



Angélica Infante-Green
Commissioner

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

January 10, 2025

Re: Next Steps for the PPSD Intervention

Dear Mayor Smiley, Council President Miller, and Superintendent Montañez:

The objective of this letter is to provide a summary of our recent stakeholder engagement and outline next steps in this phase of the Providence Public School District (PPSD) intervention and pathway to return to local control.

I wanted to begin by acknowledging that PPSD Board leadership is not listed as a recipient of this letter. It is my understanding that the previous Board has been vacated, and a new hybrid Board will be installed in early February once the Mayor's recommended School Board candidates have been approved, and the elected and appointed members have been appropriately sworn into office. I will send a copy of this letter to the new Board once the new governance team has been constituted.

Most importantly, I want to thank you for your commitment to the collaborative working group meetings that were convened by RIDE this fall. As a Working Group, your representatives focused on many of the critical challenges we face as we head into the future: centering students and their academic outcomes, student outcome-focused governance, a healthy, productive relationship between PPSD Board and PPSD leadership, the City's long-term financial commitment to PPSD including a commitment to new or like-new buildings across PPSD, and improved working relationships between City, City Council, PPSD Board, PPSD and RIDE leadership.

I also want to thank Drew Echelson, RIDE Deputy Commissioner for System Transformation, for capturing your work and presenting it at the December 17, 2024, meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. You can find the slide deck as presented, along with video of the presentation, on RIDE's website^{1 2}. The theme of the presentation is that PPSD has made irrefutable progress, but we remain clear-eyed that far more work and consistent attention is needed in the five areas of

¹ PPSD: Progress and Collaborative Working Group, Presentation to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, December 17, 2024. https://ride.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur806/files/2024-12/Encl5c_PPSD.pdf

² Video of December 17, 2024, meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education (1:17:30 through 1:52:12). https://media3.ride.ri.gov/BOE/2024/12172024_BOE_Meeting.mp4

January 10, 2025
PPSD Intervention
Page 2

focus: accelerating student outcomes, governance, finances, facilities, and collaboration between and among stakeholders.

The City also submitted a progress update which you can find [here](#) in a joint letter from the Mayor, City Council President and then School Board President. In addition, PPSD submitted a letter outlining its analysis of the [SchoolWorks](#) and [Harvard](#) reports, which can be found [here](#). I've reviewed both documents and have been briefed on the status of the Working Group. This letter provides an overview of deliverables that are complete, in process, or have yet to be started.

The Working Group completed several deliverables outlined in the September 25, 2024, letter sent to you including, but not limited to:

Collaboration & Communication

- All leads, along with an additional representative from each entity, should start meeting monthly starting no later than November 15, 2024.
- [Through] convening, [stakeholders] will work together to prepare the update for the Council by December 2024 meeting.

Funding

- Submit to RIDE a plan to fund PPSD, consistent with its legal obligations, both for FY 26 and through FY 28³.

Student Outcomes

- Superintendent to review independent reports and their findings as well as existing TAP performance and climate and culture data.
- Superintendent focuses on codifying and sustaining internal systems, structures and capacities necessary to effectively implement, monitor and report progress on the updated initiatives and TAP metrics.

Governance

- RIDE identifying a clear Board Member liaison who will regularly attend school board meetings and support PPSD in revitalizing systems and structures to better support governance members.
- Stakeholders have agreed to the following for professional learning and coaching for the new Board:

³ Note the [settlement agreement](#) only outlines city investments through FY 27. RIDE will be looking for the City to make public commitments of how it will adequately fund PPSD in FY 28 and beyond.

January 10, 2025
PPSD Intervention
Page 3

- Multiday Retreat: An orientation toward Student Outcomes Focused Governance led by Council of Great City Schools (CGCS) leadership.
- Continued Professional Development: Continued commitment to Board learning and coaching
 - CGCS has agreed to partner to deliver yearlong professional development and coaching for the new Board on the condition that they unanimously commit to engage.
 - Orientation modules on important scopes of work co-developed and led by City of Providence and PPSD leadership (e.g., Understanding Student Outcomes and Academic Strategy, Introduction to Municipal Finances and Procurement).

While progress has been made, much work is still in process or has yet to be started including, but not limited to:

- In partnership with RIDE and PPSD leadership, [all parties should closely and collectively collaborate on the development] of a transition plan [for a successful return to local control]—codify clear systems, structures, roles and responsibilities for effective collaboration among all stakeholders which must include further action items to ensure effective transition, incorporate meaningful community input to guide transition process and submit a draft plan to K-12 Council for review and approval.
- The City to make public its commitment to new or like new buildings for 100% of PPSD students.
- Clearly delineate roles and responsibilities for all operational services between City and PPSD and ensure that performance-based contracting for operational and facilities will continue to be effectively maintained.
- PPSD must revitalize its systems and structures to better support governance and school board members.
- [City of Providence] identify clear city-wide assets and supports that can be provided to aid PPSD in effectively implementing the TAP.
- [New] School Board to 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 requires or allows quarterly review. Regardless, when possible, 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.

In February, once a new Board is constituted, and at least once a month thereafter, I am asking that the Working Group, including representation and leadership from the City, City Council, new PPSD School Board, PPSD, and RIDE continue to meet to make

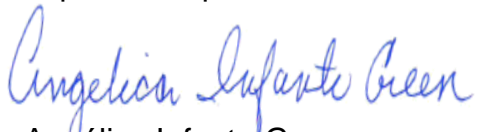
January 10, 2025
PPSD Intervention
Page 4

progress on the important deliverables that are either in process or have yet to be started. I have asked Deputy Commissioner Echelson, to continue to convene and lead this group.

I am asking all members to read and be prepared to discuss the City and PPSD status update linked above before the first meeting as a starting point for engaging in action planning around the deliverables that are incomplete or yet to be started.

I will ask that the Working Group be prepared to share an update to the K-12 Council no later than the June meeting through a presentation that will be led by Deputy Commissioner Echelson.

In partnership,



Angélica Infante-Green
Commissioner of Education

AIG/crb

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