



MINUTES OF THE MEETING
August 22, 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 5:32 p.m. Chair DiCenso welcomed new Council member Robert Mitchell and the new Chair for the Student Advisory Council, Christian Ramos.

Present: Mary Barden, **Amy Beretta, **Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell, *Christian Ramos

***Ex-officio, non-voting member**

****Member Beretta arrived at 5:38 p.m. Member Callahan arrived at 5:39 p.m.**

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Karen Davis and seconded by Jo Eva Gaines, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the August 22, 2023, meeting

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Mary Barden, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On a motion duly made by Karen Davis and seconded by Michael Grey, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the July 18, 2023, meeting

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Mary Barden, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Deputy Commissioner for Instructional Programs Lisa Odom-Villella presented the report on behalf of Commissioner Infante-Green. She acknowledged that districts have either returned or are preparing to return to school. She shared that in alignment with the priorities identified by the Learning, Equity & Accelerated Pathways Task Force (LEAP), RIDE has relaunched the #Back2schoolRI campaign. She explained that this campaign will energize students, families, and educators to promote school attendance, inform and raise awareness of the negative impact of chronic absenteeism, and underscore available in-school academic and social-emotional support and resources aimed to support students' success and wellbeing. She shared that a new calendar will be available for families to track their attendance and avoid being chronically absent. She additionally conveyed that in the upcoming weeks, the Commissioner will be participating alongside the Governor and local community leaders in extending a warm welcome to students as they embark on their first day of school. Deputy Commissioner Odom-Villella mentioned that a study conducted by the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment indicated that it would require 3 to 5 years of intensified learning for students to reach the academic achievement levels seen before the pandemic. She added that encouraging signs with the 2022 RICAS results showed that some districts returned to their pre-pandemic levels of achievement or exceeded them. Ensuring that students continue to move in the right direction it is essential that they're in school every day ready to learn.

Next, Deputy Commissioner Odom-Villella discussed that this year, Providence schools will begin implementing the approved redesign plans and mentioned that Providence Public School Districts (PPSD) Transformation Officer Cindy Townsend has been assigned to the redesign portfolio. She shared that PPSD has held kick-off meetings, scheduled gap analysis sessions, will be launching a web page, and developed a working group between district staff and school leaders to review bids for a comprehensive project-based learning vendor.

Subsequently, she moved on to the topic of Learn365RI, where she shared that RIDE has committed to accelerate learning, improve outcomes, and match Massachusetts level of performance. 30 communities were recently awarded nearly \$3.8 million in Learn365RI grants.

Moving on, she thanked the Council for believing in the importance of CTE and the power of innovation in our schools. She noted that 13 districts are in various stages of the process of securing their own food trucks. Students are already gaining hands-on experience and learning to create business plans, market, brand, and design.

Next, Deputy Commissioner Odom-Villella shared that jointly with Senator Reed, RIDE was awarded a \$858,000 U.S. Department of Agriculture Team Nutrition Grant that will support RIDE and partner organizations to help schools expand their menu offerings. The goal is more healthy, nutritious food that also reflects students' cultural traditions and heritage.

She continued addressing the teacher workforce challenges and shared that in May, RIDE held a state-wide job fair and over 40 districts participated. She also mentioned a program aimed at assisting prospective teachers in their preparation for the Praxis exam while covering all associated costs. Deputy Commissioner Odom-Villella concluded her presentation, expressed gratitude to all attendees and relinquished control of the meeting back to Chair DiCenso.

4. OPEN FORUM

One individual addressed the Council.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Summer Learning & Back to School - PPSD Update

PPSD's Chief of Staff, Scott Sutherland provided a brief statement on behalf of Superintendent Montañez who could not be in attendance. Mr. Sutherland initiated the presentation by providing an update on summer learning. He provided a summary of the successful events that transpired throughout the summer programs. This encompassed involvement, credit retrieval, and book donations to every elementary student engaged in the program. Additionally, it involved a summer graduation ceremony for high school students and enrichment in all middle school programs.

Zachary Scott, PPSD's Deputy Superintendent of Operations proceeded with the presentation, elaborating on the district's preparations for the upcoming year. This encompasses aspects such as safety, security, transportation, sanitation, a comprehensive transition plan to ensure readiness for the first day of school, as well as exciting renovations and transformative initiatives.

The meeting presentation proceeded with Joan Jackson, Senior Advisor, who talked about strategies aimed at achieving educational excellence by eliminating obstacles and providing support to both students and families. These forms of support include attendance regulations, learning management platforms, teacher professional growth initiatives, instruction for social workers and behavior intervention specialists, as well as interventions designed for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Ms. Jackson also discussed involving communities through activities such as convening gatherings of community leaders, establishing a Parent Leadership

Academy, and implementing a Parent University Certification Program in collaboration with the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI). Furthermore, she highlighted the importance of working together with the Office of Student Support to aid families. She noted that, as the district strives to assist students, teachers, and families, it is actively seeking top-tier talent by implementing recruitment initiatives aimed at addressing challenging staffing gaps. These initiatives encompass hosting career fairs tailored to high-demand positions, streamlining, and automating the employee onboarding process and restructuring the HR department to align more effectively with the needs of schools and staff members. Before wrapping up the presentation, Ms. Jackson also provided details about the upcoming back-to-school events scheduled to take place across the district. Council members asked questions and shared concerns throughout the presentation and received corresponding responses.

b. 2022-2023 CSI Visits

Chair DiCenso handed over the meeting to Deputy Commissioner for System Transformation, Dr. Roldán to introduce the next agenda item. Dr. Roldán briefly outlined the upcoming presentation to be delivered by Director of School and District Improvement, Kristen Danusis and then passed the floor to her to begin.

Ms. Danusis initiated the discussion by addressing the schools that were designated as Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools (CSI) in December 2022 during the release of the school accountability report. She highlighted that the Office of School and District Improvement (OSDI) offers CSI schools a range of resources, training opportunities, and tailored assistance throughout their improvement journey. She emphasized that these schools receive an annual grant of \$3.6 million to support their improvement initiatives. She pointed out that six schools successfully transitioned out of the CSI category, demonstrating performance improvements that surpassed their pre-pandemic levels. She also mentioned that there are five schools in Providence currently involved in extensive redesign efforts, which was discussed at the last meeting.

Ms. Danusis relayed feedback from school principals who expressed their appreciation. These principals were enthusiastic knowing that RIDE has a team that is approachable, well-informed, resourceful, and highly professional. Additionally, she conveyed that both SchoolWorks and a team from RIDE closely monitor each CSI school with the objective of assessing the extent to which the improvement plan is reflected in their operational practices, and they are ready to make revisions as needed. She also included that the Classroom Visit Tool utilized by SchoolWorks concentrates on evaluating ten distinct areas during classroom observations, and she presented key trends based on the findings from the 237 classroom visits conducted at the CSI schools.

Finally, she clarified that schools identified between 2018 and 2019 will have the chance to transition out of CSI status based on the accountability data, whereas no new schools will be identified under this designation. Council members asked questions throughout the presentation and received corresponding responses.

c. Capital Budget

Chair DiCenso passed the meeting to Deputy Commissioner Lisa Odom-Villella to introduce the next item on the agenda. She offered a concise preview of the forthcoming presentation concerning the FY 2025 capital budget and then handed the meeting over to the Chief Finance Officer, Mark Dunham, for the presentation. Mr. Dunham delivered an overview, outlining that the capital budget covers the period from FY 2025 to FY 2029, with a total budget allocation of \$616 million. This allocation encompasses projected expenditures from FY 2024 to FY 2029, totaling \$395.5 million, as well as pre-2024 expenditures for ongoing projects amounting to \$210 million and post 2029 expenditures projected at \$10.2 million. He further mentioned that there are a total of sixteen projects, consisting of thirteen previously approved and three new initiatives. He conveyed that the new projects encompass a Facility Equity Initiative, a roof replacement project, and the acquisition of two new vehicles. Council members posed questions and received appropriate responses.

6. ACTION ITEMS:

a. Capital Budget

On a motion duly made by Karen Davis and seconded by Mary Barden, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education formally Approves the FY 2025 Capital Budget Request, as presented

Vote: 9 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 0 members abstained, as follows:

YEAS: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaine, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

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 move into Executive Session

Vote: 9 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative, and 0 members abstained as follows:

YEAS: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Michael Grey, it was,

VOTED: That the meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education move back into Regular Session

Vote: 9 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative, and 0 members abstained as follows:

YEAS: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

8. **ADJOURNMENT:**

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

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

Vote: 9 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative, and 0 members abstained as follows:

YEAS: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.