



MINUTES OF THE MEETING
March 26, 2024

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Chair DiCenso welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. She declared a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

Present: Mary Barden, **Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso,
**Michael Grey, Robert Mitchell, *Christian Ramos

*Ex-officio member

** Member Beretta arrived at 5:42

*** Chair Grey arrived at 5:39 p.m.

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary education accepts the agenda for the March 26, 2024, meeting

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On a motion duly made by Karen Davis and seconded by Mary Barden, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the February 27, 2024, meeting

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

RECUSAL: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Jo Eva Gaines

3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Infante-Green opened her report by expressing gratitude to everyone present and emphasizing the importance of the SurveyWorks deadline on March 31st. This annual survey enables RIDE to gather direct feedback from students, parents, and educators regarding their experiences in our schools and provides essential insights into areas where RIDE can make improvements. She continued by acknowledging that over the years, RIDE has heard from students who desire more engaging, hands-on learning experiences to better prepare them for success in college and careers. She noted that in response to this feedback, since 2019, RIDE has implemented over 70 new career and technical education (CTE) programs, representing a nearly 30% statewide increase. She also mentioned one of the most exciting CTE programs, the Menu for Success Food Truck Initiative, which is assisting 15 local education agencies (LEAs) in acquiring their own "mobile classrooms." She shared that last week, Providence Public Schools' PCTA welcomed their new truck: Good Eats and Treats. She informed the Council that RIDE will be hosting the Food Truck Roundup at Lincoln High School on May 4, where a variety of food trucks will be serving delicious dishes.

Commissioner Infante-Green continued her report announcing that Hannah Smith a student from Warwick's Pilgrim High School and Victoria Spradlin, a student at the Wheeler School were chosen as the state delegates to attend the National Youth Science Camp for 2024. She added that Hannah dedicates much of her time to her rigorous academics, extracurriculars, and volunteer work. During the summers leading into her junior and senior years, she conducted hands-on research in theoretical chemistry through a paid fellowship at Brown University. She also mentioned that Victoria has also demonstrated strong academic progress and leadership skills through her rigorous coursework and extracurriculars. She has served as a paid research assistant at Brown University and as a student researcher at the University of North Carolina and University of Hawaii.

She noted that the camp provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the two delegates to exchange ideas and learn with leading scientists and other professionals from academic, governmental, and corporate worlds.

She went on to share that RIDE recently held the first of three statewide job fairs, with the initial session focusing on recent and upcoming graduates seeking employment in Rhode Island's education sector. Over 30 employers participated, including LEAs, higher education institutions, preparatory programs, and afterschool organizations. She reminded everyone that RIDE launched educate401.org, featuring the first-ever statewide job board and provides information on how to become certified in RI. Additionally, RIDE launched the Praxis Prep Program, aimed at assisting candidates in preparing for and passing the exam, thus encouraging more new teachers to enter the profession. She noted that the remaining sessions will be held on April 3, from 3:30-7:30 p.m. and June 22 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Crown Plaza in Warwick.

Lastly, she shared that RIDE has officially launched the Facilitated Individualized Education Program (FIEP) service. She mentioned that this program would be discussed more thoroughly during one of the presentations later in the evening. As a mother of a differently abled son, she expressed familiarity with the challenges many families face while seeking support for their loved ones. She emphasized her pleasure in RIDE's transition from solely focusing on compliance to providing support, highlighting the FIEP team as an additional point of support for families. With this resource, RIDE aims to further support students' needs and assist families and school districts in achieving mutually agreed-upon outcomes.

4. OPEN FORUM

One individual addressed the Council, and one individual submitted a written comment.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. MLL Update

Deputy Commissioner Dr. Kelvin Roldán initiated the presentation with a concise summary. He outlined that the team would assess the present condition of Multilingual Learners (MLL) in RI, outline the strategy for enhancing outcomes for MLL students, and establish the timeline and subsequent actions.

Chief Strategy Officer Brian Darrow proceeded by presenting data, focusing on a few main points. He highlighted that RI experienced the highest growth nationwide in the percentage of MLL students between 2010 and 2020. He emphasized that RI currently has twice as many MLL students enrolled in School Year 2023 compared to School Year 2013. Additionally, he mentioned that RI's regulations, last updated in 2007, are outdated and do not align with federal law.

Director of Student, Community, and Academic Supports David Sienko continued the presentation by discussing the shared responsibilities outlined in the Blueprint for MLL Success. Through a comprehensive review of literature and statewide data, the MLL Blueprint Advisory Committee identified key conditions necessary for MLL student success. These conditions include the provision of high-quality MLL instruction, bilingual and dual language instruction, educators, and administrators trained in supporting MLL students, coherent and effective support systems, engagement of families and communities, and the utilization of evidence-based practices and data for MLL students. He also outlined the MLL Blueprint vision, which aims to empower all MLLs with high-quality instructional opportunities, including MLL education, that leverage their cultural and linguistic assets, promote college, and career readiness, and prepare them to thrive socially, politically, and economically, both in our state and globally.

ELL Coordinator Flavia Molea Baker further elaborated on the implementation of the MLL Blueprint, discussing its goals and outlining key milestones with associated progress dates for each goal. Additionally, she highlighted some initial promising outcomes, including the performance of recently exited MLLs. Despite the progress made to date, Director Sienko discussed the significant performance and opportunity gaps that still exist that need to be addressed to ensure that all MLLs receive an excellent and equitable education.

Mr. Darrow outlined the steps for advancing and the strategy aimed at improving outcomes for MLLs, emphasizing a comprehensive and holistic approach using multiple tools which include expanding the MLL categorical funding, updating the 17-year-old MLL regulations. Enhancing student exit criteria and providing direct LEA support moving forward. Finally, he presented a high-level roadmap spanning from March 2024 onwards into 2025 and beyond.

b. Facilitated IEP

Deputy Commissioner Roldán opened the discussion by providing context before handing the meeting over to Director Sienko. Director Sienko began the presentation by reviewing the agenda, which encompassed a welcome and team introductions, an explanation of facilitated IEP/504 meetings, the facilitation process, the advantages of IEP/504 facilitation, and allocated time for questions and comments. He noted that there is an overwhelming desire from parents for support during the IEP/504 meeting. He shared that having a neutral IEP/504 Facilitator available can help the parties work through the impasse, enhance communication, and encourage cooperation.

IDEA/FIEP Coordinator Jane Slade elaborated on what a facilitated IEP/504 meeting entails, describing it as a process designed to proactively address and resolve conflicts. This approach involves a facilitative structure, shared responsibility, a collaborative attitude, and strategic planning. She emphasized that facilitated meetings enable IEP/504 teams to cultivate and enhance strong relationships with families and schools, achieve genuine consensus, prioritize student needs, and foster effective communication. She emphasized that a facilitated IEP/504 meeting is an informal and voluntary process aimed at assisting IEP/504 team members in collaborating effectively to achieve goals while keeping the focus on student's needs. She highlighted that the process involves the entire IEP team working together with the facilitator. Importantly, she noted that the facilitator remains impartial and does not take sides, place blame, or impose decisions on the team. She further discussed the benefits, emphasizing that the goal is to enhance and strengthen the partnership between schools and families, leading to improved outcomes for students.

Lastly, she noted that either a parent or a school district can request a facilitated IEP or 504 meeting. However, both parties must agree to participate in the facilitation process. Ms. Slade mentioned that the RIDE facilitated IEP team, along with approximately 30 district level leaders, have been trained, and other districts will also receive training in the future. The presentation concluded with a quote from an educator who had taken part in the training. "I tried out the facilitated meeting strategies we learned at the training, and it was a success! At first it took a little buy in from the team members but after the meeting they all agreed it worked out well!"

c. Trauma Informed Schools Commission Report

Associate Director of Student, Community, and Academic Supports Rosemary Reilly-Chammat started the presentation following an initial overview provided by Deputy Commissioner Roldán. She outlined the presentation agenda, covering the background, implementation plan, process, and next steps for the RI Trauma-Informed Schools Commission. She explained that the Trauma-Informed Schools Act was signed into law in June 2022, mandating the establishment of a commission tasked with reviewing and assessing existing schools and community-based resources and initiatives statewide. To inform the creation of a trauma-informed school implementation plan and associated materials, which will be submitted to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. Additionally, the commission was responsible for

researching, identifying, and cataloging state, federal, and philanthropic funding sources aligned with this work for a final report due June 30, 2024. Next, she delved into the key takeaways from the commission. The commission’s role was to advise RIDE on recommendations aimed at supporting trauma-informed schools statewide. Within the implementation plan, the commission outlined 25 recommended actions across five key areas. These recommendations necessitate a substantial investment of resources from the General Assembly. She noted that the commission’s first three recommendation areas come directly from the Trauma-Informed Schools Act, and the last two align to RIDE’s Strategic Plan providing sample recommendations from the plan. Next, she reviewed the process from summer-fall of 2022 through 2025 and beyond. Lastly, she discussed the next steps for the commission and provided a list of the commission members.

6. ACTION ITEMS:

a. Approval of Trauma Informed Schools Commission Report

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Mary Barden, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves to amend the action item.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,
 0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the Trauma-Informed Schools Commission Report and calls upon the RI General Assembly to approve necessary and significant funding.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,
 0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis,

Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

b. Chariho Regional School District's Request for a Two-day Emergency Reduction of the School Year pursuant to R.I. Gen Laws § 16-2-3

On a motion to deny duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Michael Grey, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education
Moves to deny the Chariho District's Request for a Two-day
Emergency Reduction of the School year pursuant to R.I. Gen Laws
§ 16-2-3

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis,
Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

c. Jamestown School District's Request for a Two-day Emergency Reduction of the School Year pursuant to R.I. Gen Laws § 16-2-3

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education
Moves to deny the Jamestown School District's Request for a Two-day
Emergency Reduction of the School year pursuant to R.I. Gen Laws
§ 16-2-3

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis,
Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

7. ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Colleen Callahan 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: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis,
Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m.