

**From:** [patricia@excelined.org](mailto:patricia@excelined.org)  
**To:** [Gist, Deborah <Deborah.Gist@ride.ri.gov>](mailto:Deborah.Gist@ride.ri.gov)  
**CC:**  
**Date:** Thu, 5/12/2011 5:47:58 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Articles of note for Chiefs

Thank you, Deb.

I think one of the things the chiefs need to decide on is will former Chiefs be allowed to stay and participate (if they want to). I don't think paul does, but I think eric may want to stay and participate.

Would love your thoughts.

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**From:** Gist, Deborah [mailto:Deborah.Gist@ride.ri.gov]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 11, 2011 9:46 AM  
**To:** Patricia Levesque (patricia@excelined.org)  
**Subject:** RE: Articles of note for Chiefs

Thanks Patricia

Please let me know how I can assist through Paul's transition.

DG

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**From:** Patricia Levesque (patricia@excelined.org) [mailto:patricia@excelined.org]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 11, 2011 9:24 AM  
**To:** Barresi, Janet; Bennett, Tony; Bowen, Stephen; Cerf, Chris; Gist, Deborah; Huffman, Kevin; Pastorek, Paul; Robinson, Gerard; Skandera, Hanna; Smith, Eric  
**Cc:** Deirdre Finn (dfinn@excelined.org); John Bailey; Fonda Anderson (fonda@excelined.org); Mandy Clark (mandy@excelined.org); Jaryn Emhof (jaryn@excelined.org); Christy Hovanetz (christyh@excelined.org); MatthewLadner <ladner55@gmail.com> (ladner55@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** Articles of note for Chiefs

Chiefs,

A few articles of note for you. Supt. Pastorek, Congratulations on your new endeavor. Commissioner Gist – congratulations. I'm sure your debate of Diane Ravitch was articulate, professional and well-deserved.

Patricia

**Education historian demands apology from R.I. education commissioner Gist**

01:00 AM EDT on Wednesday, May 11, 2011

By Jennifer D. Jordan

Journal Staff Writer

Prominent education historian Diane Ravitch said Tuesday she wants an apology from Education Commissioner [Deborah A. Gist](#) after an awkward meeting last week with Governor Chafee and Gist, who Ravitch said interrupted her repeatedly for 50 minutes and refused to listen to her point of view.

Gist was not available for immediate comment. But she said in an interview last week that many of the points Ravitch raised at the meeting were not relevant in Rhode Island, so she countered them.

“Over the past half-century, I have met with many governors, state superintendents, congressmen, senators, Cabinet members, and every president since Lyndon B. Johnson (I met John F. Kennedy in 1958, when he was senator from Massachusetts),” Ravitch wrote in an e-mail to The Journal Tuesday afternoon. “I have never encountered such behavior.”

Ravitch, a former assistant secretary of education, is today one of the nation’s foremost critics of education reforms identified nationally with U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan and locally with Gist. She was invited to visit the state May 3 by the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers at Chafee’s urging. After meeting with the governor at 2 p.m., she spoke to 500 educators at Rhode Island College.

Just minutes after the State House meeting, Ravitch and Chafee said in a joint interview that the discussion had been lively and that Ravitch and Gist had even agreed on a few key points, including the need to make teachers feel respected at a time when many of them feel unfairly blamed for problems in schools.

But a week later, on the website of a national trade publication, Education Week, Ravitch blogged about her displeasure with Gist, calling the commissioner rude and uncivil in a post titled “Why Won’t ‘Reformers’ Listen?”

Gist “dominated the conversation, interrupted me whenever I spoke, and filibustered to use up the limited time,” Ravitch wrote.

Requests for comment from Chafee and Gist were not immediately returned Tuesday.

But after the meeting last week, Gist said that many of Ravitch’s main talking points, such as the expansion of for-profit charter schools that compete with traditional charter schools, were not problems in Rhode Island, which has 15 nonprofit charters.

Ravitch also expressed concern with schools’ narrowing of curriculum to emphasize two subjects, reading and math, in standardized tests, but Gist countered that was not happening in Rhode Island.

Ravitch also opposes using test scores to judge teacher effectiveness but said she didn’t get a chance to explain her position to Chafee.

Gist said last week that she welcomed the debate offered by Ravitch.

At the same time, Gist said, “I hope she’s open to understanding what we are actually doing in Rhode Island.”

“There is nothing in our plan that blames or demonizes teachers,” Gist said.

“I do think there is a vocal minority of people who want to simplify the conversation, and we can’t focus on those negative viewpoints,” she said.

“We have to go forward with what we know. People respect teachers, but they also expect teachers to serve children well, and those two things are not in opposition.”

## Superintendent Paul Pastorek plans to quit job

By WILL SENTELL

Advocate Capitol News Bureau

State Superintendent of Education Paul Pastorek plans to quit his job, officials said Tuesday.

“I heard this morning that he was maybe resigning today,” said Walter Lee, the longest-serving member of the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, or BESE.

A call to Pastorek’s office was not immediately returned.

The superintendent has held the job since 2007.

However, Gov. Bobby Jindal stopped just short of confirming that Pastorek would resign.

“We won’t be shocked if there is a vacancy,” Jindal told reporters Tuesday morning after testifying in the Louisiana House Appropriations Committee.

Jindal said his office already has been discussing the possibility with BESE board members to ensure a smooth transition. He said the 11-member panel would need to name an interim superintendent since a permanent one cannot be hired until after BESE elections later this year.

Pastorek, an attorney and a former member of BESE, has clashed frequently with state lawmakers and education groups over efforts to revamp public schools in Louisiana.

He has repeatedly said that sweeping changes are needed to get the state off the bottom of most lists of student achievement.

However, how to do that has put him at odds with the Louisiana Federation of Teachers, Louisiana Association of Educators and the Louisiana Schools Boards Association.

Critics contend Pastorek is heavy-handed and unenthusiastic about listening to those with different ideas.

Jindal said the next superintendent should continue public school reforms already underway and should “work well on building consensus among different stakeholder groups.

“That is an important part of the job of superintendent of education,” Jindal said.

The superintendent’s pay package of nearly \$377,000 per year, including a salary of \$287,907, a housing allowance of \$57,240 and a car allowance of \$31,800 has also sparked criticism.

Penny Dastugue, president of BESE and a Pastorek ally, could not be reached for comment.

Pastorek’s move comes just after he hired John White to be superintendent of the Recovery School District, which oversees troubled public schools in Baton Rouge, New Orleans and elsewhere.

White is set to get a pay package of nearly \$281,000 per year.

Whether he would be a possibility to succeed Pastorek is unclear.

Jindal said it is premature to speculate on possible successors. “It has all happened very quickly,” he said.

White is former deputy superintendent for the New York City school system, which is the largest in the nation, with about 1 million students.

Pastorek plans to take a job in the private sector, officials familiar with the issue said.

BESE is in charge of picking a superintendent but the governor, who has three appointees on the panel, traditionally has strong influence over any selection.