
The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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Statewide Teacher Contract Study Commission

The Rhode Island Senate established a study commission to investigate the possibility of a statewide teacher contract. The Study Commission met on March 9 to receive a report from the District Management Council. The District Management Council is a management consulting firm hired by the Rhode Island Foundation to provide information on the issue.

The [District Management Council report](#) raised the possibility of a thin contract that could result in having a statewide teacher contract. The report also raised the possibility of eight so-called best practices that may be included in a statewide contract, including reducing the role of seniority in layoff decisions and increasing the school day. The report highlighted the pay disparity among Rhode Island school districts and noted that healthcare cost savings depend more on the plan design than whether or not medical insurance is part of a statewide contract.

RIFTHP President Frank Flynn serves on the Commission and asked the consultants why there was such limited reference to contract provisions that benefit student achievement brought to the table by teachers through their union. He gave examples such as class size, supplies and materials, teacher professional development, mentoring, protection of common planning time, and staffing for specific programs. James Parisi, Field Representative and lobbyist also serves on the Commission. He questioned why only half of the state's charter schools replied to information requests on salary and healthcare data. The District Management Council replied that they were relentless in their requests, but only had limited responses.

The Commission will meet again to consider the information in the report and to determine next steps.

Senate Education Bills Considered

The Senate Education Committee met on Wednesday, March 9 to consider several bills. ([S2339](#)) by Senator Adam Satchell which would require RIDE to collect data on school social worker caseloads, staffing and other measures. RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified in support of the legislation, noting the value in having good statewide data on school support staff. He asked that the committee expand the data collection to include related service providers such as school psychologists and guidance counselors.

Parisi also testified on legislation by Senator Juan Pichardo, ([S2168](#)) that would require school districts to review school discipline data to determine whether or not discipline has a disproportionate impact on students based on race, ethnicity or disability status. Parisi did not object to that portion of the bill, but did object to another provision that severely limits a school administrator's ability to impose out-of-school suspensions.

Delegate Ballot Lottery Held

On Wednesday, March 9, Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea hosted a lottery to determine the ballot placement of Rhode Islanders seeking to be delegates to the Republican and Democratic national conventions. Four RIFTHP members are running to be Hillary Clinton delegates to be elected on April 26. RIFTHP Director of Professional Issues **Colleen Callahan** and **Fred Hoppe**, President of the Lincoln Teachers' Association, will be listed as the last two names on the ballot for Congressional District 1. In Congressional District 2, **Lizbeth Larkin**, Cranston Teachers' Alliance President, will be 9th and RIFTHP Field Representative and Lobbyist **James Parisi** will be last on the ballot.

Bill Introductions

State Testing Program

([H7131](#) *McNamara, House Health, Education and Welfare*)

This act would amend the implementation of state assessments of students in Rhode Island public schools. The act would direct the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop its own state assessment for use in public schools beginning in the 2018-2019 school year. School districts would also be given the option to develop their own assessments to use in lieu of the Department's assessment, but such assessments would need to be approved by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. PARCC testing would be phased out of use for grades 11 and 12, and instead other assessments such as the SAT would be used.

Higher Education Performance Funding

[\(H7428\)](#) *McNamara, House Finance*)

This act would establish "The Performance Funding Act of 2016" that would provide that new, unrestricted funding, for Rhode Island's postsecondary state schools be based upon certain performance measures.

Student Eligibility – End of School Year upon Age 21

[\(H7050\)](#) *Azzinaro, House Health, Education and Welfare*)

This act would provide that where a child with a disability is enrolled in a post-secondary or transitional education program as part of the services provided to the child by the school committee or local educational agency, and such child reaches age 21 during a school or program year, then the school committee or LEA would pay for such child's schooling through to the conclusion of the school or program's academic year.

Dyslexia Regulation

[\(H7053\)](#) *Lombardi, House Health, Education and Welfare*)

This act would make certain findings about dyslexia and would establish a definition of "dyslexia". This act would also direct the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education to promulgate rules and regulations to incorporate this definition and findings.

Screening for Reading Disabilities

[\(H7054\)](#) *Lombardi, Senate Education*)

This act would require school districts to conduct screening for dyslexia and other reading disabilities of school children who have exhibited one or more potential indicators using certain screening methods selected by the commissioner of education. This act would take effect upon passage and would be implemented at the commencement of the 2016-2017 school year.

Self-Insurance – Developmental Disabilities Agencies

[\(H7088\)](#) *Hull, House Corporations*)

This act would authorize operators of developmental disability agencies, acting as a group, to self-insure health care costs for employees, retirees and other beneficiaries and to allow a third-party administrator to administer said program.

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