



MINUTES OF THE MEETING
January 22, 2025

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Chair DiCenso welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, declared a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Present: Mary Barden, Karen Davis, Patt DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Karen Davis, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the January 22, 2025, meeting

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Mary Barden, Karen Davis, Patti 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 Mary Barden, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the January 6, 2025, meeting

Vote: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Mary Barden, Karen Davis Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

RECUSAL: 1: Marta Martinez

3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Angélica Infante-Green started by expressing gratitude to everyone who attended the Governor's State of the State address, emphasizing that education is a top priority. She further recognized the dedicated efforts of students, families, administrators, and staff, affirming that their collective hard work has contributed to significant progress. She highlighted several key points from the speech, including the Governor's recognition of efforts to close the achievement gap between Rhode Island and Massachusetts and the ongoing work to reduce absenteeism. Additionally, she noted the Governor's praise for the partnership with Hazel Health to provide students with mental health support, as well as the acknowledgement of Providence Public Schools (PPSD) with a few notable spotlights.

Commissioner Infante-Green was also pleased to announce that RIDE has officially launched SurveyWorks, the annual survey covering a variety of important topics related to education. These topics include students' sense of belonging, levels of respect, school safety, and college and career readiness. The survey is available for students, families, educators, and administrators to complete, and the feedback gathered will help guide the steps necessary to improve the educational experience in R.I.

Next, she expressed gratitude to the AmeriCorps members who joined RIDE staff and other partners in service on the 30th anniversary of the annual Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. Together, they prepared nearly 20,000 meals for distribution to families in need.

Lastly, she reminded everyone that the FAFSA is now officially open. The first week of February marks National School Counseling Week, a perfect opportunity to recognize the invaluable support of school counselors and emphasize the importance of completing the FAFSA. She was pleased to share that families have reported a smoother process this year. Additionally, she noted that Rhode Island's FAFSA completion rate for the class of 2025 currently stands at 25.2%, ranking the state 8th in the nation.

4. OPEN FORUM

Twelve individuals addressed the council, and 24 written statements were submitted.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

5a. Virtual Learning Update

Deputy Commissioner Lisa Odom-Villella and Associate Chief of Staff Maureen Dizon delivered an update on virtual instructional days. Deputy Commissioner Odom-Villella explained that in cases of inclement weather or other emergencies, local education agencies (LEAs) with approved virtual instructional day plans may hold their school day remotely. Associate Chief of Staff Dizon provided background information, noting that since 2017, RIGL § 16-2-2(c) has required RIDE to establish a policy allowing LEAs to submit detailed plans if they intend to conduct virtual instruction when schools are closed due to such circumstances.

Deputy Commissioner Odom-Villella explained that LEAs seeking approval for a virtual instructional day plan must submit an application that includes a plan template addressing culture and management, curriculum and instruction, and technology and supports. Applications can be submitted to RIDE at any time throughout the year. She noted that the RIDE team reviews the applications and informs the LEA of the plan's status. The commissioner then approves the plan through delegated authority and provides updates at Council meetings. Additionally, LEAs with approved plans must notify RIDE of a shift to virtual learning by submitting the Virtual Learning Intent Form.

Associate Chief of Staff Dizon stated that LEAs that submitted virtual instructional day plans in SY22-23, SY23-24, and SY24-25 were approved under the Commissioner's delegated authority. She also emphasized that both the submission of a virtual instructional day plan and the decision to implement virtual instruction during an emergency are at the discretion of the LEA. Lastly, Deputy Commissioner Odom-Villella provided a list of LEAs that have submitted virtual instructional day plans for SY24-25.

6. ACTION ITEMS

6a. Charter Renewals

Apprenticeship Exploration School

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Mary Barden, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to renew the charter of Apprenticeship Exploration School for 5 years beginning with school year 2025-26 and expiring at the end of the school year 2029-30.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,
0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

RISE Prep Academy

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Michael Grey, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to renew the charter of RISE Prep Academy for 5 years beginning with school year 2025-26 and expiring at the end of the school year 2029-30.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,
0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The Greene School

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to renew the charter of the Greene School for 5 years beginning with school year

2025-26 and expiring at the end of the school year 2029-30.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey,
Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Times2 STEM Academy

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to renew the charter of Times2 STEM Academy for 5 years beginning with the school year 2025-26 and expiring at the end of the school year 2029-30.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey,
Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Blackstone Academy

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Michael Grey, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to renew the charter of Blackstone Academy for 3 years beginning with the school year 2025-26 and expiring at the end of the school year 2027-28.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Southside Elementary Charter School

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 renew the charter of Southside Elementary Charter School for 3 years beginning with the school year 2025-26 and expiring at the end of the school year 2027-28.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Discussion Item:

7a. RISE Prep Update

Stephen Osborn announced that RISE Prep has withdrawn its major amendment request as of January 17, 2025.

7. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Michael Grey and seconded by Jo Eva Gaines it was,

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

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,
0 members voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey,
Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.