



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner

Rhode Island Special Education Advisory Committee

The Rhode Island Special Education Advisory Committee is an active voice in advocating that all students receive superior educational services enabling each student to achieve optimum success throughout the school years and into the world of adulthood.

December 19, 2013

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

RI Parent Information Network
1210 Pontiac Avenue Cranston, RI 02920

Meeting Minutes

Present: Edward Angilly, Kate Barnas, Eileen Botelho, Ann Brockmann, Cris Brodeur, Jennifer Connolly, Lori DiPina, Susan Donovan, Deborah Garneau, Patti Hien, Laura Laviano, Cynthia Notarianni, Pamela O'Brien, Mary Pendergast, Douglas Pierson, Brian Quigg, Elizabeth Santana, Maria Silvestri-Golotto, Sharon Ursini-Quimby

Absent:, Wilfred Beaudoin*, Sharon Bissonnette*, Amy Canario*, Cindy Duckworth*, Allyson Dupont, Joanne Eichinger*, Gillian Elliot Pearis*, Rosemary Gomes*, Barbara Irons, Craig Levis*, JoAnn Nannig*, Robin Pacheco*, Robert Wall*

** Indicates that prior notice was given regarding absence*

Call to Order, Welcome, Agenda Review: The meeting was called to order at 6:42 pm. Susan welcomed everyone and reviewed some brief announcements.

Announcements:

- **Inclement weather** – if RIPIN closes, all on LISTSERVE will be sent notice, so check email when weather is questionable. You can also call RIPIN at 270-0101 if you are unsure.
- **Annual Performance Report (APR)** – Indicator #17, Data Driven Accountability System, will be discussed when Susan Wood comes to present report in January. She will try to send out materials prior to the meeting to give everyone a chance to review and prepare questions. There is a quick turn-around time for our response to the APR.
- **Ad Hoc Bylaws Subcommittee Meeting** – next meeting will be Jan 6 at 3:00 pm at RIPIN and all are welcome to attend and participate.

- **Vacancies** – Bob Wall, who represented private special education schools to this point on RISEAC, has been hired in Pawtucket as new Special Education Director, so he will no longer represent private schools. Bob is willing to stay on. Beth offered to contact the Private School Special Education Directors for suggestions of names to be submitted to fill that position for that constituency.

Approval of Minutes for November 21, 2013 – With the following corrections: page 2, under Old Business: spelling of Leviano should be Laviano; and last page, name of workgroup should be Educational Initiatives, not High Stakes Testing; a motion was made by Mary and seconded by Patti to approve the minutes. The vote was unanimous to approve.

New Business:

Speaker: Deb Garneau, Office of Special Health Care Needs, RI Department of Health – “Youth Risk Behavior Survey”. The following are highlights from Deb Garneau’s presentation:

- A large part of what RI Dept. of Health does has to do with transition from youth to adulthood so that youth are aware of services available to them.
- In the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), Deb noted the definition of disability. Respondents were considered to have a disability if they answered YES to either or both screening questions: 1) Do you have any physical disabilities or long-term health problems?, and 2) Do you have any long-term emotional problems or learning disabilities? (long-term means 6 months or more). Not all states have these questions which allow them to “break out” data by disability.
- Twenty-one percent of high school students report having a disability, which aligns with most statistics.
- The Center for Disease Control creates the survey. Rhode Island adds a question that is used as an indicator. The YRBS is administered every two years and the data is used well.
- The biggest discrepancy between those students with and without disability was seen in those who reported acute depression (54% to 15%, respectively).
- It was the first year that electronic bullying was included.
- There are lots of implications for school health care that can be derived from results of this survey.

There were many questions and much rich discussion about the survey among members of the RISEAC.

- One important program discussed which was not readily known by many, was the program FCCP, the Family Care and Community Partnership. It is a voluntary program meant to provide a way to refer children in families to get help for the family. David spoke about his attempts to bridge special education with FCCP. The FCCP, which has been in effect for about 3-4 years, was meant to “capture” kids at risk early-on and link them to community resources as preventative measures. An area of concern is that schools are not equally aware of and using FCCP services. It was suggested that, perhaps as a result of budget cuts causing cuts in social workers in the school districts, information about FCCPs may not be distributed.
- Another question was about how much guidance is given to students in completing the YRBS. Deb reported that it is basically a self-report survey and no guidance is given. She also reported that 21% self-identified disability does reflect the special education population. Those with reading needs or cognitive needs are not given guidance when taking the survey.
- One comment indicated that IEP teams are not well-versed in functional areas and that more professional development is needed as well as ways for these social-emotional needs to be addressed. See Director’s Report item #1 for social emotional learning IEP examples.
- There was much discussion about the need for help for schools as well as students with social emotional needs to have support, e.g. families are having difficulty getting to doctors as a resource, such as those who take Medicaid.

- David addressed that additional information that can support and add to the profile provided by the YRBS is the information provided through data points like InfoWorks and others like it.

Director's Report: David Sienko

Special Education Specific Announcements

1. Social/Emotional Learning IEP Examples RITAP has posted new examples of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) IEPs aligned to the five competency areas from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL).

- recognize and manage emotions
- develop caring and concern for others
- establish positive relationship
- make responsible decisions
- handle challenging situations effectively

The examples may be accessed through the IEP link or the ASD link on the RITAP web site at:

<http://www.ritap.org/iep/social-and-emotional-learning>

or

<http://www.ritap.org/asd/social-and-emotional-learning>

2. LEAs encouraged to review anti-bullying policies

The four-part series in the Providence Journal, "Actually Andy," by Karen Lee Ziner tells the story of Andy Schulz, a transgender 16-year-old who lives in Warwick and is currently a senior at The Greene School. This moving story about Andy's adjustment to a new way of life and to his acceptance by his school and his community provides us with a great occasion to reflect on our own state anti-bullying policies. RI has very strong policies against bullying in general and, in particular, against bullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

The Basic Education Program (BEP) contains clear language about supportive and nurturing school communities:

Each LEA shall ensure that schools create a climate of safety, security and belonging for all students and adults, thereby establishing an environment that builds respectful relationships, enhances productive learning and teaching, promotes school engagement, and promotes academic success. Each LEA shall accomplish this goal by ensuring that each school:

- safe, respectful, and free of discrimination;
- establishes protocols for on-going student, family, and community engagement; and
- provides expanded learning opportunities and academic enrichment. (G-14-2)

This section of the BEP also sets forth expectations regarding freedom from discrimination, the right to a safe school, and the prevention of bullying and harassment.

Here are links to some of our materials and policies on bullying: Statewide Anti-Bullying Policy:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Students-and-Families-Great-Schools/Health-Safety/RI-Statewide-Bullying-Policy.pdf>

Board of Education Policy Prohibiting Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression:

<http://www.thriveri.org/documents/RIDE%20Policy%20Statement%20on%20Discrimination%20Sexual%20Orientation.pdf>

Thrive website: <http://www.thriveri.org/components/sexuality.html>

Youth Pride, Rhode Island: <http://www.youthprideri.org/>

GLSEN Model District **Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students:**
http://transequality.org/PDFs/Trans_ModelPolicy_2013.pdf

GLAD Rights of LGBTQ Youth in Rhode Island <http://www.thriveri.org/components/sexuality.html>

3. Second NECAP test scheduled

RIDE has been **scheduling a second NECAP retake** for February and March 2014, exclusively for seniors who may still need to attain partial proficiency or show improvement on assessments in mathematics and reading. The 2014 retake testing will take place between February 25 and March 7, with additional dates reserved in case of snow days. If you have questions about the NECAP retest at this time, please e-mail Cali Cornell (cali.cornell@ride.ri.gov), in our Office of Multiple Pathways, or Kate Schulz (kate.schulz@ride.ri.gov), in our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum.

4. Recent Commissioner Hearing Decisions Relating to Special Education

In an interim order, the Woonsocket School District is required to provide FAPE to a student who is a residential patient of a pediatric nursing facility in Providence:

http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2013/024-13_IN_RE_V.S.S._DOE_093013.pdf

There is no violation of the compulsory-attendance law when a student is dismissed one hour before the end of the school day for purposes of receiving ABA therapy:

http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2013/026-13_Student_G._Doe_Vs._Cumberland_S.C._120413.pdf

General Announcements

1. NBC News Education Nation has created a **Parent Toolkit** to help parents participate in their children's academic success and personal growth. The Parent Toolkit includes:

- a "growth chart" containing grade-by-grade academic benchmarks for Pre-K through 12th grade in mathematics and English Language Arts;
- tips and resources for parents to support their children's learning for Pre-K through 12th grade;
- a guide to parent-teacher conferences and school counselor meetings; and
- a newsfeed with stories, blog posts, and videos from a variety of sources

The goals of this toolkit are to establish for parents a clear understanding of what is expected of their children at each step in their academic journey and to provide a comprehensive set of tips and tools to help parents engage in and monitor their children's academic development. NBC News enlisted a number of experts, from academics to classroom teachers to parents from across the country, to help review all the content. You can visit the site, at: www.ParentToolkit.com.

2. RIDE, the Business Innovation Factory and Youth in Action, launched Students Design for Education, a project in which 24 students will go through the design process to create a new school. There is a team of students ready to embark on the design process and a great partnership with Saul Kaplan and the Business Innovation Factory to help transform the students' vision into a reality. Once the students complete the design, RIDE will work to open the student-designed school within two years. This project has the potential to be a life-changing not only for the students involved in the school design but for many Rhode Island students for years to come.

3. Child Nutrition Programs in schools and communities are expanding across the state. An important part of our work toward ensuring that our schools are safe and healthy learning environments for all students is our commitment to child-nutrition programs. Children who are hungry or malnourished will inevitably find it difficult to concentrate in school and to keep up with their peers. With a great deal of support from federal funds and resources, RIDE administers several child-nutrition programs through our Office of Statewide Efficiencies. To provide the public with better information on these programs, we have just developed a new page for our website that contains a complete compendium of resources on [Child Nutrition Programs](#), including the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Summer Food Service Program, the Farm to School Program, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program, and more. I invite you to take a look at this new section of our website.

4. America Achieves has invited Rhode Island high schools to participate in the OECD Test for Schools, a new international assessment that is modeled on the well-known PISA international assessment, the “gold standard” for critical thinking. Last year, five Rhode Island districts participated in the pilot version of the OECD Test for Schools – one of the highest participation rate in the country demonstrating that Rhode Island educators are thinking globally. The OECD survey enables schools to compare responses on an international scale. Participation is entirely voluntary – for schools, and for students. The OECD Test for Schools is an assessment focused on problem-solving and critical thinking.

More information is available at www.americaachieves.org/oecd.

5. RI Families are receiving solicitation letters regarding college admissions, financial aid.

RIDE has received word from the R.I. Higher Education Assistance Authority (RIHEAA) that families of students in at least one community are receiving letters from a Nevada-based company called C3. The letters, which include student names, begin by stating: “You and your student, [first name], are scheduled to participate in an education group presentation followed by a personal interview to help determine college admission and financial aid eligibility.” Parents are then asked to register online and to call and confirm this “appointment.” Families in your community should be notified that this message does not come from RIDE, RIHEAA, or your school department. As Gail Mance-Rios, the Acting Director of RIHEAA, notes: “These ‘free’ services typically have an aggressive sales pitch at the end for the family to sign up for their ‘paid’ services.”

6. Other Recent Commissioner Hearing Decisions:

In the matter of residency of Student K. Doe, a student who has resided in Warwick since the start of the school year must be immediately dis-enrolled from North Kingstown:

[http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2013/025-13 Residency of Student K. DOE 120313.pdf](http://www2.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2013/025-13%20Residency%20of%20Student%20K.%20DOE%20120313.pdf)

7. The GED Testing Service announced on December 4 that registration and new cutting-edge resources to help prepare for the 2014 GED test are now available with the launch of the organization’s new MyGED website. MyGED – which can be found online at GED.com – is a free site that will help adults register for, take and be better prepared for the GED test. Beyond the basics of testing, it will help students identify career pathways, and more easily navigate to jobs and into college training programs required for most of today’s job openings.

The new GED program, which will launch on January 2, was overhauled to better prepare adults without a high school diploma for higher education and the workforce. The comprehensive, start-to-finish 2014 program uses technology to help students prepare for, pass, and progress beyond the GED test to find better jobs with better wages. The 2014 GED test is the only high school equivalency program [fully aligned to state college and career readiness standards](#). Some of the new features students can use on the new GED.com website include:

- a one-stop resource for registration, preparation, and more.

- Tools to develop personalized study plans and find study materials or in-person classes;
- a skills assessment to help test-takers match skills with possible careers, and focus on career plans to get to better jobs with better wages;
- access to information and resources to help test-takers apply for college or training programs and fill out financial aid forms; and
- an official practice test that shows test-takers their strengths and where they need to improve, including specific pages to study in their training materials at home and online.

For more information about the MyGED website, visit www.GED.com. Download the [fact sheet](#) for more information about the 2014 GED program.

8. The Lifespan Summer Youth Employment Program is now accepting applications for Summer 2014. Please visit www.lifespanyouth.org. Click on the “summer youth employment” link for more information and to submit an on-line application. Please contact Kelly Estes by email kestes@lifespan.org or phone 793-4905 if you have further questions or concerns.

Old Business:

- **Present Commissioner with Annual Report** – A date and time has been set for January 24, 2014 at RIDE.
- **Workgroup Meetings** – It was suggested that the workgroups, especially the Social & Emotional Learning workgroup, should try to capture some of the ideas that had been raised in the discussion about the YRBS survey. Kate shared that their group had done some research and referred to the Illinois state “Urgent State of Mental Health” task force which had been formed. Since lack of time allowed further discussion, Kate indicated that she would provide the membership with a link to the Illinois report through the ListServe. Currently, there is a bill in the US House of Representatives, HR 817, which would address social & emotional learning. RISEAC should focus on action steps to take. RISEAC could pool resources to provide a list of available doctors, etc. available for students with social-emotional needs. Pam through Parent Support Network suggested that prior to the next full meeting, some could meet to share these resources. A request was made for information from the FCCPs regarding where referrals could come from.
- **Partnership Conference** – Sponsored by various agencies such as RIPIN, Department of Health, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, will be held March 12, Wednesday at the Crowne Plaza. There is a fee of \$20-25. The conference is to provide information to help identify and find resources for children from early childhood through adulthood.

Public Comment: None.

Adjournment: A motion was initiated by Maria and seconded by Laura to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:32 pm.

Recording Secretary: Ann L. Brockmann

RISEAC website: www.riseac.org