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COMMISSIONER OUTLINES PRIORITIES AT BOARD OF ED MEETING

Implementing a new history, social science and civics framework to the state's current curriculum and supporting continued talks about K-12 education funding are among Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley's priorities.

At a Board of Elementary and Secondary Education meeting, Riley filed his goals and objectives for the school year and expressed a desire to build "...on the successful development and implementation of the English language arts, mathematics, science and computer science standards and curriculum frameworks."

The Legislature in July passed a bill establishing civics education requirements (S 2631), but lawmakers have not acted on a Gov. Charlie Baker amendment that aims to protect the rights of students with diverse views. The unfinished bill remains before the Legislature.

Education department spokeswoman Jacqueline Reis said the legislation did not play a part in the development of the commissioner's planned framework, which was formally adopted by the board in June and initially created in 2016. Following its implementation, students will have a new eighth grade course on civics, new standards for financial and news literacy, and classes will have a stronger focus on the intersection of history, social science and literacy instruction as well as "the contributions of women and men of all ethnicities" in order to "reflect the diversity of the United States and world cultures."

House and Senate Democrats were unable to agree on a consensus education funding bill this summer, after differing bills cleared the branches. Riley said he expects "continuing conversations" on that matter and "we anticipate that we will be asked to provide substantial support to both the Legislature and the Administration as they work on their respective legislative proposals as part of their FY 20 budget development process."

Riley also told the board that he will lead a new media campaign during the fall and winter to celebrate teachers and focus on recruitment, establish a working committee to develop a plan that will guide the "diversification of the teacher force," convene stakeholders in an education conference and visit over 100 schools throughout the school year. - Chris Triunfo/SHNS

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