



State of Rhode Island
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Angélica Infante-Green
Commissioner

September 25, 2024

Re: Next Steps for the PPSD Intervention

Dear Mayor Smiley, Council President Miller, School Board President Rogel, and Superintendent Montañez:

The objective of this letter is to provide clear information on the beginning steps on the next phase of the Providence Public School District (PPSD) intervention, and the pathway to return. I am writing this letter jointly to all key stakeholders in order to ensure shared understanding, and I am including clear initial actions that all stakeholders must collectively take to both support PPSD now, while simultaneously planning for a successful transition of PPSD back to local control.

As you are aware, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education (Council) [recently extended](#) the PPSD intervention for up to three years to provide stability for PPSD to continue to build upon its initial progress.

Furthermore, the extension also provides the opportunity to develop and initiate a transition plan that will ensure that a long-term foundation is in place to sustain PPSD's progress when the district is returned to local control. The extension identified five clear areas of focus, based on the findings from the independent reviews and community feedback, that must be prioritized and addressed by local leaders as part of any transition planning.

1. Funding: providing adequate and equitable funding for students;
2. Facilities: revitalizing school facilities;
3. School Board Capacity: strengthening School Board capacity aligned to governance and school board best practices;
4. TAP Progress: continuing the progress with a focus on teaching and learning, aligned to the TAP; and
5. Collaboration & Communication: establishing effective systems and structures for cross-governance collaboration and communication.

This letter identifies a list of initial and immediate actions aligned to these five focus areas that all stakeholders, both individually and collectively, can take to support PPSD immediately and in service of successful long-term transition planning. These action items are organized by each of the above five priorities, and this letter also includes a clear delineation of action items by stakeholder as an appendix. RIDE will convene representatives from each of these respective agencies to monitor progress towards the implementation of these action items, and also identify longer term action steps, with community input, that can be part of a transition plan.

September 25, 2024

Re: Next Steps for the PPSD Intervention

Page 2

Furthermore, to help ensure transparency with the broader PPSD community, I am asking that all stakeholders be prepared to provide an update to the Council on the above action items by the December 2024 Council meeting.

1. Funding:

PPSD is facing immediate and significant financial constraints due to increased student need, exacerbated by the pandemic, increased costs due to inflation, the expiration of federal stimulus funding, and insufficient local funding. While state funding to PPSD has significantly increased throughout the intervention, the City of Providence has failed to meet its funding obligations to adequately support PPSD, despite and beyond the requirements under state law and commitments to do so.

To ensure that adequate and equitable funding is provided for Providence's students, both immediately and as part of any transition planning, the Mayor and City Council must collaborate together to:

- Submit to RIDE a plan to fund PPSD, consistent with its legal obligations, both for FY26 and through FY28.
- Submit to RIDE a plan to support PPSD with additional funding for FY25 to address critical structural deficits, exacerbated by persistent and insufficient local funding, which, if not addressed, *may result in significant cost reduction measures that will adversely impact students.*

2. Facilities:

When the intervention began, the approach to school facilities in Providence was piecemeal, advancing only band-aid solutions; moving forward, the focus must be on new buildings and regular maintenance of that investment. We collectively have a one in a generation opportunity to invest \$1 billion in school construction funding and result in 100 percent of Providence's students being in new or like-new facilities. The SchoolWorks report validates the progress we've collectively made in revitalizing our school facilities.

To ensure that a clear foundation is in place to maintain this constructive momentum:

- The Mayor's Office must formally respond to the June 17, 2024 letter issued by RIDE's School Building Authority, including a clear outlining of the City's internal capacities and structures that will ensure the successful implementation and funding of school construction projects.
- The Mayor's Office, City Council, PPSD, and RIDE must continue to collaborate with each other to ensure the successful implementation of all phases of PPSD's construction plan, with a special focus on Phase 4 should voters approve the \$400 million school construction bond in November.
- The Mayor's Office and PPSD must clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities for all operational services between the City and PPSD, and ensure that performance based

September 25, 2024

Re: Next Steps for the PPSD Intervention

Page 3

contracting for operational and facilities related services remains in place after the transition so that school facilities will continue to be effectively maintained.

3. School Board Capacity:

If returned to local control, within the City's current governance model, the PPSD School Board would assume oversight responsibilities for PPSD. However, the SchoolWorks' findings indicate clear concerns about the Board's current capacity to assume these responsibilities in its current state. Thus, as part of any transition planning, the Board, both as individual members and collectively as an institution, must fundamentally focus on building their capacity to constructively support the district. Furthermore, this capacity building must be augmented by clear systems and structures from the City, RIDE, and PPSD.

Specific actions must include:

- All Board members participating in ongoing professional learning aligned to governance and school board best practices;
- This professional learning being provided in partnership between PPSD, RIDE, and the City;
- The City nominating highly-qualified board members as part of the new hybrid board structure through a transparent process with clearly defined and published selection criteria, rubrics, and evaluation tools;
- PPSD revitalizing its systems and structures to better support school board members; and,
- RIDE identifying a clear board member liaison who will regularly attend school board meetings and support PPSD in revitalizing these systems and structures.

4. TAP Progress:

Fundamentally, we must remain laser focused on improving outcomes for our students, consistent with the commitments identified by the community within the Turnaround Action Plan. Furthermore, reviewing and updating a strategic plan after the plan's initial duration, such as the Turnaround Action Plan, is a consistent best-practice in any continuous improvement, strategic planning cycle.

As such, I am charging the PPSD, specifically the Superintendent, to:

- Review the independent reports' findings in-depth, as well as existing TAP performance and climate and culture data;
- Conduct extensive external engagement on these findings, including students, families, community members, educators, School Board members, and municipal leaders.
- Develop robust, concrete initiatives that will inform PPSD's next steps for continued improvement, which may include updated TAP initiatives and refined TAP metrics.

September 25, 2024

Re: Next Steps for the PPSD Intervention

Page 4

- Focus on codifying and sustaining internal systems, structures, and capacities necessary to effectively implement, monitor, and report progress on the updated initiatives and TAP metrics.
- Present regularly to the Board on academic outcomes aligned to the TAP, with careful attention and analysis of outcomes and opportunities for Black, Hispanic, Multilingual Learner, and Differently-Abled Students.

In addition, to support PPSD in continuing to make progress within the TAP:

- The Mayor's office should identify clear city-wide assets and supports that can be provided to aid PPSD in effectively implementing the TAP.
- The School Board will ensure that a "TAP Quarterly Update" is on the agenda at least once per quarter and monitor progress toward TAP goals, while acknowledging that not every TAP goal require or allow quarterly review. Regardless, when possible this review should also be aligned to a review of district spending and budgeting processes in order to ensure alignment towards or identify fiscal barriers towards ensuring TAP progress.

5. Collaboration & Communication:

A successful, sustained governance structure that enables PPSD student success is one in which all respective governance entities effectively collaborate and communicate with one another. I genuinely believe that we all share this as a common goal. To help to solidify these collaboration and communication systems and structures both immediately and part of long-term transition planning:

- Each governance entity responsible for ensuring PPSD's success (RIDE, PPSD, Board, Mayor's Office, and City Council) should identify a clear designee to serve as a collaboration and communication lead with RIDE no later than October 15th, 2024.
- These leads, along with an additional representative from each entity, should start meeting on a monthly basis starting no later than November 15th, 2024.
- To ensure this first meeting is as successful as possible and there is shared visibility on the status of the deliverables in this letter, each lead should submit to RIDE by no later than November 1st, 2024 either evidence of the completed deliverable or a description of the deliverable's status with an expected completion date.
- These convenings should focus on: a) collaborating and monitoring on the action items identified within this letter; and, also; b) building the clear systems and structures needed for effective, long-term collaboration and communication.
- This convening will also work together to prepare the update for the Council by their December 2024 meeting.

September 25, 2024

Re: Next Steps for the PPSD Intervention

Page 5

While all of the above action items are meant to help foster clear communication and collaboration among stakeholders, the long-term end-product of this collaboration must be the development of a clear transition plan that sustains PPSD's progress.

This transition plan must codify the clear systems, structures, roles, and responsibilities for effective collaboration among all stakeholders, while also including the further delineating action items that all stakeholders will take to ensure an effective transition throughout the transition period.

The development of this transition plan must also incorporate meaningful community input to guide the transition process, ensuring that the perspectives and needs of PPSD stakeholders are considered and addressed throughout the transition period.

Per state law and regulations, once the transition plan is developed, it must then be submitted to the Council for their review and ultimate approval before any transition period may be initiated.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to the students, families, and educators of Providence. I know that all stakeholders will seize this opportunity to address the above action items to ensure the proper systems and conditions are in place to drive and promote continuous improvement and success. I look forward to continuing this critical work to build a stronger, more resilient school district for years to come.

In partnership,



Angélica Infante-Green
Commissioner of Education

AIG/kr

CC: Patricia DiCenso, Chair, RI Council on Elementary and Secondary Education
Michael Grey, Chair, RI Board of Education

Appendix: Delineation of Initial and Immediate Action Items for all Providence Local Governance Entities

Stakeholder	Action Item
Mayor	<p>Funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with the City Council to submit a plan to RIDE to adequately fund PPSD, consistent with legal obligations, for FY26 through FY28 • Collaborate with City Council to submit a plan to RIDE to fully close anticipated funding gaps for PPSD for FY25 <p>Facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit a formal response to the RIDE SBA June 17th, 2024 letter pertaining to school facilities • Collaborate with PPSD and RIDE to execute the PPSD capital plan • <i>Collaborate with the City and PPSD to clearly delineate roles/responsibilities for operational services and maintains performance-based contracting</i> <p>School Board Capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with PPSD/RIDE to provide professional learning to the Board • Nominate highly-qualified board members as part of the new hybrid board structure through a transparent process with clearly-defined selection criteria <p>TAP Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify clear city-wide assets and supports that can be provided to aide PPSD in effectively implementing the TAP
City Council	<p>Funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with the Mayor’s Office to submit a plan to RIDE to adequately fund PPSD, consistent with legal obligations, for FY26 through FY28 • Collaborate with the Mayor’s Office to submit a plan to RIDE to fully close anticipated funding gaps for PPSD for FY25 <p>School Board Capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and approve high-qualified board members, as nominated by the Mayor
PPSD	<p>Facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with the City and RIDE to execute the PPSD capital plan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Collaborate with the City and PPSD to clearly delineate roles/responsibilities for operational services and maintains performance-based contracting</i> <p style="text-align: center;">School Board Capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide professional learning to Board members in partnership between PPSD, RIDE, and the City • Revitalize PPSD’s systems and structures to better support school board members <p>TAP Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the independent reports’ findings in-depth, as well as existing TAP performance and climate and culture data • Conduct extensive external engagement on these findings, including students, families, community members, educators, School Board members, and municipal leaders • Develop robust, concrete initiatives that will inform PPSD’s next steps for continued improvement, which may include updated TAP initiatives and refined TAP metrics • Focus on codifying and sustaining internal systems, structures, and capacities necessary to effectively implement, monitor, and report progress on the updated initiatives and TAP metrics • Present regularly to the Board on academic outcomes aligned to the TAP, with careful attention and analysis of outcomes and opportunities for Black, Hispanic, Multilingual Learner, and Differently-Abled Students
<p>School Board</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">School Board Capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Board members participating in ongoing professional learning aligned to governance and school board best practices <p style="text-align: center;">TAP Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that a “TAP Quarterly Review” is on the agenda at least once per quarter and monitor progress toward TAP goals. This review should also be aligned to a review of district spending and budgeting processes to ensure alignment towards or identify fiscal barriers towards ensuring TAP progress

<p>RIDE</p>	<p>Facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with PPSD and the City to execute the PPSD capital plan <p>School Board Capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with PPSD/Mayor’s Office to provide professional learning to the Board Identify board member liaison who will regularly attend school board meetings and support PPSD in revitalizing Board support systems and structures <p>TAP Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support PPSD in the development, update, and implementation of the TAP
<p>All Stakeholders</p>	<p>Collaboration & Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a clear designee to serve as a collaboration and communication lead with RIDE no later than October 15th, 2024 These leads, along with an additional representative from each entity, should start meeting on a monthly basis, starting no later than November 15th, 2024 Submit to RIDE by no later than November 1st, 2024 either evidence of the completed deliverable or a description of the deliverable’s status with an expected completion date Codify long-term collaboration and communication systems and structures Submit an update on the status of completion of the above deliverables by the December 2024 Council meeting