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Commissioner

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
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June 15, 2020

Representative Joseph M. McNamara
Chair, House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare
Room 135, State House

Dear Chairman McNamara and Members of the House Health, Education and Welfare Committee:

This correspondence is in response to the questions posted at the Health, Education and Welfare meeting on distance learning held on Wednesday, June 3, 2020. Below please find questions that required follow-up from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education along with the most updated answers.

HEW Hearing – Wednesday, June 3, 2020

Below please find questions asked at the hearing that require a response from RIDE.

- 1.** Chairman Joseph McNamara began the questioning by asking about the Cares Act dedicated to LEA's, specifically the CARES Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund Allocation (ESSERF).
 - a. Districts have been sent their allocation amounts from RIDE along with information on the specific uses of the funds under ESSER.
 - b. RIDE is in the process of loading all pertinent information to be included in the application to be sent to all LEAs.
 - c. The goal is to have the application to all districts by the beginning of July 2020. Districts are expected to have the application completed no later than October 31, 2020.
 - d. The districts have until September 30, 2022 to spend the money allocated to them through ESSERF.

- 2.** The second question came from Rep. Julie Casimiro. She asked what districts are doing for Extended School Year learning and if RIDE will be issuing guidelines for the districts.

How is RIDE addressing students that have been able to access distance learning because of their disability?

- a. RIDE has been working with Rep. Casimiro on this issue. Below is the answer that was sent to Rep. Casimiro.

The Commissioner has asked each LEA to submit a plan for Extended School Year (ESY) services this summer. Typically, students who attend ESY are differently abled students who receive special education services, often students with more complex needs. RIDE received the plans on May 28th and is preparing feedback to each school district on their plan. Most districts have indicated that they have not yet made the necessary preparations for in-person instruction to start safely this summer, but there are a few who are looking to start some level of in-person services in the second half of ESY (usually late July early August). Each Superintendent is aware of their district's plan and can address specific issues with parents and community members at the school level.

The Commissioner is aware that there are students who will not respond well to Distance Learning due to the nature of their disability and the need for direct contact with teachers and related service providers. The Commissioner is well aware of the challenge these families are facing and their need for in person services to resume. RIDE is supporting LEAs in ramping up in person services as quickly and safely as possible knowing that each district is at a different level of readiness.

RIDE would encourage parents and others interested in the school districts plans for in person instruction to discuss the matter with the Superintendent. Each community is different in the rate and risk for COVID spread and their readiness to meet the safety requirements for direct contact with students. The Commissioner respects the thoughtful and careful consideration each Superintendent must make in initiating in person contact with students.

- 3.** There was a great deal of interest on summer learning opportunities for students. RIDE priorities are advance academic achievement, provide enrichment and exploration learning and physical fitness, support student transitions, support our multilingual learners and differently abled students and provide Work-Based Learning.

- a. There were a few questions about work-based learning opportunities for students.
- b. The application for the Covid-19 Response Summer Jobs Program was recently released by the Governor's Workforce Board.
- c. The Governor's Workforce Board (GWB) has federal funds available to subsidize summer jobs for youth ages 16-24. This new program, funded by the GWB and implemented by community partners selected through an online application, will allow youth to contribute to the COVID-19 recovery, serve their community, build workplace skills, and earn money. Job opportunities must be related to the state's efforts to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, and selected applicant organizations will be required to manage their own recruitment, selection, supervision, and payment of youth employees, either themselves or through a partner organization. Businesses, nonprofits, schools, and municipalities are eligible to apply. More information and the link to apply can be found at bit.ly/risummerjobs and any questions can be directed to pauline.abetti@dlt.ri.

RIDE has also posted applications for in-person programming and virtual summer learning opportunities. Rhode Island public schools have the opportunity to expand upon teaching and learning for their students through face-to-face Summer Camps and the Summer Learning Opportunities (SLO) program. SLO is a temporary program designed to enhance the educational opportunities to our Pre-K thru Grade 12 students who suffered learning losses during the peak of Rhode Island's COVID 19 health crisis. It aims to provide the children of Rhode Island access to a range of academic and enrichment educational opportunities that provide project-based learning, student-led seminars, and other learning opportunities that will promote student participation and engagement and growth and development. SLO will serve students statewide but will prioritize programming and support to the children of Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket. Learning opportunities will be provided by schools, districts, nonprofit organizations, workforce training partners, businesses, colleges and universities from June 22, 2020 through August 28, 2020. More information can be found on [RIDE's website](#).

- 4.** Rep. Jack Lyle asked a question about data available for students in grades 1, 2, and 3. Deputy Commissioner Riley mentioned that we do not have data at this point but would have much greater information at the end of the school year. We will follow up with Rep. Lyle when this data becomes available.

- 5.** Rep. Gregg Amore asked a question about Charter Schools. Rep. Amore reminded the Committee that certain Charter Schools have applied for and received loans from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) that was established by the CARES Act. Traditional public schools are not eligible for these loans. The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner said that they were aware of this situation and would look into it further.

I want to thank you and the members of your committee for the opportunity to discuss the important education issues facing our state today. I hope this information proves helpful to you as you continue to pursue your important work for the citizens of our state. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,



Angelica Infante-Green
Commissioner