
DOA Conference- Room A
10:00am – 11:30am
Meeting Minutes
Approved March 26, 2018

Cabinet Participants:

Commissioner Wagner

Director Hawkins

Director Alexander-Scott

Director Boss

Director DiBiase

Director Piccola

Call to Order:

Commissioner Wagner calls the meeting to order and asks for a motion to accept the minutes from the January 29th meeting. The motion is seconded and the minutes are approved.

Commissioner Wagner notes the national conversation around school safety. For a group like this whose focus is to support children and families in the state, we of course are at a critical moment in supporting children around safety and school safety. The administration has made a number of public statements to communicate support and confident and school district and local community leaders have always been on top of issues of safety. There are three parts to this. One is creating the types of communities and cultures where students are less likely to fall through the cracks to prevent tragedies. The second is investments in safety procedures, protocols, and so on as well as planning, drills, and practices so that communities are prepared if the unimaginable were to occur. And the third is the advocacy to have proper policies around gun access and community mental health and so on. Governor Raimondo will be signing an Executive Order later in the day which will be followed by an act in the legislature. There will be upcoming events on March 14th and April 20th where people will be expressing their feelings and intentions around school safety. One of the things RIDE intends to communicate is that while there are laws and rules in place around student participation in educational programs, the fact that the student voice is an increasingly vocal part of the conversation, from his perspective and others, is extremely important and welcome. RIDE looks forward to helping students find the balance of advocating and expressing their voice while also keeping the message clear that school and school attendance is extremely important.

Director Boss then presents the Behavioral Health transition guidebook for transition-aged youth. She notes that BHDDH works to ensure that all Rhode Islanders have the opportunities to realize the best possible mental health and wellbeing. The guidebook work came out of the Healthy Transitions team – with help from a grant that BHDDH received from the Obama Administration which created the grant following the Sandy Hook shootings. The work has been to look at the needs of transition aged youth. Youth already struggle with transitioning to adulthood, and by adding in behavioral health and other issues, the challenge can feel almost insurmountable. This booklet which was developed as a resource guide and created with input from youth, and is meant to support this transition. Youth said they wanted happy upbeat photos; for it to be available on the web; and for it to include information on hospitalization. The document can be edited when information changes and each page is a standalone so people can print

pages they specifically need. Director Boss thanks everyone for working on this project, welcomes feedback, and says that the guidebook is available on the BHDDH website.

Director Alexander Scott thanks Director Boss and says that RIDOH is excited to help disseminate the guidebook and post it on the website.

Mark Fields asks whether any forums happened with youth.

Director Boss directs the question to **Denise Achin** who notes that they did forums at the Kent Center and other locations.

Another audience member asks where to locate the guidebook. **Director Boss** says that the digital copy is available at the BHDDH website on the “What’s New” section of the webpage. (http://www.bhddh.ri.gov/whats_new/index.php)

Commissioner Wagner thanks Director Boss and moves to the next agenda item focused on early learning. He says that we often have focused on the wraparound services regarding 3rd grade reading, but had not focused in on instruction – a point that Director DiBiase had noted. Families and communities are key parts of instruction and only late in a child’s career do they come to a classroom, but instruction matters. We are fortunate that we have leaders and administrators across the state doing great work in literacy and literacy instruction. We have invited RISSA to participate in the 3rd Grade Reading conversation going forward. RISSA had been deeply involved with the Cabinet in the past. Today’s presentations include one from the RIDE team for how the formal literacy planning is happening for the BPS curriculum and then one from Cranston to discuss implementation. Commissioner Wagner anticipates that RISSA will have a presence at the table going forward and that there will be presentations from other districts going forward as well.

Literacy Planning Presentation – RIDE

Diane Girard, Literacy Specialist, RIDE begins the presentation and says that she is excited about the RI Kindergarten Project, which is still in its infancy, and wants to present on what we know to date. It is starting to take hold in our RI schools. As background, it began with Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge money from 2011-2016. Early part of the project focused on getting structures in place, and then at the latter part focused on getting Common Core aligned curriculum for kindergarten. There were many different activities with preschools, but at the same time, RI also went to full-day kindergarten and the Common Core state standards came online. As she began to look more closely at kindergarten classrooms, it was alarming to see that educators were not quite sure what to do with the extra instructional time. Some districts had rest time, or increased the specials, such as art and physical education and more. Others made K into a mini-first grade, and put more skill drill into kindergartens that were not developmentally appropriate. For those reasons, RIDE decided to start figuring out what might be done.

In 2015-2016, RIDE contracted with Education Development Center and offered districts the opportunity to explore K curriculum. A few districts came on board and worked with a few different curriculums – and at the same time, she was hearing more about what was happening in Boston with their early childhood education department. EDC brought background information about that BPS curriculum as well as other options. As a result, one district worked on the BPS curriculum.

In fall 2016, RIDE held a kindergarten conference in Providence and it was filled to capacity: 120 educators. At that conference, RIDE shared best practices from Boston. At the same time, RI began piloting with the BPS curriculum. The first pilots were last year.

In the pilot year, cohort 1 had 21 classrooms. This year, cohort 2 has 36 additional classrooms. Some are in districts that piloted last year and are expanding, and some are in new districts. It is starting to expand further, as cohort 3 has 46 classrooms coming on board. RIDE is able to offer this because it has a Preschool Development Grant from the federal government. Only 11 communities were eligible for the funding because they have the state pre-K, but there are even more schools that are trying pilot them and need funding.

Commission Wagner notes that the Governor's budget includes funding for these classrooms. What has been good is that, because there has been little funding, the growth has been organic.

Diane notes that what has been helpful in implementing the curriculum is coaching. Diane is personally coaching many different classrooms and it is a key part of success. This next year, with funding, RIDE can infuse more coaching.

BPS curriculum is called Focus on K-2. It is an open source curriculum, so it is free of charge which is a benefit for districts. It is a complete curriculum telling teachers what to do across the school year. It is helpful that Boston is nearby so that they can support RI in implementation.

Director Alexander Scott asks for the total number of kindergarteners across the state in order to get a sense of the proportion experiencing these classrooms.

Commissioner Wagner responds that it is approximately 10,000 students per cohort in the public schools. It is a very small percentage in the BPS classrooms. One of the things we are seeing is that this is a foothold approach. People are finding this valuable and therefore more people are getting interested. It is spreading even beyond kindergarten and into the culture and instructional mission of the schools. One of our goals and one of the things RIDE is talking about is the transformational potential of curriculum – not to script teachers, but to give teachers resources, as a way to tackle equity challenges. When those curricular resources are available, it spreads and it influences the entire school.

Diane notes that Providence is coming on board this year. The first few years they were not ready, but they are now coming in with 18 classrooms. Regarding outcomes, there is no data currently on effectiveness. BPS is running a study right now on their K-2 curriculum and that should be coming out later this year. Seeing as RI started this last October, RIDE has some anecdotal information from teachers and principals and school leadership to share. LEAs are doing assessments for kindergarten, including formative assessments to track progress. Teachers who have taught kindergarten for several years also have given some anecdotes:

- **Academics:** Teachers say that as far as academic factors – literacy, letter sound correspondence, reading words, etc – the students are doing about the same. This is important because many teachers worry that with this type of curriculum they may lose ground on these things, because kindergarten has been doing skill and drill for so long.
- **Knowledge of story:** There are factors beyond literacy that are worth sharing. Teachers talk about the knowledge of story, being able to understand characters, setting, beginning, middle and end, and that that is better than what has happened in the past because that is part of the curriculum.
- **Vocabulary and use of words:** Parents and others who have visited classrooms comment on kindergarteners' abilities in this area.
- **Social and emotional development:** This area is not always focused on in classrooms, but this program builds SEL capacities. Kids learn to be focused for extended periods of time because they have center time. Students have been known to work on projects for an entire 60 minutes

which is an accomplishment for this age group. They also can resolve conflicts more because they are not sitting at a desk by themselves, they have to be able to communicate and resolve issues when they are in groups with other students. There is a philosophy of students being inspired by someone else, rather than the typical dynamic of anger over students copying each other. In this program, it is not about copying each other but rather inspiring each other and helping influence someone else's work.

- **Discipline:** Some principals have noted that discipline issues have gone down since this program started.
- **Constructive feedback:** Five-year-olds are giving constructive feedback to each other and taking the feedback in stride with respect.

These anecdotal pieces help show that the BPS classrooms are on the right track with this program.

Lisa Nugent, Early Learning Coordinator, RIDE begins the second part of the presentation. She says that by bringing this program to kindergarten, RIDE is bringing kindergarten classrooms in line with where pre-K is already. Rhode Island's Pre-K is one of the two in the country that meets all 10 criteria for quality. For kindergarten to achieve this type of quality, it will take a paradigm shift. When people see a classroom, they often see it as 'free play' time, but there is no such thing as 'free play' – play is how children learn. With skill drills, kids might be able to say things back to a teacher, but they are not learning. Students need purposeful engagement with ideas, materials, and other children. When we talk about closing the achievement gap, the more experiences we can provide a child while they are with us, the more they are going to learn. In pre-schools and pre-K, we have always worked in centers and cooperatively -- and we already know it is not about the teacher but rather the child environment. Teachers often need to change their thinking and their practice, which is not easy in a K-12 environment. We need to understand that it is a child-initiated hands-on experience. It needs to be engaging; this is intentional play.

We need to teach from an integrated and intentional learning approach. For example, literacy is embedded throughout every part of the day across all the different center based activities – not just in the writing area, but also in the block corner. There is a lot of sharing and discussing happening across the room. The more feedback and loops that happen, the more a child can express himself. It will help close the word gap and help with 3rd grade reading. We are providing experiences that they may not be able to get elsewhere.

Commissioner Wagner notes that there is no secret that there are the reading wars – how much do we do constructionist and how much do we do traditional teaching. The answer of course is that it is both, and we could have saved ourselves a decade. In this discussion, so far you have emphasized the learning through play side. Could you give us a feel of how kids are learning through sounds, symbols, associations, and fluency just so we can hear the balance?

Diane notes that the BPS curriculum is focused on the centers, which also is tied to the themes. If the unit is on animals and habitats, then the dramatization center is about building the habitat for the frog and then playing with the puppets that they made. They are creating things to go along with themes.

Lisa adds that they also have their direct instruction. That is where we see more directed instruction especially based on what level a child is at. We are still picking up sounds, doing sight words, and including all of those pieces, but we are not doing it as a whole group. We are doing it in smaller chunks, one for their attention span and two so they are getting individualized attention. Especially in kindergarten there is a range of readiness. What are the child outcomes that we are seeing? ECE programs and Head Start programs that are used to this type of instruction – their child outcomes are higher than state Pre-K which is still a high-quality environment but in a public school.

Commissioner Wagner notes that for the 100% of kids who need to see reading as opening a journey, this curriculum achieves that. For the 5-25% of kids who have an extra struggle with some of those letters and sounds, is there also a component to support them?

Lisa affirms that there is, and that for the 5-25% who are already beyond this, it continues to challenge them. It's based on literacy and is a more holistic curriculum. BPS had a needs assessment done on current curriculum and they incorporated feedback. One thing to note is that in the past, we took all the materials out of kindergarten classrooms, replacing the blocks and dramatic play with little desks and tables. The money we are trying to invest is to bring back the materials to the kindergarten classroom. When we talk about 3rd grade reading – at age 3, children are working to put one Lego on top of another in pre-school and pre-K, but when they get to kindergarten, the Legos are gone. A child will never get to the next step because they cannot practice. This curriculum helps ensure that children can practice what they do not quite have. This group of children can run for political office in 2032, so we need to get this right.

Some children are already writing in kindergarten, but there are others who are more artistic. In this curriculum, they are able to get the same learning and we can help them with their writing. That is the direct instruction piece. With blocks, this helps with social-emotional learning, math, and spatial awareness – it is everything we hope to teach, but broken down through play. The kids often will have pencils behind their ears, walking around with clipboards, interacting with each other.

With pre-K, this year, 24 state pre-K classrooms are going to participate in a full 2-day training on best instructional practices. Many state pre-K classrooms are using high quality curricula, but this will focus on the teacher and their practice. Eight public school pre-school programs are also going to participate in this training, which will help promote the paradigm shift. Five public school pre-K classrooms are going to continue ongoing professional development throughout the school year to help implement the BPS curriculum in K-1. The community and head start programs have their curriculum and they want to get the practice right. The public schools are focusing on how to do this with fidelity to get the classroom and culture right.

Roxanne Gustafson, Director of Education Programs for Cranston Public Schools, begins the third presentation. She presents on the district perspective on the BPS K-2 program. She says that Cranston Public Schools selected the BPS curriculum for a few reasons: the timing was perfect because they were moving to all-day K, and were evaluating their curriculum, instruction, and assessment at the elementary level, and they were revisiting their philosophical beliefs about the best interest of students, and what needed to be teachers hands to be successful, and long range for student success. They looked at developmentally appropriate learning progressions, as well as student-centered activities that they could do. They wanted students to have a choice and voice in what they were learning. They also looked at interdisciplinary content, so that the learning was not in isolation and teachers did not have to make the bridge. It was about theory, practice, and the application piece which has been missing throughout this time.

In looking through research of BPS, in first year of implementation, two kindergarten classrooms went through this process. Two pieces of research stood out. One: emergent reading skills. Students come into school at all different levels – some already reading, and some who have never turned the pages of a book. The district needed to ground itself in determining where students are at. In this curriculum, there is no guessing where students are at – it's visual. The students learn that the spoken word is represented in print. They also learn that while writing may look like a scribble, but it will start to attach a letter and string of letters to represent what one feels. The program is designed on these cornerstones to help kids be successful readers in the future.

In answer to Commissioner Wagner's earlier question about the balance between constructive play and curriculum, Roxanne says that the "wow" center is structured to do just that. There is shared reading, independent reading, and teachers taking targeted groups of students. For one group, they may work with readers who need to go a little slower, really focusing on skills, while a group of high-flyers, they may not see them every day but are pushing them to the next thing. There is targeted practice time in learning letters and sounds. In the centers themselves, there is progression. In the first unit, about community, students are learning how to interact with each other and how to build their own sense of community within the classroom. In unit two, they start to label items and apply the sound-symbol association within their writings. Then, as time moves on, they are creating books by the end of the year.

The other piece is the oral language development, which is critical. They need to opportunity to talk and communicate and interact with each other. They need to maintain the content they are learning over time. They need to listen – the thinking and feedback protocol mentioned earlier is taking the few minutes when a student is presenting their work and asking them to notice, to ask questions, to see what is inspiring. These conversations are critical and help them latch on to learning.

The other piece is best practices. This program matched Cranston's philosophical belief. In talking about best reading strategies, like close reading strategies, the 7 major comprehension strategies, tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary – these pieces together are where Cranston wants to go and what will help students remember material. It is not only play, but play and the content together. That's why Cranston chose the program.

Commissioner Wagner asks Roxanne to comment on explicit content learning that occurs in this approach. One of the things we forget is how much learning is reading by process versus reading by going deeper in high interest content. Can you talk about the content?

Roxanne gives the example of the animals and habitats unit in the curriculum. The students will talk about habitats, such as for a salmon. And the kids will read many books on salmon, but they read a particular book over and over again for different purposes.

Commissioner Wagner notes that all children may not like salmon, to which Roxanne mentions that they will move on to something else. Commission Wagner notes that the curriculum goes deep on reading by having a motivation to go deep in the stuff that they are interested in – so if sharks is something one is interested in, reading is a way to access that information.

Roxanne continues with parent and student feedback. One parent mentioned that their student asked to go to the public library on the weekend and pull out the same books they are using in class because they want to read it at home with their parents. Even if they are just looking at pictures, they know that there is meaning behind the pictures. The other thing parents have commented on is the vocabulary piece. They are coming home and talking about estuaries and salmon – and the children can describe each word. The kids are also excited to come to school, and motivated to be there. One parent commented that their student wakes up on Saturday and asks if it is time for school yet. One young girl last year cried on Friday afternoons because she did not want to leave the center. It is these things – the kids are so excited and motivated, that it motivates the teachers. They love the challenge and enjoy the mindset shift, because their students are challenged and motivated. The other thing that Cranston has seen is a behavior issue decrease. Also, because they are focusing on community in the first unit, the children are learning to be inclusive of all and no one is left behind. They learn to work with each other and overcome issues. The social emotional pieces also are learned – they take turns, have a conversation, how to make a plan and that sometimes it will not go their way, and how to navigate that situation at 5 and 6 years old.

Commissioner Wagner asks a question about scale. The challenge is that teachers are in very different places. Currently, elementary school teachers are not required to be experts in reading instruction. And reading teachers are not required to be present throughout elementary schools, or for special education teachers to be certified in reading instruction. What that means is that the child's first form of support is a teacher whose exposure to reading has been just three classes in their teacher prep program when they were 19-years old. That is an incredible workforce challenge. On the other side, with this comprehensive curriculum that may be able to smooth over some of those variances until we get everyone to the standard that we need them to get, is available in 35 classes across the state. Assuming that we are not delusional and this is a promising way to go, how do we scale to get to more kids? How are you doing that in Cranston?

Roxanne says that they are approaching this by filming. We can't say we can't anymore. We need to, for them. This is what we need. And we are looking at professional development to help them achieve that. For PD, we are talking about best practices and things we can implement are right there, such as teaching the seven major comprehension strategies. What does that look like? When a student hands in work, what does that look like? Where do you go next? It is always having the end in mind so you know where to deliver your instruction.

Commissioner Wagner asks, when this gets a foothold, can teachers teach each other?

Roxanne says that they absolutely can. Cranston does that through their coaching cohort for BPS.

Commissioner Wagner comments that what that indicates is that we do not need outsiders to teach our teachers how to teach, we just need to set the right leadership context, create the conditions, and teachers can get each other through the process.

Lisa adds that that is true, and what they need is the buy-in from teachers, because this is a lot of work. For a kindergarten teacher of 20 years, to switch to this way of thinking, it is a lot of work. But once get buy-in, this can explode.

Commissioner Wagner notes that he suspects that there are a lot of teachers out there asking why it took RIDE and others so long to reach these conclusions, since they have been doing this for 20 years.

Kristen Stringfellow, Superintendent of South Kingstown School Department and President of the Rhode Island School Superintendents' Association, comments that, representing more than the 35 classrooms doing this wonderful project, kindergarten teachers throughout the state are in a very different place. For her district, they have had full day kindergarten since 2007. She has also worked in districts that have had all day kindergarten prior to that. Some of those districts have not abandoned these practices – some of the broad brush statements that kindergarten has thrown away the blocks and Legos is not accurate. In 2010, she got involved with the Teachers' College Columbia University reading and writing project, and are also doing learning progressions that are not whole class, and are based on students need. When she goes into classrooms that have high expectations, it is like Montessori is with us in developmental design and appropriateness. She notes that we need to careful that scale means 35 out of 200 classrooms are doing this and the others are not, because that is not accurate.

Commissioner Wagner notes that even though people are doing equally quality stuff, just calling it different things, would you agree that we have consistency challenges?

Superintendent Stringfellow agrees that there is unevenness. In meetings she has attended, what they are looking at is taking great reading, writing, and math instruction – all developmentally appropriate at whatever age level students are at – and mapping those out as best practices. One of is BPS curriculum -

this is a best practice curriculum with heavy professional development, as are others such as Teachers College. She says that we have eight or nine districts coming into our district on a weekly basis trying to figure out whether this is the program they will adopt, or perhaps BPS will be what they adopt. It is important for everyone to know that RIDE is leading the way in saying that these are best instructional practice programs that are surrounded by a significant amount of PD for teachers, and as long as each kindergarten or fifth grade is using one of these we are confident the children will do well. Agree that higher education is not giving teachers more than one developmental reading course, so the program her district adopted is to make sure every teacher is a teacher of reading.

Commission Wagner notes that in the past, the state education agency has focused on policies and compliance to try to move the work forward. What we are trying to do is to shift from policies and compliance to best practices and conditions that encourage the spread of best practices. As Superintendent Stringfellow said, we are not trying to tell people to adopt the BPS curriculum, but rather that whatever curriculum you pick, make sure it is evidence-based and make sure there is consensus that it is effective. We will help identify the four to five different curriculum structures that have the evidence behind them. School districts will always be responsible for selecting what makes the most sense in their community and making sure their teachers get up to speed to implement it.

Director Hawkins asks about the work on getting the teachers to where they need to be. What is the influence on the schools of education so that they are mirroring what you want to see in practice?

Commission Wagner responds that RIDE regulates the teacher preparation programs of the schools of education. Currently, RIDE is in the midst of an improvement plan with Rhode Island College, which trains 70% of Rhode Island teachers, so it is a high impact process. One of the things they are doing is things like this – having teachers have a deeper understanding and training in things like literacy, having more practical experiences in order to be adept at those types of trainings and so on. However, the colleges rightly push back and say, training for what? Until there is coherence and consistency in the K-12 curricular approach, they feel that they are training for a moving target. We are trying to do both push the higher education institutions to do things differently, and to get more consistency and coherence in the curriculum so it is easier. One legacy piece of higher education institutions is that the pedagogy comes from the School of Education but the content comes from the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences and even within higher education, getting those two pieces to talk to each other so you get the pedagogy and you get the deep content, is a challenge in itself. We must push on all of those things.

Director DiBiase comments that this is a terrific presentation. Tapping into developmental strengths of kindergarten students is important. We have set third grade reading and literacy as the highest goal, and he was not sure we have evidence to back up the literacy advance from this. And these things are measurable.

Lisa notes that we currently measure the child outcomes in the state pre-K because it must be reported to the Federal government. We are working with Child Trends and looking at the cohort from this year and then comparing them in kindergarten with their peers. From our own outcomes, we do check-ins and mid-year to see how many children are below and how many we have closed the gap with by end of the year. We have that data, and will have more at the end of this year.

Commissioner Wagner adds that, for the last couple years, we have asked for the Kindergarten Entry Profile that will show us where kids are when they come to us. We have not gotten funding for it but we will continue to try to push to get low cost options for people.

Director DiBiase comments that he thought he heard that we kept even with this type of practice.

Lisa notes that anecdotally what we know, is that if you switch to this type of practice in kindergarten, some of our teachers were afraid that kids would lose because they were not doing as much skill and drill. What we have seen is that they continue to maintain and at the same point, SEL and other areas of development have increased, which is important.

Director DiBiase agrees that those components are important for later learning, but wanted to remind everyone that we are at 40% proficiency right now so keeping even is not going to cut it.

Director Alexander Scott comments that she wants to also applaud this and has herself been a benefactor of Montessori so it sounds familiar. She is curious to know from an equity stand point, what is seen as the challenges and barriers are in schools such as Providence not being ready previously and now wanting to engage and other schools along those lines – what the extra hump is that is needed to help these kids?

Lisa notes that the issue is funding. This curriculum is not expensive if there is not coaching and other components, but it takes funding to set up the classroom. For classrooms that already have the materials, that is great, but many classrooms need books, they need curriculum, which is open source but it needs to be printed and in teachers' hands.

Commissioner Wagner adds that, for a variety of reasons, there are no statewide requirements for ongoing professional learning for teachers. RIDE is planning on introducing a set of teacher regulations in the Spring that would reintroduce the annual requirement for teachers to have ongoing professional learning. The responsibility would be with the teachers, but of course districts invest in their teachers all the time so we would expect that that would continue. We used to have this, but it became very bureaucratic. We are trying to reintroduce the requirement without the bureaucracy. One of the strategies that we are thinking we would take would be to pre-qualify certain kinds of programs, similar to Real Jobs Rhode Island. The state will have already signed off that these pre-qualified programs will count as the required training. If we can do that, then when teachers are struggling and districts are struggling with supporting teachers, programs like this could be on the menu of options and there would be an alignment of the investments teachers are making in their own learning and the investments districts are making in their workforce as well as the policy goals that we have at the statewide level. That will play out in spring and summer of this year, and we will have more structures in place to help advance this work.

Roxanne mentions that in cohort 2, they wanted this to look different. They selected Title I schools, sheltered classrooms, and inclusion classrooms because they wanted to see if it worked with different learners, and they noticed it is on the same trajectory as our last year's group. As background, these schools have a population of Free and Reduced Lunch that is significant, so we have a school-wide Title I, which means more than 40% of the students are on Free and Reduced lunch. In the schools that are in, about 60% FRL. This year, we rolled it up to 5 teachers, and next year we are going to 6 more classrooms. We want to be slow and steady because fidelity is important. What's key is the coaching aspect. Because we are implementing year 2 this year, we have a cohort of BPS teachers coming together sharing information and seeing each other's classrooms.

Commissioner Wagner mentions that at the March 6 Council next week, Providence is going to present to the Council about a very promising practice around instructional rounds. In Providence – as well as Jamestown – you take a problem of practice, such as literacy instruction, and you get the leadership team along with teachers to go to different schools to see how different groups of teachers are tackling that problem of practice. It is similar to medical rounds process. We have lost sight of the fact that the only thing that moves teacher practice is teachers having the time to talk to each other and implement what they are learning. We need to challenge teachers, and we need to give them time to support each other. This approach is very compatible with what Providence is doing.

Superintendent Stringfellow notes that RISSA cohorts – such as the southern RI superintendents, or the East Bay superintendents or assistance superintendents – are meeting with the folks of higher education who are in charge of teacher prep programs. We are having all day conversations about how we bridge the gap between where we have been to where we want to go. That has included a contract about student teaching and practicum students. For example, we want to make sure that the student teachers they are sending us are ready. They want to make sure that they are giving us student teachers and they are being paired with a master teacher in the classroom. We are having some of the teaching and learning fellows from URI and RIC come into the schools and see what is going on, and we are also agreeing to only match with our most proficient teachers, and we are interviewing student teachers to make sure they are ready to come into our classrooms. There is a lot going on and we are trying to bring it to scale as a state.

Commissioner Wagner mentions that, in addition to the teacher learning requirements, just like we introduced the idea of an endorsement on a student diploma to encourage student pathways, in this set of teacher regulations, we are going to introduce the idea of an endorsement on the teacher certification so they do not need to go all the way to a second certification if they want to pursue a formal designation. This is something that could be recognized by employers, by contracts and so on. We are going to start with the endorsement for English Language Learners and reading, and to try to get that off the ground, we have a cohort supported by the Rhode Island Foundation of teachers going to a URI teacher reading instruction piece. Also, working with DHS, Director Hawkins is putting out a professional services contract for early learning professionals, and we are going to collaborate between DHS and RIDE to make sure that the investments we are making in early learning professionals aligns with the investments we are making in K-12 because that PD should be a continuum across those sectors.

Leanne Barrett of RIKC encouraged the collaboration between DHS and RIDE because kindergarteners have this amazing ability to learn vocabulary and plan and do review, and 3-year-olds do as well. Some would say two-year-olds and even infants do as well. Much of the state's work is to align age 3 to grade 3 in a coherent fashion and that strong collaboration in the childcare world, and have that connected in with the public education system, is important. South Kingstown has been fabulous model of having a high-quality early childhood program within the public schools. Another piece is the observation and coaching – which is what people have seen as best practice across the country -- is what the BrightStars system that is across public schools and early childhood programs is trying to promote. It can feel threatening to have providers have someone come in and do a standardized observation of your program and give you scores, but it is a tool that is out there to make those incremental changes to improve their practices.

Commissioner Wagner notes that there is a strategy to this engagement. One of the things he noted when he asked RISSA to re-engage with the Children's Cabinet is that they have a captive audience of the Cabinet members here. We need to have a shared understanding of what's working, what's not working and what we need to scale up and what we need to get fiscal support for these things.

Lisa Guillette of Foster Forward says that this great work, and the right work. In the question about denominator, or that we are at 40% for third grade reading. At the recent Jobs Summit, the Commissioner of Postsecondary Education showed the anticipated trajectory is without any additional intervention, and who would not get served if we continue as we are now, and then the strategies being employed to reach the 70% goal. Have we mapped out what we think the trajectory will be without any additional investment, how these investments impact that, and what the force multipliers are going to get to get the goal? When you said the Governor is putting in funding to support the curriculum, is that enough? How do we know if it is enough?

Commissioner Wagner says that we have that picture of where we need to get and the gap from where we are. One of the things we are doing with research partners is a path analysis to look at the impact of different interventions based on the literature. In that way, we can understand how investments in

different programs lead to different outcomes, and we can be rational in our resource allocation. Will also say that we want dollars to invest as we can, but should note that we currently invest roughly \$30 million a year in professional learning, and about 70% of teachers last year told us that we could have saved that money because it wasn't aligned to the actual work they were doing or it was not delivered in a high impact way. There is a lot of ground we can cover by doing PD in a smarter, more strategic way, that puts the teacher at the center. As a district leader, you see the PD mandate and you think how can I possibly do all things for all teachers and meet my contractual requirements – answer is you can't. That's why we need to broker partnerships in the teacher education space, just like we do in the student education space. That's why I think we can get more bang for our buck in teacher PD by doing things doing different.

Director Alexander Scott notes that the path analyses are coming along well.

Another audience member notes that a Newport research project in the 1990s showed that in K-2, the program impacted the schools the program was in, but that other schools benefited as well because people talk across the system and people learn. The other piece is bringing the parent engagement into the schools.

Lisa notes that we can do all this work in ECE, but if we do not have a solid transition plan between pre-K and K, we lose a lot of the gains if they feel like they are starting over. East Providence, which has seven state pre-Ks, they have a strong transition piece, where the kindergarten teachers and pre-K teachers are going into each other's classrooms to learn. They are transferring data between classrooms so they know where each child is starting.

Roxanne notes that in Cranston, the district attends the parent open houses and goes through the program with the parents. The family center will call parents and bridge the gap so parents feel comfortable coming in to the school, and have translators available.

Commissioner Wagner notes that there is also the public awareness campaign – Talk Read Listen – and want to saturate the community with these messages. We will not move the 3rd grade reading proficiency until anyone can talk about what we are doing, such as at the supermarket. If people shopping at the supermarket are saying the same thing that we are saying at the Children's Cabinet, then we will know that the interventions are making their way into the community.

As a last piece, the Governor visited one of these kindergarten classrooms and was impressed, and asked the students what we should do make the state better for children. The response is apparently a 3D response. She will go back and discuss their responses. We would welcome any of the Children's Cabinet members would like to visit these classrooms.

Commissioner Wagner asks for any further questions. With no other questions, the meeting adjourned and Commissioner Wagner notes that the next meeting will be on March 26th, 2018.