



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner

June 1, 2010

Ms. Janice D. Mele, Chair
Johnston School Committee
Johnston Public Schools
Administrative Office
10 Memorial Avenue
Johnston, Rhode Island 02919-3222

Dear Chairperson Mele:

Thank you for your letter of April 14, 2010 in which you, on behalf of the Johnston School Committee, request certain waivers or alternative methods of compliance in accordance with R.I.G.L. 16-2-21.4. We will address your requests in the order in which you have submitted them.

Request concerning bus monitors: "We are requesting a waiver to R.I.G.L. 16-21-1 (b) providing a bus monitor for all school-bound/homebound runs for grades 1-5. Currently, we have a waiver for grade K busing since we provide individual stops for our Kindergarten students. If the waiver is granted, I will work with the bus company to eliminate bus monitors only on quiet neighborhood runs. We will not eliminate bus monitors on heavily traveled routes."

Response: The Commissioner has authority to grant variances to the school bus monitor law (R.I.G.L. 16-21-1) if the Commissioner, "finds that an alternative plan provides substantially equivalent safety for children." Your request for a variance to the monitor law must be denied at this time because the single paragraph you have submitted in support of the requested waiver falls short of being a detailed "plan" adequate to support appropriate review. For a variance to be considered, a detailed plan must be submitted to my office and this plan, in accordance with R.I.G.L. 31-20-10.3, must be approved by your local police chief. If you wish me to further consider this issue please submit a detailed plan with the required approval by your chief of police.

Request concerning Response to Intervention (RTI): We are asking for a waiver to implement Response to Intervention at the secondary level for next year. We are currently struggling with the implementation at the elementary schools due to support staff cuts as well as a reduction in special and regular education staff.

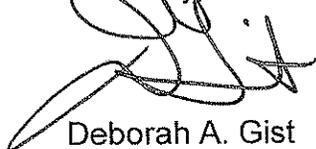
Response: RTI protocols will not be in effect at the high school level until the 2011- 2012 school year. Variances to the RTI requirement at other grade levels should be requested through Ms. Kristen Matthes, RTI Technical Assistance, Rhode Island Department of Education. (Telephone 401-222-5104)

Request concerning Vocational Education: In this request you ask for a waiver of the requirement that Johnston pay tuition for its students attending the Cranston Area Career & Technical Center.

Response: As your letter indicates these tuition payments are required by R.I.G.L. 16-45-10. Since I lack any authority to waive or vary this enactment of our General Assembly your waiver request must be denied. Moreover, it is evident that any changes to the funding mechanism supporting the system of Area Career and Technical Schools in Rhode Island will have to be made on a statewide basis, rather than through ad hoc variance requests that by their very nature would tend to destabilize this system.

If I can be of any further help to you please let me know.

Sincerely,



Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner

C: M. Iacovelli, Superintendent
Kenneth Swanson

Johnston School Committee

JANICE D. MIELE
 Chairperson
 JOHN D. CONTI
 Vice Chairperson
 ROBERT A. LAFAZIA
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MARGARET A. IACOVELLI
 Interim Superintendent of Schools

KATHRYN M. CROWLEY
 Assistant Superintendent of Schools

JOHNSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
 ADMINISTRATION OFFICE
 10 MEMORIAL AVENUE
 JOHNSTON, RHODE ISLAND 02919-3222

April 14, 2010

RI Department of Education
 Shepard Building
 255 Westminster Street
 Providence, RI 02903-3400
 ATTN: Deborah Gist
 Commissioner

COPY

RE: FY2010-11

Dear Commissioner Gist:

At its regular meeting held on April 13, 2010, the Johnston School Committee voted 5-0 to approve the submission of this request to seek the following waivers. This vote was taken after public discussions and school committee questions.

The committee requested I seek the following waivers due to severe financial constraints facing the district in the 2010-2011 school year.

1. We are requesting a waiver with respect to RIGL §16-21-1(b) providing a bus monitor for all school-bound/homebound runs for grades 1-5. Currently, we have a waiver for grade K busing since we provide individual stops for our Kindergarten students. If the waiver is granted, I will work with the bus company to eliminate bus monitors only on quiet neighborhood runs. We will not eliminate the bus monitors on heavily traveled routes.
2. We are asking for a waiver to implement Response to Intervention at the secondary level for next year. We are currently struggling with the implementation at the elementary schools due to support staff cuts as well as a reduction in special and regular education staff.
3. Our last request, and probably the most difficult, has to do with vocational education. Attached please find the data that I have compiled over the last couple of years demonstrating the cost associated with the numbers of students attending Cranston Area Career & Technical Center (CACTC). If all of the students who have applied are accepted, I will experience an estimated increase of \$789,614 over this year.

Telephone 401-233-1900

Fax 401-233-1907

Voice/TDD 800-743-5555

The mission of the Johnston Public Schools, in partnership with the school community, is to provide students the education to become responsible citizens of the emerging global society by offering a rigorous and dynamic academic program which challenges all students to achieve high standards, become lifelong learners and lead self-fulfilling productive lives. The Johnston Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, religion, national origin, color or handicap in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

April 14, 2010
Commissioner Gist
Page 2 of 2

According to RIGL §16-45-1.1(1)(i) all students must have access to vocational education programs. RIGL §16-45-6.1 states that no fewer than 40% of our students 9-12 shall be provided the opportunity to enroll. Yet, in RIGL §16-45-7, it states that the general assembly shall appropriate monies to reduce district tuition. This has never happened and costs continue to increase. In RIGL §16-45-10, it states if the sending district fails to pay the tuition, and I do see this occurring next year, you may deduct the tuition from my state aid.

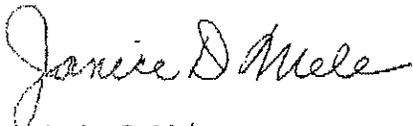
Johnston has worked extremely hard to reduce our costs by providing vocational education classes (i.e., our Criminal Justice Academy and Finance Academy) for our students. Due to lack of money, our Technology Academy has been put on hold for two years. We are requesting a cap of 10 students to attend CACTC for grade 10. We will continue to support our students in grades 11 and 12.

We look forward to your response and we are always available for discussions. I know that you are well aware of the financial difficulties facing the state, cities and towns, and school districts; however, the Johnston Public School District is facing the potential third year of level funding from the Town of Johnston. Our state aid is down and the small revenue that we do receive is also down. In the past three years, we have all taken zero percent raises to a modest 1.75% increase this year for certified staff and 2% increase for non-certified.

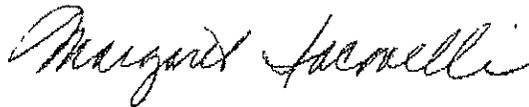
My proposed budget, although lean, was over the 4.50% cap of Senate 3050. We had to cut \$1.3 million from the budget. I shudder when I think of the learning opportunities that will be lost. If the Town once again level funds the district, we must cut an additional \$1.5 million from a bare bones budget.

Should you require further information, please contact me at 401-233-1900 ext. 2402 or via email at ride7195@ride.ri.net.

Sincerely,



Janice D. Mele
Johnston School Committee Chair



Margaret A. Iacovelli
Interim Superintendent of Schools

MA:bit

c: Kathryn M. Crowley, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Melissa Devine, Business Manager
Members of the Johnston School Committee

CRANSTON AREA CAREER TECH CENTER

| SCHOOL YEAR | TUITION TYPE | TUITION COST | STUDENT TOTAL | TUITION TOTAL |
|-------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 2007-08 | Regular | \$ 12,600.00 | 55/56 | \$ 699,300.00 |
| | Resource | \$ 25,883.00 | 12 | \$ 310,596.00 |
| | Self-Contained | \$ 39,165.00 | 0 | \$ - |
| | | | 67.5 | \$ 1,009,896.00 |

| SCHOOL YEAR | TUITION TYPE | TUITION COST | STUDENT TOTAL | TUITION TOTAL |
|-------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 2008-09 | Regular | \$ 12,994.00 | 42/43 | \$ 552,245.00 |
| | Resource | \$ 26,594.00 | 17/19 | \$ 478,710.00 |
| | Self-Contained | \$ 40,195.00 | 1 | \$ 40,195.00 |
| | | | 62.5 | \$ 1,071,150.00 |

| SCHOOL YEAR | TUITION TYPE | TUITION COST | STUDENT TOTAL | TUITION TOTAL |
|-------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| 2009-10 | Regular | \$ 13,130.00 | 36 | \$ 472,680.00 |
| | Resource | \$ 33,010.00 | 12 (+ aide@ \$35,000) | \$ 431,120.00 |
| | Self-Contained | \$ 52,889.00 | 1 | \$ 52,889.00 |
| | | | 49 | \$ 956,689.00 |

| SCHOOL YEAR | TUITION TYPE | 09-10 RATES TUITION COST | ESTIMATED STUDENT TOTAL | 09-10 RATES TUITION TOTAL |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2010-11 | Regular | \$ 13,130.00 | 45 | \$ 590,850.00 |
| | Resource | \$ 33,010.00 | 23 (+ aide@ \$35,000) | \$ 794,230.00 |
| | Self-Contained | \$ 52,889.00 | 7 | \$ 370,223.00 |
| | | | 41 | \$ 1,755,303.00 |

