



MINUTES OF THE MEETING
July 18, 2023

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Chair DiCenso welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. She declared a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m.

Present: **Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

****Member Beretta arrived at 5:56 p.m.**

(*Ex-officio, non-voting member)

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Karen Davis, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the July 18, 2023, meeting

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On a motion duly made by Marta Martinez and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the June 20, 2023, meeting

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members

voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso,
Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Deputy Commissioner for System Transformation Dr. Kelvin Roldán presented the report on behalf of Commissioner Infante-Green. He initiated the report by providing updates regarding summer education and nutrition during the summer months. He mentioned that the previous week had been designated as National Summer Learning Week, and the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) visited various programs throughout the state. Additionally, he shared the Free summer meals are available statewide.

Subsequently, he moved on to the topic of teacher preparation. He shared that this month, RIDE announced launching a free, comprehensive program to help teacher candidates pass Praxis tests, which is a step towards teacher certification. This free program is developed in partnership with University Instructors and supports participants with Praxis preparation offerings worth an estimated \$1,000. The program aims to ease the financial burden on educators and address the teacher shortage impacting Rhode Island and the nation. Dr. Roldán stated RIDE had received over 175 submissions.

Next, Dr. Roldán proceeded to talk about school construction. He shared that this month, RIDE toured the new Garden City Elementary School in Cranston, which is set to open this fall. He shared that the new school features modern classrooms, a state-of-the-art gymnasium, a large library/media center, secure outdoor spaces, and other environments that promote learning and can be used by the community. He added that RIDE also got a look at renovations at Eden Park Elementary School, which has served as a model for 21st-century construction across the state. RIDE was excited to announce a substantial energy bonus of \$344,000 to both Cranston and Eden Park as a recognition of their dedication to promoting sustainability and environmental initiatives. He noted that Eden Park marked the initial phase of the district's comprehensive five-year capital plan. Also, in alignment with the "newer and fewer" approach, Cranston successfully merged multiple structures, and now with momentum building, they are preparing for a significant milestone with the upcoming groundbreaking event at Gladstone later this week.

Continuing the focus on Cranston, Dr. Roldán shared a progress update on the \$5 million ARTS initiative that received approval from the Council in May of last year. Recently, RIDE released a video detailing how ARTS funding is strengthening the arts in Cranston schools.

He added that these funds have also had a positive impact on schools like the Rhode Island School for the Deaf, and Mt. Pleasant High School. Dr. Roldán concluded his presentation, expressed gratitude to all attendees and relinquished control of the meeting back to Chair DiCenso.

4. OPEN FORUM

Two individuals addressed the Council.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. PPSD Redesign

Dr. Roldán initiated the conversation by recalling that in the previous month, RIDE presented an overview of the Redesign process under ESSA, which entails granting the Council authority to approve individual school redesign models. He noted that these were the schools that were previously identified as schools under Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) for four consecutive years. He further mentioned that today, RIDE is presenting the Council with the redesign proposals for five schools, each situated within the Providence district. Dr. Roldán outlined the upcoming proceedings for the evening which included Kristen Danusis, Director of School and District Improvement, providing a comprehensive outline of the proposed recommendations for approval for each of the schools followed by a few words and introductions given by Superintendent of Providence Schools, Superintendent Montañez. He added that Christopher Sanacore and Pascale Thompson would support the schools and their principals for each of the presentations. He noted that the principal of JSEC would not be joining due to a personal matter. Lastly, he reminded everyone that this was a launch year and that the teams were looking forward to presenting their school redesign proposals.

Kristen Danusis, Director of School and District Improvement began her address with gratitude and conveyed her enthusiasm for the redesign plans. She extended appreciation to all the teams that had contributed to this collaborative effort. The plans bring forth added prospects for students within Providence. Each plan underwent multiple cycles of feedback and refinement. She further emphasized that the result aligns effectively with the requirements and preferences of our students. It establishes strong connections with community partners and paves the way for sought-after career opportunities for our students. She added that RIDE collaborated with a third-party entity to bring in specialized knowledge and ensure an impartial evaluation of all the redesign plans. She noted that every individual plan underwent a meticulous assessment using a comprehensive rubric, aiming to determine whether it satisfied the rigorous criteria essential for the school's redesign. Her concluding statement asserted RIDE's recommendation for the Council to grant approval to all the redesign plans.

Superintendent Montañez began his speech with enthusiasm, expressing his anticipation of unveiling the redesign plans for the Providence School District.

He emphasized the district's proactive engagement with the community to ensure widespread awareness of the redesign plans. The district has made a strategic choice to further enhance its outreach initiatives, reaching out to families, students, and the community to communicate the intricacies of the redesign modes.

Christopher Sanacore along with Pascale Thompson proceeded to further elaborate on the details of the redesign plans. He indicated that they would be brief, enabling the Council to directly receive information about the plans from the schools themselves. He discussed the timeline for Phase 1 of the redesign process in SY 2022-2023. He noted that the redesign teams were comprised of Community Advisory Boards (CAB), families, and community members. These teams conducted redesign working sessions to support and assess the redesign model choices. The outcome from these sessions is the submission of five redesign applications.

Pascale Thompson proceeded with the presentation, addressing the communication strategy employed by PPSD. She noted that every school will create a tailored communication plan that aligns with the needs of their respective families. Continuing and forthcoming communication will encompass updates on progress, noteworthy achievements, opportunities for engagement, as well as reminders and notifications. This information will be shared with students and families, the CAB, community partners, local businesses, elected officials, nearby social service agencies, institutions of higher education, as well as school and district personnel. The floor was passed to the principals to discuss their individual school redesign plans.

Each school was afforded the chance to present an outline of their redesign plans and address any inquiries pertaining to the process. The schools that delivered presentations included Hope High School, which is embarking on the transformation to the Hope High School Visual and Performing Arts. Principal Francisco Velasquez presented this overview. Another presentation was made by Christopher Sanacore and Brett Dickens on the transition of W.B. Cooley Sr. High School at JSEC to the Juanita Sanchez Life Sciences Institute. Principal Woberson Torchon presented the redesign plan for Mount Pleasant High School, which is transitioning to become the Mount Pleasant Early College and Career Academy. Dr. Jorge Alvarez High School will undergo a transformation into the Dr. Jorge Alvarez Healthcare and Finance Careers School, and principal Nathan Biah provided this presentation. Lastly, Governor Christopher DelSesto Middle School, presented by Principal Suzanne Madden, will evolve into the DelSesto STEAM Academy. Although each school will be going through the redesign process, it will not affect the students who are already enrolled and will be enrolled if they do not wish to embark in the career path established for the school. Council members asked questions and shared concerns to each school and received corresponding responses.

b. Providence Teachers Union Agreement

Krystafer Redden addressed the Council and explained that RIDE had brought forth the Providence Teachers Union Agreement, collaboratively negotiated between the Providence Teachers Union, the Providence School Department, and the Rhode Island Department of Education. He detailed that although future years may bring agreements before the Council for deliberation and implementation, the current agreement and the passage of the related legislation do not necessitate that step for this agreement. He noted that RIDE is presenting this agreement to the Council aiming to demonstrate transparency and a commitment to acting in good faith. Subsequently, he handed control of the meeting to Zachary Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Providence Schools, and legal counsel to the Providence School Department, Charles Ruggerio.

Counsel Ruggerio introduced himself and clarified that he served as the principal negotiator representing the Providence School District for the collective bargaining agreement under discussion tonight. Briefly put, he conveyed that these negotiations were undertaken with a clear objective to establish a chance for increased instructional time for both students and faculty members. This effort aligns with the turnaround plan, aimed at strengthening the district and attaining the objectives outlined in the turnaround action plan. He acknowledged that they had a limited window of opportunity to achieve this goal, primarily due to the reliance on federal funds from ESSER to cover the expenses linked to offering extra instructional time. He noted that differing from a conventional negotiation, this process was characterized by its determined and time-critical nature. He noted that objectives were made clear at the outset and was fortunate to have a clear set of objectives from the Union as well. Both parties exerted considerable and swift efforts to achieve the shared objectives. He outlined the modifications made to the one-year agreement and welcomed any questions or concerns the council members might have.

6. ACTION ITEMS:

a. Approval of PPSD School Redesign

HOPE HIGH SCHOOL

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to approve the Hope High School application for Redesign under Rhode Island’s ESSA State Plan to begin in school year 2023-2024.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 0 members abstained, as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis,
Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

W.B. COOLEY SR. HIGH SCHOOL AT JSEC

On a motion duly made by Marta Martinez and seconded by Amy Beretta, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to approve the William B. Cooley Sr. High School at Juanita Sanchez Educational Complex application for Redesign under Rhode Island's ESSA State Plan to begin in school year 2023-2024.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 0 members abstained, as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis,
Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

MT. PLEASANT HIGH SCHOOL

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Karen Davis, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to approve the Mt. Pleasant High School application for Redesign under Rhode Island's ESSA State Plan to begin in school year 2023-2024.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 0 members abstained, as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis,
Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

DR. JORGE ALVAREZ HIGH SCHOOL

On a motion duly made by Marta Martinez and seconded by Karen Davis, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to approve the Dr. Jorge Alvarez High School application for Redesign under Rhode Island's ESSA State Plan to begin in school year 2023-2024.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 0 members abstained, as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

GOVERNOR CHRISTOPHER DELSESTO MIDDLE SCHOOL

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to approve the Governor Christopher DelSesto Middle School application for Redesign under Rhode Island's ESSA State Plan to begin in school year 2023-2024.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 0 members abstained, as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

b. Request for Delegation of Authority to the Commissioner to approve plans for virtual learning when the schools are closed due to inclement weather or other emergency under R.I. Gen Laws 16-2-2 (c)

On a motion duly made by Marta Martinez and seconded by Karen Davis, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education delegate to the Commissioner, its Chief Executive Officer, the authority to: (1) approve any plans for virtual learning submitted by school districts pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws 16-2-2 (c); and (2) if the plan is acceptable, to count a day or days of virtual instruction as a “school day (or days)” under 16-2-2(a); provided, however, that in exercising such authority, the Commissioner shall report to the Council the submission of virtual instructional day plans by school districts, and provided further, that this authority shall remain in effect contingent upon review every two years.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 0 members abstained, as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

7. ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Amy Beretta, it was,

VOTED: That the meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Adjourns

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative, and 0 members abstained as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis,
Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.