RHODE ISLAND
BOARD OF EDUCATION

Enclosure 2a
November 2, 2021

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
October 5, 2021

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Board Chair Cottam welcomed everyone to the October 5, 2021, meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. Virtual access was provided to members of the general public. Chair Cottam declared a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Present: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

Absent: Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines and *Milly Asherov

[*Ex-officio, non-voting member]

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Amy Beretta, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the October 5, 2021, meeting

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES

a. Minutes of the August 17, 2021, Meeting

On a motion duly made by Lawrence Purtill and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the minutes of the August 17, 2021, meeting

DRAFT

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members abstained and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

b. Minutes of the September 14, 2021, Meeting

On a motion duly made by Marta Martinez and seconded by Amy Beretta, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the minutes of the September 14, 2021, meeting

Vote: 5 members voted in the affirmative, 2 members abstained and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, and Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 2 - Council Members Davis and Purtill did not attend the September 14, 2021, meeting

3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Infante-Green began by acknowledging that October is National Principals Month and stressed the essential role that principals across the nation play in making a school great and ensuring student get the education they deserve. Commissioner Infante-Green also recognized that October also Dyslexia Awareness Month and shared that RIDE has been using its social media accounts to raise awareness of Dyslexia, share valuable education resources, and highlight stories of successes with students, families, and education statewide.

Next, Commissioner Infante-Green reported that much like what was done for Multilingual Learners this past year, RIDE is also working directly with stakeholders and advocates to create a Differently Abled Student Blueprint for Success. RIDE is prioritizing community engagement to hear of ideas and perspectives from the community on how it can best serve differently abled students.

Next Commissioner Infante-Green expressed that RIDE has been focused on ensuring equity in the state's education system, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a more severe impact on already marginalized student populations as detailed in the LEAP Task Force's report released in April.

Commissioner Infante-Green also reported that in the coming weeks RIDE will share the RICAS scores, and noted that much like Massachusetts and across the country, drops in scores are expected, driven by the learning disruption. With the guidance of the LEAP Task Force recommendations, RIDE has a gameplan to not just recover, but to accelerate learning so that students can leap forward to academic success. The blueprints will complement that work and will place additional emphasis on the most vulnerable students.

Next, Commissioner Infante-Green also recognized that we are at the halfway point of Hispanic Heritage Month. She shared that over the last few weeks, she has had the pleasure of visiting and participating in the celebrations in schools across the state to recognize the achievements and contributions of Hispanic and Latino champions who have inspired others.

Commissioner Infante-Green also shared that later this week, she, and Interim Superintendent Montañez, will visiting E-Cubed Academy Career and Technical Education. The essence of the visit is to place a spotlight on the program and on how the school community has come together to adopt programs that will engage students in unique ways and set them on paths to success.

Commissioner Infante-Green ended her report by sharing that RIDE is committed to ensuring every student in the State receives a comprehensive, enriching, and high-quality educational experience. The noted that the fiscal year 2023 budget reflects that mission and is responsive to the community needs that we have heard over the last year. Included in the budget are increases for additional supports to our most vulnerable students, including a doubling of state aid funding both for High-Cost Special Needs students and Multilingual Learners. The budget also includes an increase for school housing aid to support students facing housing insecurity, which is especially important for students for students who have been at-risk during the pandemic. And to reflect RIDE's commitment to becoming an agency of support for local school districts, the agency has reduced its own operating budget compared to the Fiscal Year 2022 enacted budget. This strategic reduction will allow the agency to better prioritize the needs of students, teachers, and the education community.

4. OPEN FORUM

One individual addressed the Council.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Providence Update

Brett Dickens, Director of Career and Technical Education (CTE), presented on the district's efforts to transform CTE in the Providence public schools, and shared that the program's mission is tied to the TAP goals - helping students earn credentials and prepare for postsecondary employment and career education. It is also the district's priority to address teacher shortages, improve teacher preparation, and strengthen pipelines for teachers of color to match the student diversity. The program is currently in seven of the district's high schools, with the plan to eventually be in all the high schools. Director Dickens went over the three areas of focus – quality, growth, and work-based learning, highlighting that in 2020, 20% of students reached Gold Level Status standards and the goal is to get 40% of students at level by 2025. She also went over the accomplishments in the difficult 2020-2021 school year and opportunities for school year 2021-2022.

Next, Francisco Velasquez, Principal of Hope High School, went over the school's new EMT program. He explained that this is a combined pilot program funded by Perkins for 25 seniors from Hope's CTE JROTC and Central High School's CTE Law and Public Safety. He noted that students will receive 160 hours of instruction from a certified EMT instructor and will be able to take the written and practical EMT exam as soon as they turn 18.

Director Dickens also shared that the district partnered with two different community organizations that bid on the One Providence for Youth, a year-long employment program grant that allows for funding to pay $15 an hour to 100 students across all schools, who participate in work-based learning experiences. The district also partnered with the Real Skills for Youth/Governor's Workforce Board PITCH grant, a very focused initiative with the Teacher Academies at Mount Pleasant and Cooley at JESEC high schools, which will fund 40 paid, $1000 internships for seniors to work with two local elementary schools at 100 hours per student, paired with a classroom teacher. She also went over the goals for school year 2022-2023, which include increasing the percentage of CTE students in each graduating class, targeting new industry clusters, such as healthcare and manufacturing, expanding paid internships, as well as launching Dell Student Tech Help Crew, to support IT needs.

Council members praised the different pathways and the value of these experiences on students' lives, but raised concerns with how students are being paid (stipends versus hourly wages) to serve as interns. They also asked why students leave Providence to attend programs in other districts. Director Dickens responded that she shares the same concerns, however, there are some legalities around students being employed. Students are leaving the district for programs in healthcare, which are not currently being offered in Providence. Council members asked for a list of the CTE programs at PPSD and the opportunity to visit those programs.

b. Capital Budget – Fiscal Year 2023-2027

Ana Riley, Deputy Commissioner, Instructional Programs, framed the discussion by reminding Council members that the School Building Authority team leads the capital projects across the state, however, RIDE also supports capital projects for the state operated schools – The MET, School for the Deaf and Davies.

Next, Mark Dunham, Finance Director, began the presentation by explaining that the Capital Budget is a $560M, five-year plan, with projected expenditures of $491M. He explained that pre 2023 expenditures for ongoing projects are $67M and post 2027 projections for ongoing projects are $2M. Currently, there are 14 total projects; eight previously approved by the Council, Governor, and the General Assembly, and 6 that are new. Director Dunham went over the Statewide Facility Assessment, required to be conducted at least once every five years, estimated at $3.5M, and the Facility Equity Initiative, a pay-go funding mechanism that provides LEAs with reimbursement rates greater than 60%.

Next, Director Dunham went over the new projects at the RI School for the Deaf – update the gymnasium, parking lot, track, security enhancements, new vehicle purchase, and funding to address routine issues that arise. At the MET, there will be a roof replacement and asset protection funds to address routine issues that arise over time. And at Davies Career and Technical High School, there will be asset protections funds to address issues that arise, healthcare classroom improvement, and HVAC upgrades.

c. Fiscal Year 2022 Revised and Fiscal Year 2023 Current Service Level Budgets

Director Dunham began by sharing that annually, RIDE submits a budget for the current year and a revised budget for the previous year. He explained that this year, the FY 2022 revised budget of $477M is less than the FY 2022 Enacted Budget, due to the America Recovers Plan (ESSER II) and the CRRSAA funds (ESSER III), originally budgeted in 2022, and will be distributed across several fiscal years through FY 2025. The Proposed FY 2023 Budget Request includes a General Revenue increase of $79.5M, with the largest increase of $62.7M in education aid and the next largest increases of $8.5M for housing aid and $6.9M for teachers' retirement contributions. Director Dunham also went over RIDE's staffing requests in the FY 2023 Budget Requests; State Aid to Education funding formula and categorical aid; FY 2023 Requested: All RIDE department and all funding sources; State funded schools general revenue increases; ACES budget and funding source, including a line item to provide professional learning for RIDE staff; RIDE budget by funding source; allocation of education funds; COVID-19 relief major funds summary; and COVID-19 state set-aside funds.

d. Statewide FAFSA Initiative

Spencer Sherman, Chief for Innovation, introduced Elizabeth Texeira, Director of the Office of College and Career Readiness, who has led the FAFSA work over the years. Ms. Texeira began her overview of all the things that are happening across the State by emphasizing that in addition to RIDE, there are several strong partners, such as the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, CCRI, and the RI Student Loan Authority (RISLA) that runs the College Planning Center, who work hand in hand with RIDE to ensure that federal aid is available to all students across the State. She highlighted that there is $150B available in federal student aid (including grants, loans, and work-study) for the 2021-2022 school year and that 85% of American families will receive some sort of financial aid upon completion or the FAFSA. She stressed the importance of students filling out the FAFSA and noted that in 2018, the State left $6M of unused funds on the table. She highlighted that one big part of the campaign is to get the word out to students and families about these statistics and the importance of filling out the FAFSA. Rhode Island has made inroads in increasing the statewide completion rate over the past few years through inter-agency collaboration, increased use of data, additional outreach efforts, and multiple tools and resources (FAFSA Portal, FAFSA Toolkit, and the FAFSA Dashboard) to increase the State's completion rate, which dropped last year due to the pandemic. The FAFSA is also available to adult learners and the colleges do significant outreach to college students to ensure that they reapply for funding and/or are aware that there is funding available.

e. Assessment Data Portal

Spencer Sherman, Chief for Innovation, and Scott Gausland, Director of Network and Information Systems, gave a brief live demo overview of the new assessment data portal application system. Director Gausland emphasized that this system is a collaboration between his staff and the staff in the Assessment Office to ensure that the data is represented properly.

Council Members discussed the need to provide professional development to district leaders and teachers on how to interpret and compare the data, as well as the need to share best practices.

6. ACTION ITEMS:

a. Approval of the Appeals Committee Recommendation on the matter of Christopher DeFraga v. RIDE

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was

VOTED: That in the matter of Christopher DeFraga v. RIDE, the Commissioner's decision is affirmed, as presented

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative, and 0 members abstained as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

7. ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Lawrence Purtill, it was

VOTED: That the meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Adjourns

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative, and 0 members abstained as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.