RHODE ISLAND
BOARD OF EDUCATION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
January 29, 2019

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Chair McConaghy welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, noted for the record that Council Member Gaines and Student Representative Christopher Boves would not be joining the meeting, and that Member Purtill would be joining the meeting late. He declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

Present: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Marta Martinez, Daniel McConaghy, and *Lawrence Purtill

Absent: Jo Eva Gaines

[*Arrived at 6:05 p.m.]

1. **ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA**

    On a motion duly made by Karen Davis and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

    VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the January 29, 2019, Meeting

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

    YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Marta Martinez, and Daniel McConaghy

    NAYS: 0

[Lawrence Purtill arrived after the approval of the agenda]

2. **ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES**

    a. Minutes of the January 14, 2019, Meeting

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

    VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary

Education accepts the minutes of the January 14, 2019, Meeting

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members
               voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field,
               Marta Martinez, and Daniel McConaghy

NAYS: 0

[Member Callahan had to recuse herself from the vote as she did not attend the January 14, 2019, Meeting]

[Lawrence Purtill arrived after the approval of the agenda]

3.   OPEN FORUM

Chair McConaghy reported that no one had signed up to speak.

4.   REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER

Commissioner Wagner began his report on the topic of curriculum, which he noted many people are discussing. He stated that for at least the past two years, curriculum – supporting the adoption of coherent, high-quality curriculum and also professional learning for all educators in all different roles anchored in that curriculum – has been a key part of RIDE's strategies. He noted that RIDE will not pretend that curriculum is a cure-all; it will not solve all of our challenges, nor that RIDE pretends that we can do curriculum without an ongoing commitment to professional learning, but it is a big part. At the March 4 Council meeting, RIDE plans to present an analysis of where the districts are in terms of curriculum and will do an overview of our strategies.

Next, Commissioner Wagner shared that there has been a lot of media interest, prompted in part by a thoughtful podcast by an education reporter, that has galvanized and synthesized a lot of the research around the science of reading. Commissioner Wagner summarized the piece noting that decades of consistent consensus around the science of teaching reading have been largely ignored in the way that teachers are being prepared to teach reading and that there is a big gap in the oversight role in approving teacher preparation programs. Commissioner Wagner referenced a recent report recently released by the National Center for Teacher Quality

(NCTQ). This controversial organization takes a hard line around teacher preparation programs across the country, and Rhode Island, like most states, did not fare very well in this year's report. One of the solutions that was proposed was that states should start thinking about an explicit requirement that teacher preparation programs must teach reading in a way consistent with the science of teaching reading. Though it seems like a common-sense, simple approach,

RIDE, like many state agencies, has not yet gone there, since one would assume that teacher preparation programs would be anchored in the science of instruction. As teacher preparation programs are analyzed deeper and deeper, it seems that programs are instead anchored in the teaching preferences of the faculty as opposed to the science of teaching reading or are anchored in legacy practices of the field. RIDE will be thoughtful about what, if anything, to bring to the Council around this topic.

Next, Commissioner Wagner reported on legislation that was approved giving authority to the Council to approve a virtual learning day to take the place of a school day in case a school is closed due to inclement weather. Commissioner Wagner noted that RIDE has been very deliberate and very direct in holding schools to a high bar – that we do not want to make a false equivalence between a "to-go bag" and a highly trained instructional program. However, there has been increasing pressure for RIDE to approve various proposals. RIDE has received six proposals, but not yet advanced any for the Council's consideration. RIDE does have one proposal that at least warrants review for a pilot approval, which RIDE will bring to the Council at the February 4 meeting. He shared that RIDE's typical protocol, especially for important policy discussions, is to have the discussion at one meeting and to come back to a second meeting for action, however, the more time that we take – February 4 being the first opportunity, March 4 the second opportunity – with winter weather hopefully being over by March, we could potentially lose the window for that approval. He then proposed a question to the Council as to whether the typical protocol be followed for this, which he would be fine with, or whether the Council would be comfortable discussing and then acting on the proposal in the same meeting. Council members suggested that the discussion and action be scheduled for the same meeting and if Council members had any concerns, the voting could always be tabled.

Commissioner Wagner ended his report by clarifying some questions in the news recently about the accountability system and the chronic absenteeism data, particularly for teachers. He explained that when a data element is being collected and is not being used for a decision of consequence, it is very common to have very poor quality in that data element. RIDE has been collecting attendance data for some time, but if no one has been using it for any purpose, it is not unusual to have poor data quality. Commissioner Wagner stated that he wants to be very clear that RIDE does not create district data – district data is reported to RIDE, so any data that is out

there, was reported to RIDE, and through a very extensive verification process. So if there are any questions about data, those questions are properly directed to the districts that reported the source data to RIDE. If there are district errors, it begs the question: do you fix it, and when you fix it, do you change the public reporting. People may have differences of opinion, but clear best practice is when there is an ongoing reporting process, and an ongoing verification process, and when people only bring up errors after the fact, that public reporting should not be changed. If the public report is changed after the fact, any incentive to get the reporting correctly before it goes out to the public has been removed.

A Council Member raised an unrelated question about whether the Council had addressed civic education and whether it would be on the agenda for discussion at a future meeting. Commissioner Wagner noted that as a Board that had not yet happened, and RIDE had not planned it as there were quite busy agendas, but it would be added to the queue. The Council Member stated that due to the lawsuit and recent media about it and about Massachusetts' project, that the Council should see where that stands and consider what if any plan for the future. Commissioner Wagner replied that there could be an update for the Council, but that RIDE could not comment on the specifics of the lawsuit.

5.   **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

   a. **Early Childhood Regulations – Overview**

Commissioner Wagner invited Dr. Phyllis Lynch, who leads RIDE's Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum, to the table, and introduced the topic. He explained that the primary purpose of the Council taking a look at this now, after the previous look for the formatting update a few months ago, is related to the Governor's campaign promise on a dramatic expansion of pre-K access while maintaining pre-K quality. This is a multi-agency effort, but there are some features of the Governor's proposal that would require some updates to the recently approved Comprehensive Early Childhood Education (CECE) Regulations, which is why the agency is now revisiting the regulations with a policy-focused approach. RIDE has reached out to stakeholders and is starting to receive feedback from some early review stakeholder groups, and plans to return to the Council in March with a red-line version for review. The CECE Regulations are broader than state pre-K: they cover both pre-school and kindergarten, so programs at both levels can apply even though so far only pre-school programs have done so.

Dr. Lynch began the overview by providing some background on why high quality pre-kindergarten matters. In addition to increased graduation rates and increased proficiency rates, students also have a lower chance of repeating a grade and reduced referrals to special

education. In addition, especially for low-income students, it has been integral to closing our achievement gaps. Finally, the fiscal piece, where there have been a range of studies indicating that for every dollar invested in pre-K, there will be about nine dollars yielded. In 2008, the General Assembly enacted legislation directing RIDE to establish a pre-K pilot. Beginning in 2009, RIDE worked with various stakeholders to develop quality criteria setting forth what pre-K should look like, and then launched a pilot with 126 children that year. Since then, from 2010 to present, RIDE has been able to use a combination of state categorical funding specifically for pre-K which has increased every year, as well as federal pre-school development grant funds to increase the state pre-K program. This year, RIDE increased 1,080 students in 60 classrooms in eleven communities. She stressed that Rhode Island is one of three states that meet all of the quality benchmarks for National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

Dr. Lynch shared the Governor's proposal to make high-quality pre-K available to every 4-year old in the state by 2023. Rhode Island will add about 60 classrooms per year, continuing the mixed delivery model through community-based organizations, public schools, and Head Start programs, and maintaining the quality standards.

Dr. Lynch then outlined two additional items that RIDE is proposing to change in the regulations. Currently, the regulations allow for half-day programs, however, no one who has ever applied for CECE in this iteration of the regulations has ever sought it, and Rhode Island no longer has half-day kindergarten, so RIDE is proposing to be requesting that that go to a full-day. Also, there are a lot of process and procedures embedded in the regulations, some of which RIDE is proposing to lift from the regulations.

   5b. Accountability System – Growth Metric

Commissioner Wagner noted that Dr. Lynch would remain at the table, and invited Ana Karantonis, an Assessment Specialist in the Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum, to the table. Commissioner Wagner introduced the topic by stating that there were many things that stuck with RIDE from the last discussion about the accountability system. The first two RIDE will respond to include the complexity of the accountability system and the amount of time that could have been and should be spent on understanding it, as well as the question about how growth functions in the accountability system. RIDE thought it appropriate to begin a sequence of meetings to go deeper on the accountability system, in a topical way, and include demonstrations of the mechanisms that are across the entire accountability system. In today's growth conversation, three elements will be touched upon that are central to the entire

accountability system: first, how to measure it; second, how to come up with the cuts to determine after it has been measured whether it is good or not good; and third, how to combine it with other features of the accountability system. These three elements apply to every measure in the accountability system, and will be talked about in subsequent meetings.

Dr. Lynch stated that growth is one of the key indicators for school accountability and outlined the presentation as follows: what is student-level growth, how it is calculated, why it is useful, and how it is implemented in accountability. She introduced and turned the presentation over to Ms. Karantonis.

Ms. Karantonis introduced the Rhode Island Growth Model as a statistical model that allows measurement of each student's academic growth from one grade to the next, using the state assessment. This model has been used for several years for different purposes and ways in accountability, and with different assessments. However, while its application has changed, the underlying way student growth has been measured has not. Growth is measured in terms of student growth percentiles, which have a range of 1 to 99, with 99 being the highest. This is relative growth, so growth is measured relative to that student's peers instead of how many points the student gained or lost. Once the individual students' growth percentiles have been calculated, RIDE is able to aggregate growth at the school, district, or subgroup levels. It is a measure of student progress relative to students' academic peers – those students statewide who scored similarly on past assessments. In order to calculate this peer group, the only factor taken into account is academic history in terms of test scores: no other factors, such as ethnicity or genders, are used. In order to calculate it, RIDE needs a baseline and the current achievement, so a minimum of two years of statewide assessment. If a student does not have a baseline, the student growth percentile is unable to be calculated.

Commissioner Wagner noted that the reason RIDE does not base the growth calculation on anything other than prior achievement is not because RIDE doesn't want to be thorough, nor that RIDE is so focused on test scores that the agency believes that is the only thing that matters – it is because RIDE does not want to have a policy stance that different kinds of growth should be expected from different kinds of students, other than recognizing that students who are struggling will produce different patterns of growth than students who are high-achieving. RIDE also does not want to make an assertion that boys vs. girls should have different patterns of growth, or different students of color should have different patterns of growth, or that

students in high poverty should have different patterns of growth – the model is that the only thing that predicts different growth is where the student is starting from, not their identity in any kind of way. However, RIDE also tests that assumption by looking at the growth patterns for gender, race, ethnicity, etc., so that first RIDE doesn't assume identity differences and then RIDE tests to make sure that identity differences weren't seen. If so, the model is valid for that particular data set.

Ms. Karantonis noted that in terms of the two consecutive state accountability system scores, for the 2018 accountability measures, at the minimum, a student would need the following in order to have a student growth percentile calculated: for grades 4-8 (ELA and mathematics), a 2017-18 PARCC score and then the 2018-19 RICAS score, and for high school the 2017-18 PARCC score and the 10th grade 2018-19 PSAT score.

Commissioner Wagner noted that for next year's accountability system, the high-school measure will change as it will be from PSAT to SAT because RIDE does not have that data set for this current year.

Council Members asked whether RIDE felt that there was enough comparability to do this.

Commissioner Wagner responded that RIDE had modeled the data internally and also validated it externally with the Center for Assessment in Colorado that scores can be calculated that way.

Ms. Karantonis then shared several examples of student scenarios in scoring, how their student growth percentiles were calculated, and what it meant. Commissioner Wagner noted that there are thousands of students, so then the individual growth scores can be taken and averaged, and school level, district level, and so on, can be calculated, which produces the reports RIDE has shared.

Council Members asked clarifying questions about how the student was compared to a peer group, and when the scores were averaged at the school level that peer group would no longer apply.

Commissioner Wagner explained that each student was compared to the peer group, which was the control that resulted in a personalized score, so the student was normed to their own, and then that score could be averaged for the school.

Ms. Karantonis continued with an explanation of how the score is used and why it is useful.

Council Members raised questions about whether at the school level when educators are doing "data digs" in professional learning communities, whether those educators can still have the data specific to their students year-by-year.

Commissioner Wagner noted that it would still be relevant for teachers to see the score profile of their individual students so that they know what the student can do now, but with the growth score also be able to know their progress.

Council Members followed up with questions on whether in the future, a teacher would be able to look at how a student scored at a micro level – at the individual scores year to year.

Commissioner Wagner requested clarification from Steve Osborn, RIDE's Chief of Innovation, who noted that historical data should be available to teachers for as long as the student has been in the state and taken the assessment, and in relation to Teacher-Course-Student data (teachers who had those students in their classes). Commissioner Wagner noted that that was a work in progress, and an important question to raise.

Ms. Karantonis shared the different ways to aggregate the growth at the school level by showing a graph on RICAS achievement and growth for 2018 that is currently live on the RIDE website, where each circle represented a school on the graph (achievement on the vertical axis and average growth on the horizontal axis). She explained that the size of each circle represents the number of students tested, which is a proxy for school size, and the coloring represents the proportion of students on free or reduced lunch.

Commissioner Wagner further explained that the schools above the average growth percentile are schools that are breaking the trend and can be learned from for how they are doing so. The power of the scatterplot is that it helps to bring alive the data, especially in the context that now exists with the importance of professional learning. He also noted that the top right-hand corner is schools with high achievement and high growth, while the left-hand corner is schools with high achievement but low growth year-over-year.

Dr. Lynch explained how the information was used in the accountability system. Council Members raised questions on how the data has been validated, to which Commissioner Wagner replied that the student growth profile is by far the most used methodology and Dr. Lynch added that it is the most common method of including student growth in accountability, as twenty-four states currently use a student growth percentile model.

Council Members expressed appreciation for the presentation, and asked how RIDE is helping other people increase their understanding of this data, including parents and the general public. They noted the importance of bringing people together to have a similar experience, walk-through, and demonstration is a very good use of professional learning time.

Commissioner Wagner explained that RIDE had done training sessions prior to the release, after the release, and so on, but agreed that it was a process and that if parents are interested in this level of detail, RIDE will support them in learning about this, in addition to the parent report that was sent to them and includes graphics sharing where their child is in their score and also growth.

Dr. Lynch shared how the growth score factored into the accountability system through an index system (like with achievement) so that each student is counted in the score, unlike with an average, which would come down to one number.

Council Members asked how that compared to how Massachusetts rates their schools, because in Rhode Island, there are a lot of schools that are low-performing, and therefore are worried that the schools' growth could overcompensate for their lack of performance and result in a higher star rating.

Commissioner Wagner answered the question by stating that a simple answer was that Rhode Island is doing this much better than Massachusetts, and that this was the result of a long and hard discussion and thoughtful approach. The score basically says that a school is ranked as low as the lowest criteria. Each of the criteria is informed by the rigor of the weights within it, but a school cannot write off any of these criteria because it is not an arithmetic combination.

Council Members commented that it is basically impossible to have all five stars except one three star, because there is a relationship between the columns.

Dr. Lynch clarified that there are business rules that thoughtfully balance the system so instances of high performance and moderate growth do not penalize the school, but where lowest achievement and high growth prevent the school from receiving more than two stars as an overall rating. There is a little more flexibility with the two- and three- stars in the chart where achievement and growth are bundled together, but not at levels four and five.

Council Members raised questions on how newcomers and English Learners were accounted for in this system.

Dr. Lynch explained that first-year English Language Learners do not take the ELA assessment, but do take the math, though their first-year scores are not included in achievement or growth. They would be included in the English Language Learner proficiency metric, but they aren't counted separately except in subgroup performance.

In response to a comment that there have been schools which have been identified for decades, Commissioner Wagner noted that the timelines and criteria are part of the federally-approved state plan, however there is a progressive intervention state statute that may not be held to the same timelines as in the federally-approved plan. He explained that the RICAS scores have been a catalyst for a lot of needed conversations about achievement, growth, and Rhode Island schools to spark interest and action in improving schools.

6. **ACTION ITEMS:**

   a1. Approval of the Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy

On a motion duly made by Gara Field and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was

VOTED: That   the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education move to renew the term of Blackstone Valley Prep's six schools for 5 years, beginning with the school year 2019-20, expiring at the end of school year 2023-24. If the high school does not become at least a 3-star school by the 2020 accountability release, pending the outcome of a renewal visit, the school's term will be adjusted.

Prior to the vote, Council Member Beretta asked for a motion to amend the language on the motion and change the word "will" to "may," which was agreed by all.

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

VOTED: That   the Motion be amended to change the word "will" to "may"

      Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

            Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

      YEAS: 8

      NAYS: 0

On a motion duly made by Gara Field and seconded by Amy Beretta, it was

VOTED: That   the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education move to renew the term of Blackstone Valley Prep's six schools for 5 years, beginning with the school year 2019-20, expiring at the end of school year 2023-24. If the high school does not become at least a 3-star school by the 2020 accountability release, pending the outcome of a renewal visit, the school's term may be adjusted.

      Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

            Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

      YEAS: 8

      NAYS: 0

a2. Approval of the Segue Institute for Learning

On a motion duly made by Gara Field and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was

VOTED: That   the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education move to renew the charter of the Segue Institute for Learning for 5 years, for the term beginning with school year 2019-20, expiring at the end of school year 2023-24.

         Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

                          Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

         YEAS: 8

         NAYS: 0

a3. Approval of the Southside Elementary Charter School

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

VOTED: That   the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education move to renew the charter of the Segue Institute for Learning for 3 years, for the term beginning with school year 2019-20, expiring at the end of school year 2021-22.

         Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

                          Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

         YEAS: 8

         NAYS: 0

a4. Approval of The Hope Academy

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Karen Davis, it was

VOTED: That   the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education move to renew the charter of The Hope Academy for 5 years, with sustainability conditions, for the term beginning with school year 2019-20, expiring at the end of school year 2023-24.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

YEAS: 8

NAYS: 0

a5. Approval of The Learning Community

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

VOTED: That   the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education move to renew the charter of The Learning Community for 5 years, for the term beginning with school year 2019-20, expiring at the end of school year 2023-24.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

YEAS: 8

NAYS: 0

a6. Approval of Times2 STEM Academy

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

VOTED: That   the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education move to renew the charter of Times2 STEM Academy for 3 years, with sustainability conditions. These sustainability conditions are due within the 2019 calendar year, may require interim site visit, and may require the charter to report directly to the Council on its progress in meeting the conditions. The charter term begins with school year 2019-20 and expires at the end of school year 2021-22.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

YEAS: 8

NAYS: 0

7. ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

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

VOTED: That   the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education adjourns.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Marta Martinez, Daniel McConaghy, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0