



MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
July 30, 2024

**COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

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Chair Grey 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.

**Present:** Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines,  
\*\*Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell, \*Lisa Leaheey

\*Ex-officio member

\*\* Chair Grey arrived at 6:20 p.m.

**1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA**

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 accepts the agenda for the July 30, 2024, meeting

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

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 approves the minutes of the May 28, 2024, meeting

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

## 3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Infante-Green thanked everyone for joining the meeting and began by noting that despite it being summer, the message that "Attendance Matters" is still being emphasized and that promoting regular attendance during summer learning and activities helps kids develop good habits for the school year. She shared exciting news about a promising drop in chronic absenteeism, with more updates expected soon. She added that the "Attendance Matters RI" campaign is gaining national recognition, informing everyone that Governor McKee and RI speaker presented their strategies at the White House during the "Everyday Counts" Summit, and their insights have even reached global audiences, from Hawaii to the UK. She highlighted that Rhode Island is making a notable impact, and the focus is on maintaining this momentum into the upcoming school year.

She also acknowledged that the state had an excellent Summer Learning Week, with engaging STEM-focused opportunities through Rhode Island. She highlighted North Providence High School, where students worked on Algebra I skills by solving traffic issues alongside the police. DelSesto Middle School where they partnered with Electric Boat to design and test underwater robots and the Fuller Creative Learning Center in East Providence who teamed up with MobileQuest, giving students the chance to code and launch baking-soda-fueled rockets.

Commissioner Infante-Green continued emphasizing the importance of food access for student success and the efforts that are underway to help families' complete applications for free or reduced-price meals.

She shared that events are being held at various family-friendly locations, such as state parks, libraries, the Providence Children’s Museum, and the Roger Williams Zoo.

Additionally, thanks to this year’s state budget, all qualifying students will receive meals at no cost. Next, she shared that preparation for the first cohort under the new Readiness-Based Graduation Requirements is also in full swing. She acknowledged that since the regulations were approved last November, there has been active engagement with stakeholders. The “Lets Get Ready” Exhibition in June brought together educators and administrators from 41 high schools to share progress and strategies. Additionally, FAFSA Support Ambassador grants have been released to 20 high schools, enabling them to hire staff to assist students, especially multilingual and economically disadvantaged ones, in completing their FAFSA and Alternative Aid applications.

Lastly, she shared excitement about the progress under the School Redesign in Providence. She thanked the Council for the approval of the redesign plans and recognized that the students are already benefiting from new partnerships and opportunities. Additionally, the facilities are also being transformed to align with this vision. She noted that more will be disclosed during the presentation.

Commissioner Infante-Green concluded by expressing enthusiasm for the ongoing efforts and handed the meeting to Chair DiCenso.

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

No individuals addressed the Council, and 1 written statement was submitted.

#### **5. Board of Trustees Appointments for the Rhode Island School for the Deaf and the William M. Davies Career & Technical School**

##### **a. Discussion and approval of RI School for the Deaf and W.M. Davies Career and Technical School Board of Trustees appointment**

Deputy Commissioner Lisa Odom-Villella framed the discussion and turned it over to State Strategy Officer Stephen Osborn. Mr. Osborn began by announcing that the Rhode Island Department of Education is recommending the following nominees to fill the vacancies on the William M. Davies Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees and the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees. The nominees for the William M. Davies Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees are Shawn Sullivan and Mario Zuluaga and the nominee for the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees is Jennifer Alleman. Each nominee was interviewed by the Rhode Island Department of Education, and based on their background, qualifications, and goals,

RIDE is confident that they possess the experience and commitment to advance the goals and mission of both the William M. Davies Career and Technical Center and the RI School for the Deaf.

**Action Item:**

**Jennifer Alleman**

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was,

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the recommendation of Jennifer Alleman to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees, as presented

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Mike Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

**Shawn Sullivan**

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

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the recommendation of Shawn Sullivan to the William M. Davies Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees, as presented

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Mike Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

## Mario Zuluaga

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

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the recommendation of Mario Zuluaga to the William M. Davies Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees, as presented

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative,  
0 member voted in the negative

**YEAS:** Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Mike Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

**NAYS:** 0

**ABSTAINS:** 0

## 6. Redesign Update

### a. Discussion on updates from Providence Public Schools' Redesign Models

Deputy Commissioner Dr. Kelvin Roldán framed the discussion by acknowledging the tremendous amount of effort involved and expressing the team's excitement to share the remarkable progress taking place in Providence.

Superintendent, Dr. Javier Montañez continued by reaffirming that the purpose of the school redesign is to ignite passion, address individual strengths, and cultivate 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, thereby equipping students for success in both college and their future careers. He outlined that the team would address the forthcoming phases for the five-school undergoing redesign. These schools have implemented significant redesign initiatives over the past academic year, aimed at enhancing academic performance and increasing engagement in the learning process. He introduced the team, which includes Joan Jackson, Sr. Advisor to the Superintendent, Chris Sanacore, Director of Special Projects, and Dr. Paula Dillon Chief Academic Officer.

Director Sanacore began the presentation by acknowledging the contributions of the additional team members who were integral to the redesign efforts: Cindy Townsend, Transformation Specialist, Dr. Soljane Martinez, Director of School Improvement, and Brett Dickens Director of CTE. He also recognized the principals and school leaders in attendance for their support.

Director Sanacore then conveyed his enthusiasm for presenting the newly developed programs, initiatives, activities, and community partnerships.

He elaborated on the redesign map, which is centered on two primary objectives: maximizing the potential of partnerships within the Providence community and showcasing the variety of choices and options available to students and their families. He presented an overview of the foundation year, organizing the work into four key areas which included systems and structures, professional development, partner engagement, and community involvement. He also highlighted notable achievements and activities within each of these areas and showcased significant achievements from the year, illustrating the collaborative efforts between students and community partners.

Dr. Paula Dillon contributed by detailing the districts' use of a building-block approach to achieve instructional coherence and outlined the measurement and accountability frameworks employed. Additionally, she addressed the implementation phases for middle and high school and touched on the collective agreements established in collaboration with the Providence Teachers Union. She then provided a detailed overview of the universal launch year initiatives and Director Sanacore provided a comprehensive summary of the redesigned themed courses implemented for 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders for each of the redesign schools.

Director Sanacore delivered a high-level overview detailing the initiatives and specific programs for Delsesto Middle School STEAM Academy, Hope High School Visual and Performing Arts, Juanita Sanchez Life Sciences, Dr. Jorge Alvarez Healthcare and Finance Careers, and Mt. Pleasant High School Early College and Career.

Council members posed several questions, which were addressed appropriately.

## **7. Conceptual Certification Changes**

### **a. Discussion on Conceptual Certification Changes**

Deputy Commissioner Lisa Odom-Villella framed the discussion and introduced Lisa Foehr Chief of Teaching and Learning and Gina Masiello Director of Educator Excellence and Certification Services.

Chief Foehr initiated the discussion by underscoring that the objective of the presentation was to involve stakeholders in the certification updates and to gather feedback from the members of the Council. She noted that certification trends over the past decade reflect a changing workforce. She addressed both the challenge and opportunity of balancing flexibility with the maintenance of high professional standards, with the goal of expanding pathways into the educator workforce and increasing the diversity of Rhode Island's educators. She delivered a comprehensive overview of the proposed conceptual changes which were placed in three key areas that include expanding pathways, flexibilities, and standards and language, she then handed it over to Director Masiello to provide the details.

Director Masiello and Chief Foehr provided a comprehensive explanation of each proposed change and the underlying rationale. The topics covered included the International Teacher Certificate, the Registered Apprentice Certificate, and the certification for Health/Physical Education teachers. She also outlined new certifications for experienced educators, such as pathways for experienced teachers, secondary content teachers, an integrated content multilingual learner extension, a district-level administrator for multilingual learners and a server intellectual disability extension. Furthermore, she addressed the expansion of reciprocity and various flexibilities, including modifications to certificate grade spans, reinstatement of expired certificate, an alternate route to certification, expert residency, and a pilot program for Praxis test options.

Additionally, they discussed necessary updates to standards and language, as well as technical edits to the regulations. Director Masiello concluded the presentation by outlining the subsequent steps and the timeline for implementation. These steps include further stakeholder engagement, internal revisions, presentation of proposed changes for public comment, public hearing, additional internal revisions at RIDE, a council vote, filing with the Secretary of state, and the dissemination of guidance documents and communications.

The Council had a thorough discussion, providing feedback and raising questions.

#### **8. Executive Session Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 42-46 and 42-46-5**

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

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education  
Move into executive session pursuant to R. I. Gen. Laws Sections 42-46-5  
(a)(1) and 42-46-5(a)(2)

**Vote:** 8 members voted in the affirmative,  
0 member voted in the negative

**YEAS:** Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Mike Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

**NAYS:** 0

**ABSTAINS:** 0

**a. Discussion and approval of personnel contract pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-5(a)(1) - Review and approval of the proposed contract for the Central Falls Superintendent**

**While in Executive Session: There were two votes taken in Executive Session**

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

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Approves an amendment to the contract of the Superintendent of Central Falls, increasing her annual salary by 2.7% through June 30, 2025

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Mike Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

**b. Discussion of personnel evaluation pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a)(1) - Review of the proposed evaluation of RIDE's Commissioner**

**c. Discussion and approval of matters relating to pending litigation pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-5(a)(2)**

- (i) *K.L., through her parent L.L. and on behalf of a Class v. R.I. Board of Education, et al., C.A. No. 17-517 (1st Cir.) (October 29, 2018) (remedy phase of the remand from the First Circuit Court of Appeals, which held that LEAs in Rhode Island must provide a free, appropriate public education (a FAPE) to special education students until their 22nd birthday, thus in some cases adding a year to the amount of time these students remained eligible for the services mandated under the IDEA); and*
- (ii) *Providence Teachers' Union on behalf of Fifty Providence Teachers v. RIDE's Commissioner and PPSD's Superintendent, RIDE No. 24-042A (June 5, 2024 Notice of Appeal filed with the Commissioner on behalf of fifty (50) PPSD teachers whose contracts had not been renewed and challenging the Commissioners authority to vacate the vote of the Providence School Board*



on May 22, 2024, declining to approve the recommendations of the PPSD Superintendent not to renew the contracts).

**While in Executive Session:**

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was,

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the procedure reflected in the parties' Consent Order in Providence Teachers' Union on behalf of fifty Providence Teachers v. RIDE's Commissioner and PPSD's Superintendent, RIDE No. 24-042A, enabling a direct appeal to Superior Court of the Commissioner's decision with respect to the challenge to her authority to vacate the vote of the Providence School Board on May 22, 2024 declining to approve the recommendations of the PPSD Superintendent not to renew the contract of fifty-four (54) probationary teachers.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Mike Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

**At the conclusion of the Executive Session, While back in Open Session**

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was,

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education go back into Open Session

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Mike Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was,

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education  
to seal the minutes of the Executive Session

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva  
Gaines, Mike Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

**9. ADJOURNMENT:**

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

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

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva  
Gaines, Mike Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 p.m.