

Local Education Agency Turnaround Review Frequently Asked Questions

Overview of Commonly Asked Questions Regarding the
Turnaround Review Process Outlined in
R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-7.1-5.1, Regulations 200-RICR-20-05-
6, and the PPSD Summer 2024 LEA Review

August 16, 2024



RIDE Rhode Island
Department
of Education

Introduction

Overview of the LEA FAQ Document and Purpose

This document serves to answer commonly asked questions about the turnaround review process outlined in R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-7.1-5.1 and 200-RICR-20-05-6. This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document consists of three parts: the first section recapitulates the regulation creation and promulgation process, the second section details what requirements are stipulated in regulations for the turnaround review process, and the third section details the current application of the turnaround review process.

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Section 1: Regulation Development Process

1.1 Why were these regulations created?

In 2022, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed R.I. Gen. Laws § [16-7.1-5.1](#). This statute required the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education (Council) to promulgate statewide regulations that provide the criteria and a procedure for determining the continuation or end of turnaround status for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) subject to intervention and support pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § [16-7.1-5](#) (otherwise known as “The Crowley Act”). The Council formally promulgated these regulations, 200-RICR-20-05-6, in February 2024 consulting educational experts, reviewing best practices from Massachusetts and other states, and conducting an extended public comment process.

1.2 Are these regulations statewide or just for a specific LEA?

These regulations are not written for any one specific LEA. Rather, these are statewide regulations that apply to any LEA if that LEA is under state intervention pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-7.1-5.

1.3 What was the process for the creation of these regulations?

The regulations were developed by RIDE using best practices from other states, such as Massachusetts, and in consultation with national education experts. At its meeting on October 24, 2023, the Council approved RIDE’s initial draft regulations to go out for public comment and review. After the 45-day public comment process concluded on December 18, 2023, RIDE then engaged nationally renowned experts to externally review public comment and recommend changes to the regulations based on submitted feedback from the public.

After these revisions were incorporated into the regulations, the regulations were brought back to the Council for review, with the Council voting for final approval on February 27, 2024. The Final Rule was filed with the Rhode Island Department of State and adopted on April 16, 2024.

1.4 How and when was public comment solicited for these regulations?

At the Council’s October 24, 2023, meeting, the Council formally approved the proposed regulations for the purpose of public review per R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-35-2.8.

The public comment period lasted 45 days (longer than the required 30-day period) from November 3, 2023, through December 18, 2023. RIDE made public comment possible via formal public hearings, mail, and email at any point in time during the public comment process.

Consistent with best-practices, RIDE conducted six (6) public hearings during the public comment hearing window. As these statewide regulations are applicable to every LEA, at least one public comment hearing was held in each county of Rhode Island, with two being held in Providence County. Notice of the public hearings was posted via the Rhode Island Department of State and further advertised through RIDE’s website, field memo, and social media. At these hearings, a summary document of the proposed regulations and the regulations in their entirety were made available to attendants. Attendants were able to provide oral testimony at a podium or written testimony at a laptop station. The public hearing dates and locations are listed below:

- November 15th in Bristol at the Rogers Free Library



- November 20th in Newport at the Newport Public Library
- November 29th in Warwick at the Community College of Rhode Island Knight Campus
- November 30th in Providence at the Shepard Building
- December 6th in Kingston at the Kingston Free Library
- December 13th in Woonsocket at the Woonsocket Harris Public Library

1.5 How was public comment reviewed?

Following the public comment hearings, RIDE engaged an independent expert, Dr. Kenneth Wong, the Walter and Leonore Annenberg Chair for Education Policy at Brown University, to serve as an external expert advisor to RIDE on the finalization and implementation of these regulations. Dr. Wong reviewed the public comment and provided RIDE with a written memo with his advisement, aligned with his expertise and national best practices. RIDE then considered the public comment and Dr. Wong’s advisement when finalizing the proposed amended regulations for the Council’s consideration. All public comments and Dr. Wong’s written advisement were provided to the Council and posted publicly by RIDE.

1.6 Where can I find the regulations?

The regulations 200-RICR-20-05-6 can be found [here](#). More information on these regulations can be found on the Rhode Island Department of Education’s [website](#). This link also includes supporting documentation and links to public comment.

1.7 Do these regulations apply to the Providence Public School District?

The regulations 200-RICR-20-05-6 do apply to the Providence Public School District (PPSD) as PPSD was placed under state intervention due to low academic performance through R.I. Gen. Laws § [16-7.1-5](#).

1.8 Do these regulations apply to the Central Falls School District?

The regulations 200-RICR-20-05-6 do not apply to Central Falls School District (CFSD). CFSD came under state control at the request of the City of Central Falls in 1991 for fiscal reasons, and is governed by a different statute: R.I. Gen. Laws § [16-2-34](#). Because CFSD is governed by R.I. Gen. Laws § [16-2-34](#) and was not an academic intervention due to R.I. Gen. Laws § [16-7.1-5](#), these regulations do not apply to CFSD.

Section 2: Regulation Content Overview

2.1 What is the purpose of the turnaround review?

Prior to the end of any order under R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-7.1-5, 200-RICR-20-05-6 requires the Commissioner to craft a report to be delivered to the Council detailing the Commissioner's recommendation on the continuation or expiration of an LEA's turnaround status.

The report includes an analysis of two key conditions, contextualized in comparison to other LEAs as well as the underlying factors for which an LEA was originally placed in turnaround status:

- 1) **Progress:** The degree an LEA has made sufficient progress towards achieving the academic and other progress measures identified within the LEA's Turnaround Plan; as well as,
- 2) **Capacity:** If the LEA, school committee, and responsible municipal entity possess the capacity and readiness to sustain the LEA's progress if the LEA was returned to local control.

The review of these two conditions provides a helpful framework to identify clear progress made to date, as well as identify potential areas of support to continue to sustain and accelerate progress going forward.

2.2 How are LEA progress and capacity evaluated?

An LEA's progress is determined by looking at whether the LEA has, "made sufficient progress on the academic and other progress measures identified within its turnaround plan." The LEA's turnaround plan may include both academic and non-academic progress measures. The progress measures identified for review within the turnaround plan must, at a minimum:

- Be customized to the particular reasons for which the LEA was first entered into turnaround status under the Crowley Act;
- Be informed by input from community and other stakeholder engagement that helped inform the creation of the turnaround plan;
- Include academic measures that align to relevant components of the local education agency accountability system, as identified in R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-97.1-1; and,
- Include any additional progress measures identified for specific LEAs pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-7.1-5.1.

An LEA is also evaluated on its capacity and readiness to continue to make progress on the academic and other progress measures, as identified within the LEA's turnaround plan, without the support provided by the State during the intervention pursuant to the Crowley Act.

2.3 How is school committee capacity evaluated?

A school committee is evaluated on its capacity and readiness to support the LEA's continued progress on academic and other progress measures, as identified within the LEA's turnaround plan, if the intervention were to end and the LEA return to local control. The school committee is additionally assessed on its ability to provide said support consistent with the standard responsibilities for school committees outlined in R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-2-9, as well as other site-based management and governance best practices.

2.4 How is municipal entity capacity evaluated?

A municipal entity's capacity is evaluated on its ability to support the LEA's school committee or board to ensure the LEA's continued progress on academic and other progress measures, should the intervention end and the LEA be returned to local control. The municipal entity is additionally assessed on its ability to demonstrate said support through the contribution of sufficient local funding to the local school committee or board necessary to sustain and continue the LEA's progress, including compliance with statutory maintenance of effort requirements as identified in the Crowley Act.

2.5 Where are the standards these evaluations will be based off of?

To help ensure a standardized review process that is consistent with national best-practice, RIDE developed a standards framework for LEA reviews in consultation with Dr. Kenneth Wong, the Walter and Leonore Annenberg Chair for Education Policy at Brown University. These standards were developed after a through a review of best practices from Massachusetts and other states, as well as RIDE's own Basic Education Program (BEP). In particular, the standards for LEA Capacity are framed around the seven essential functions of an LEA, as identified within the BEP. Furthermore, the standards were designed to be applicable to any future LEA Review. The LEA Turnaround Review Standards can be found here on RIDE's [LEA Review website](#).

2.6 What are the possible outcomes for an LEA subject to the turnaround review process?

The Commissioner may recommend three different possible outcomes to the Council regarding the LEA's continued turnaround status. These key possible outcomes are:

- 1) Renewal of the existing turnaround plan, with potential amendments informed by the above analysis;
- 2) Creation of a new turnaround plan; or,
- 3) Exit of the LEA from turnaround status and the return of control over the LEA to the LEA's respective local school committee or board.

If the Commissioner recommends that the turnaround be renewed or extended (outcomes 1 and 2), the report to the Council shall also include, but not be limited to:

- The time duration for the renewed or new turnaround plan; and,
- An analysis as to whether any additional supports, prerogatives, and/or resources are needed, from either the state and/or local municipality, that could help make the turnaround plan more effective.

If the Commissioner recommends that the turnaround status begins to end (outcome 3), the Commissioner's recommendation will also include:

- The date for which the LEA shall officially exit turnaround status and be returned to the control of the local school committee or board, no later than the end of the term of the LEA's relevant order under the Crowley Act; and,
- Any recommendations by the Commissioner to initiate a transitional period for a phased approach of returning the LEA to local control.

2.7 What is a transitional period?

If the Commissioner recommends a transitional period before completely returning the LEA back to local control, then the LEA and state may continue to use provisions of the LEA's turnaround plan during the transitional period. The transitional period:

- Must outline the specific retained measures of the turnaround plan, including any progressive levels of control retained by RIDE, and progress measures used to evaluate when the transition period will be discontinued.
- May last for a period of two years before being reviewed, using the same reporting structure outlined above.
- May include all or a subset of schools within the LEA.

2.8 How long is a transitional period?

A transitional period may last for a period of two years before being reviewed, using the same reporting structure outlined above.

2.9 What happens at the end of a transitional period?

At the end of a transitional period, RIDE will conduct a review using the same review structure to inform the LEA's continued transitional turnaround status or return to local control.



Section 3: PPSD Turnaround Review

3.1 Why was Providence Public Schools (PPSD) placed under intervention status?

After decades of low academic performance and system dysfunction, the Providence Public School District (PPSD) was formally placed under state intervention on October 15, 2019, after Council authorization and an order of the Commissioner.

The decision to initiate the state intervention came on the heels of devastating findings from a Johns Hopkins University report that described PPSD as a fundamentally broken school system. Johns Hopkins University lead a team of local and national experts to conduct an exhaustive review of PPSD in May of 2019. In June of 2019, Johns Hopkins University delivered a [report](#) that detailed multiple findings outlining chronic and systemic dysfunction across PPSD. These findings ranged from academic challenges, such as the lack of a unified curriculum, to operational deficiencies, such as crumbling buildings suffering decades of neglect. Furthermore, the report detailed that ineffective governance over PPSD fundamentally contributed to the district's dysfunction, stating: *"Providence Public School District is overburdened with multiple, overlapping sources of governance and bureaucracy with no clear domains of authority and very little scope for transformative change. The resulting structures paralyze action, stifle innovation, and create dysfunction and inconsistency across the district."*

3.2 How and when was the Turnaround Action Plan (TAP) developed?

After PPSD was placed in intervention, RIDE led a community-driven process through "Community Design Teams" to develop a north start action plan to guide the turnaround of PPSD. These Community Design Teams engaged each other and the community and reviewed national best practices throughout the start of the pandemic to develop this action plan. PPSD's official [Turnaround Action Plan](#) (TAP) was subsequently released in June 2020.

The TAP outlines a set of goals and objectives for Providence to serve as a benchmark to guide growth and progress throughout the state intervention. This plan has four key pillars:

- 1) Engaged Communities;
- 2) Excellence in Learning;
- 3) World Class Talent; and,
- 4) Efficient District Systems.

3.3 Where can I find out more about PPSD's Turnaround Action Plan?

Interested individuals can find the current turnaround action plan, as well as quarterly updates on the status and progress of PPSD at 4pvdkids.com.

3.4 Why is PPSD undergoing a turnaround review now?

PPSD is undergoing a turnaround review as it is nearing the end of the intervention's initial five-year period. As is standard with other LEAs in an intervention in other states, this review will help assess progress made during the initial time period for this intervention and inform any continued areas of growth and improvement for the LEA going forward.



3.5 How did RIDE design the LEA Turnaround Review process and what does it include?

RIDE designed an LEA turnaround status review that may be applied to any LEA under turnaround and intervention status. This review process was also built considering best practices from other states, such as Massachusetts, and inclusive of feedback received through the regulatory public comment process.

Consistent with these national best practices, the review will include:

- 1) A desk review of evidence that speaks to LEA progress and local governance capacity.
- 2) School visits that include both classroom observations and school-specific focus group interviews.
- 3) Direct interviews including a broad group of internal and external LEA stakeholders.

In designing the review process, RIDE retained Dr. Wong to continue to serve as an expert external advisor to ensure alignment with best practices.

3.6 How is this LEA Turnaround Review different from the 2019 Johns Hopkins Review?

While this turnaround review, aligned to regulations required by state law, serves as a natural follow-up to the 2019 Johns Hopkins University (JHU) review, this review process is also fundamentally different in nature in its objective and scope. The objective of the JHU 2019 review was focused on unearthing decades of dysfunction that plagued and stymied district performance, prior to the state intervention. Now that the state intervention is completing its initial five-year phase, the objective of this review is focused on assessing progress to date to help inform the continued turnaround status and improvement of PPSD. Furthermore, while the JHU review was tailored specifically for Providence, RIDE has designed a standardized LEA review process, in alignment with national best practices, that may be applied to any LEA in the future should they enter state intervention.

3.7 What is the purpose of the PPSD Turnaround Review Process?

Prior to the end of any order under R.I. Gen. Law § 16-7.1-5, 200-RICR-20-05-6 requires the Commissioner to craft a report to be delivered to the Council to inform the Commissioner's recommendation to the Council on the continuation or expiration of an LEA's turnaround status.

The purpose of the PPSD Turnaround Review process is to assess two key conditions, contextualized in comparison to other LEAs as well as the underlying factors for which an LEA was originally placed in turnaround status:

1. **Progress:** The degree an LEA has made sufficient progress towards achieving the academic and other progress measures identified within the LEA's Turnaround Plan; as well as,
2. **Capacity:** If the LEA, school committee, and responsible municipal entity possess the capacity and readiness to sustain the LEA's progress if the LEA was returned to local control.

3.8 Who is conducting the turnaround review?

In alignment with national best-practices and informed by comments received during the public comment process, RIDE engaged two nationally recognized organizations to conduct independent third-party evaluations as part of the turnaround review.

- The Harvard Graduate School of Education's Center for Education Policy Research (HGSE-CEPR)
- SchoolWorks, Inc. (SchoolWorks), a nationally recognized education consulting firm with extensive experience conducting similar LEA reviews, including in Massachusetts

3.9 When did this review process take place?

This review process for both SchoolWorks and HGSE-CEPR took place in summer of 2024, with final reports delivered to RIDE in August 2024. SchoolWorks was on site conducting school visits, classroom observations, and stakeholder interviews from June 3 through June 14.

3.10 How was the SchoolWorks Independent Review conducted?

SchoolWorks conducted an in-depth review of the PPSD intervention in June 2024 to evaluate PPSD's current progress, as well as the local capacity of the district, school board, and city to sustain that progress if the district were returned to local control at this time.

This review included school site-visits across six schools (two at each grade level), in-person stakeholder interviews with school, district, city, community, and state stakeholders, and an exhaustive document evidence review. During the onsite visit, over 280 stakeholders were interviewed, including approximately 85 educators, 40 students, and 40 family/community members. All six schools visited were previously visited during the 2019 Johns Hopkins University (JHU review) and included approximately 30 randomly selected classroom observations.

As part of the review process, SchoolWorks evaluated their findings based off of the LEA standards developed with Dr. Wong. Please see the SchoolWorks review protocol document [linked here](#) for more information about the review process.

3.11 How was the HGSE-CEPR Review Conducted

RIDE engaged HGSE-CEPR to conduct a quantitative analysis of PPSD's academic performance with a specific consideration for the impacts during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic. This work was led by education economist Thomas Kane, the Walter H. Gale Professor of Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Faculty Director for HGSE-CEPR. Given the timing of the start of the PPSD intervention with the global pandemic, and the unprecedented impact that the pandemic had on student learning, HGSE-CEPR's quantitative analysis sought to evaluate:

1. How did PPSD's learning loss during the pandemic (as measured from 2019 to 2022) compare to similar districts?
2. How did PPSD's post-pandemic learning recovery (as measured from 2022 to 2023) compare to similar districts?
3. When considering the whole period, 2019 to 2023, how does the change in achievement in PPSD compare to that in similar districts?

To conduct this analysis, HGSE-CEPR analyzed RICAS/MCAS and national student assessment data for Providence to comparable urban districts within Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. This analysis aligns to similar research HGSE-CEPR has conducted on the impact of the pandemic on student learning loss and post-pandemic learning recovery.

3.12 Where can I read the two PPSD reports?

Interested individuals can find the full version of the finalized reports with more detailed findings on RIDE's website [linked here](#).



3.13 Were members of the PPSD school community engaged as part of the review process?

Stakeholder engagement is required by the regulations to include a broad list of community members. For context, RIDE's regulations require more community input in the review process compared to Massachusetts.

The turnaround review process engaged a broad set of stakeholders during school visits and stakeholder interviews. Through the summer 2024 review, over 350 stakeholders were invited and over 280 stakeholders actually participated in the review process. The participants included approximately 85 educators, 40 families and community members, and 40 students, in addition to officials from the district, school board, city, and state.

3.14 How are families, students, and community members being kept up to date on the PPSD Turnaround Review process?

Ensuring that families, students, and community members are kept up to date on the PPSD Turnaround Review process is a priority for RIDE. Updates on the LEA review process for PPSD will be updated on the RIDE website [linked here](#). Additionally, the Commissioner sent out a letter to PPSD community members with updates on the PPSD Turnaround Review which can also be found on RIDE's website, [linked here](#). If community members have additional questions, they are also encouraged to contact RIDE at turnaroundreview@ride.ri.gov.

3.15 What are the next steps for the PPSD Review Process?

After the release of the report, as required by R.I. Gen. Law § 16-7.1-5.1 and the Council's regulations, RIDE will next seek consultation from the PPSD School Board at their upcoming August 21st meeting. At this meeting, RIDE will present the reports' findings, hear their feedback on the reports, and receive any consultation that may be used to inform the Commissioner's recommendation on PPSD's intervention status.

After the board meeting, consistent with the process outlined in RIDE's regulations, the Commissioner will then review the board's consultation and the independent report to subsequently issue her recommendation on PPSD's intervention status to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education for your review and consideration. RIDE anticipates issuing this recommendation at the Council's August 29th meeting.

