



MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
January 30, 2023

**COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

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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 5:34 p.m.

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

\*Ex-officio member

**1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA**

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Jo Eva Gaines, it was,

**VOTED:** That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary education accepts the agenda for the January 30,2024, meeting

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

**YEAS:** Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez,

**NAYS:** 0

**ABSTAINS:** 0

**2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was,

**VOTED:** That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the December 7, 2023, meeting

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

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

**VOTED:** That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the December 19, 2023, meeting

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

### 3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Infante-Green initiated her report by acknowledging the progress and good work that is happening in Rhode Island schools. To spotlight the incredible efforts of our school communities to improve academic outcomes, RIDE has launched a video series, RICAS Rockstars. The RICAS Rockstars videos show the passion, commitment, and perseverance of our schools. Districts including Providence, Cranston, Coventry, Burrillville, Smithfield, South Kingston, and more have been highlighted on the RIDE social media channels.

Commissioner Infante-Green noted that in addition to the videos, RIDE is actively working on delivering more 21<sup>st</sup>-century schools than ever before. She announced that RIDE, in collaboration with Pawtucket officials, presented a \$50 million check to initiate the construction of Pawtucket's new high school. This groundbreaking project marks the largest construction endeavor in Rhode Island's history and will serve 2,200 students. She expressed gratitude to the Council for their vote in favor of the project, which is included in the \$1 billion worth of school construction projects approved by the Council in December. She emphasized that with the Council's support, numerous major projects have been recently completed, are currently underway, and are in the pipeline across Rhode Island. She also shared that RIDE released the most recent School Building Authority report titled "Investing in Excellence", which showcases the unprecedented investments being made in school facilities. She also shared that RIDE's commitment to improving school facilities was recognized by the White House. The Biden-Harris Administration recently announced that RIDE was 1 of 7 state education agencies in the country to receive a grant from the Supporting America's School Infrastructure federal program.

Following that, Commissioner Infante-Green shared that alongside our building investments, we are strategically placing emphasis on green and sustainable infrastructure to safeguard our environment. She expressed RIDE's commitment to preserving the planet for future generations, emphasizing the launch of innovative programs such as "Get the Foam Out." Get the Foam Out will provide nearly \$5 million in grant funding to schools to help mitigate the amount of waste produced by single-use Styrofoam meal trays. She explained that the objective is to diminish the carbon footprint of schools by phasing out the use of Styrofoam materials. This initiative is also in accordance with the Styrofoam ban set to take effect in Rhode Island on January 1, 2025. The launch event was held at the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation where it was seen firsthand how much Styrofoam is thrown into the trash every day.

Next, she discussed SurveyWorks and emphasized that community engagement is a cornerstone of the work conducted at RIDE. She mentioned her visit to North Smithfield Elementary School to officially launch SurveyWorks, the annual school survey that assists RIDE in gaining insight into what is effective and where improvements are needed in our schools. She encouraged everyone to visit [RIDE.ri.gov/surveyworks](https://ride.ri.gov/surveyworks) for more information and to share the word to complete the survey.

Finally, she addressed Providence Public Schools and highlighted the opening of three new schools this year alone, a significant increase compared to just one opening in the last 15 years. She also mentioned a plan aimed at ensuring that 100% of students are placed in high-quality learning spaces by 2030. She mentioned significant investments made in our youngest learners, including the achievement of our second nationally recognized 5-star pre-K program, along with the expansion of CTE and work-based learning opportunities. She noted that instruction has been enhanced and ensures continuity for students by introducing a high-quality K-12 curriculum to replace a disjointed approach. Additionally, RIDE has assisted over 500 teachers in obtaining their ESOL certifications, enabling them to better serve our expanding multilingual student population. She also highlighted that Providence is the sole district in the state utilizing federal relief funds to extend the learning day by an additional 30 minutes, which adds up to 15 additional days of learning.

Lastly, a video was shown showcasing what students, teachers, and school leaders had to say about Providence.

#### **4. OPEN FORUM**

Thirty-seven individuals addressed the Council, and thirty-seven individuals submitted written comments.

#### **5. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

##### **a. Right to Read**

Gina Masiello, Director of Educator Excellence & Certification Services, alongside Nicole Lyons, serving as Associate Director of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum, shared insights on advancing student literacy, which encompassed discussions on updates and future initiatives related to the Right to Read Act. Ms. Lyons began by noting that they would be sharing current data in respect to meeting the requirements of the Right to Read legislation during the presentation. She added that information will be shared on the shifts that were made to literacy to support the science of reading. A short sound clip from the podcast titled “Sold a Story: How Teaching Kids to Read Went Wrong” was played to help support the shift in teaching literacy. Ms. Lyons provided a few examples of the shift from balanced literacy practices and structured literacy. As a reminder, Ms. Lyons presented a timeline detailing the passage of the Right to Read legislation in 2019 up to the point when all Rhode Island educators are expected to meet the Right to Read standards by 2025.

Ms. Masiello shared the essence of the Right to Read Act, which ensures that educators are supported in gaining the knowledge and skills necessary to teach reading with the best practices of the science of reading and structured literacy instruction, aligning with the associated requirements outlined in the vision. She talked about the requirements, categorized by role, for achieving proficiency and awareness with the school district. She also addressed the responsibilities of the RIDE, the LEAs, and the Educator Prep Programs to help support.

Ms. Lyons presented data regarding the percentage of teachers currently demonstrating proficiency and awareness in their roles and on the educator preparation programs that are required to demonstrate proficiency or awareness, depending on their future work assignments, by the Spring of 2025. Individuals who are not demonstrating proficiency and awareness are currently undergoing training.

Next, Ms. Masiello talked about the grants awarded to RIDE to aid in supporting an implementing high-quality curriculum, professional development, training, and tool-kits. Taking over Ms. Lyons noted that RIDE will continue to provide high-quality professional learning to support teachers in incorporating their HQIM and use their understanding of structured literacy

to ensure their instruction meets the needs of all learners. She referenced the Mississippi Miracle when discussing next steps for Rhode Island, adding that while it did take years of commitment and funds change can happen.

Lastly, Ms. Masiello shared that everyone is continuing with providing professional learning to support the implementation of the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy for in-service and pre-service teachers. She noted that RIDE continues to work with the funding they have to support LEAs to provide professional learning to support the implementation of the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy by coordinating training and supporting educators in linking learning from the Right to Read Act training and HQIM implementation.

### **b. Accountability Update**

Scott Gausland, Director of Data and Technology Services initiated the presentation by providing a history of the Accountability System. He shared that the School Accountability was first approved and published in 2018 after a Committee of Practitioners consisting of dozens of educational stakeholders in Rhode Island set the values for the current system per the Federal ESSA law in 2015. He noted that RI's system of basing a school's Star Rating on their lowest column in the Star Chart is designed to bring attention to any major areas for improvement, so that strengths in one area don't mask student needs in other areas. Mr. Gausland highlighted new elements this year, which encompassed the incorporation of science proficiency within the accountability system. He also addressed notable insights, indicating that proficiency levels and attendance have shown improvement and are moving in a positive trajectory. However, he underscored that there are enduring effects from the pandemic. The primary areas of concern statewide as well as for numerous schools and LEAs, are providing support for diverse learners and multilingual students. He noted that the accountability system aims to measure all aspects of education to take a more wholistic approach to the rating while measuring academic performance, student success, and college and career readiness.

Rachel Peterson, Accountability Specialist in the office of Data and Technology Services proceeded with the presentation and provided an overview of LEA Accountability. She provided a comprehensive overview of the appearance of the district and school report card and discussed the LEA's accountability outcomes. She noted a decrease in the number of LEAs focusing on achievement and graduation rates while highlighting a rise in those prioritizing areas such as English Language Proficiency (ELP), Diploma Plus, and School Quality and Student Success (SQSS). Additionally, she drew comparisons between the 2022-2023- and 2023-2024-STAR ratings, highlighting a shift towards biennial CSI identifications. She reiterated the process through which schools are identified for CSI.

Kristen Danusis, Director of School, and District Improvement, proceeded with the presentation, focusing on utilizing the accountability data to guide future actions, emphasizing that the accountability system puts a spotlight on both the strengths and weaknesses. She elaborated on the actions taken following the release of the results, highlighting the importance of LEAs sharing their ratings with stakeholders.

Furthermore, she emphasized the necessity for schools and districts to update their strategic and school improvement plans in response to the new data. She pointed out that RIDE is available to provide resources to the districts and has a range of support services in place.

### **c. Charter Renewal Discussion**

Stephen Osborn, State Strategy and Opportunity Officer initiated the presentation reciting Rhode Island General Law § 16-77-5.1(b) which designates the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education as the authorizer for charter schools and describes their responsibilities. He informed everyone that the charters that are in the renewal process include Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, The Hope Academy, The Learning Community, and Segue Institute for Learning. He discussed the one-year charter renewal timeline, spanning from the release of the renewal application by RIDE to the subsequent meetings with all renewal schools, culminating in the provision of the final copies of the charter school renewal report and the Commissioner's recommendation. He mentioned that RIDE has formulated three recommendations for each of the schools up for renewal. These recommendations include a five-year renewal, an earned five-year renewal or three-plus-two renewal and a three-year renewal. Furthermore, RIDE employs conditions when there is a specific area of need for the charter. He added that the recommendations aim to balance the COVID-19 experiences of our schools with the high expectations that RIDE, and the Council have for academic results in our charter schools. He thoroughly discussed each recommendation in detail and noted that the key appeal of the charter school concept is its promise of increased accountability for student achievement in exchange for increasing school autonomy.

### **d. Regulations Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-7.1-5.1**

Anthony Cottone, Chief Legal Counsel began the presentation by providing a recap of the legislative requirement enacted in 2022 that requires the Council to promulgate statewide regulations providing for when a district under RIDE's control exits turnaround status and returns to local control. Brian Darrow, Chief Strategy Officer proceeded with the presentation, offering a summary of the promulgation and implementation timeline, as well as the guiding principles behind formulating the regulations. Additionally, he reviewed the essential components of the regulations. He emphasized that RIDE conducted a comprehensive, transparent public comment process across the state, adhering to best practices and surpassing regulatory standards. This involved a 45-day period for public comments, along with six public comment hearings. RIDE consistently promoted this public comment process through field memos, social media channels, and direct engagement with stakeholders. Additionally, RIDE introduced a new email address, [regpubliccomment@ride.ri.gov](mailto:regpubliccomment@ride.ri.gov), for submitting comments. In total, six public comments were received. He noted that upon conclusion of the public comment process, RIDE reviewed public comment and updated the proposed regulations based on key guiding principles.

Dr. Kenneth Wong, external expert advisor proceeded with the presentation and provided guidance centered around four primary themes highlighted in the public comments. These themes encompassed community input, the formation of an independent review team, the review process, and criteria, and finally, establishing a timeline for the turnaround. Each of these pivotal themes were thoroughly discussed.

Finally, Mr. Darrow addressed the next steps for regulation promulgation and implementation, which involve several actions: presenting proposed regulations at the February Council meeting, completing regulation promulgation with the Office of Regulatory Reform and Secretary of State, updating the review process at the March Council meeting, and formally implementing regulations and initiating a review of the Providence Public School District by late March or early April.

## **6. ACTION ITEMS:**

### **a. Approval of Charter New Schools & Expansion**

#### **RISE Prep Mayoral Academy**

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Jo Eva Gaines, it was,

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to approve RISE Prep Mayoral Academy's proposal for a material expansion to begin in school year 2024-2025 in the city of Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

**Vote:** 5 members voted in the affirmative,

1 members voted in the negative and 1 members abstained, as follows:

**YEAS:** Amy Beretta, Karen Davis, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez,

**NAYS:** Colleen Callahan

**ABSTAINS:** Patricia DiCenso

### **Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts**

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

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to approve Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts proposal for a material expansion to begin in school year 2024-2025 in the city of Providence, Rhode Island.

Vote: 7 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, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez,

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

### **Medical Preparatory Academy of Rhode Island**

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

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,

1 member voted in the negative and 0 members abstained, as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: Colleen Callahan

ABSTAINS: 0



7. **ADJOURNMENT:**

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Amy Beretta it was,

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

Vote: 7 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, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez,

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 8:50p.m.