



MINUTES OF THE MEETING
February 26, 2025

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Chair Patti 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 5:35 p.m.

Present: Amy Beretta, Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Aimée Couto*, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

*Ex-officio non-voting member

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Amy Beretta, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education move agenda item 7 to agenda item 1, to switch agenda discussion items 5a and 5c and to accept the agenda as amended.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education go into executive session to discuss and possibly approve matters relating to *RIDE Professional Employees Union, Local 2012, AFT v. R.I.*

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, et al. C.A. No. PC-24-05478, pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-5(a)(2)

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Mary Barden, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education to go back into open session

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education to seal the minutes of the executive session

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, 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 Amy Beretta, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the January 22, 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: 3: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Robert Mitchell

3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Angélica Infante-Green began by referencing a recent *Boston Globe* article titled, "R.I. students have recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic faster than the rest of New England." The Education Recovery Scorecard, produced by researchers from Harvard and Stanford University, indicates that while there is still progress to be made, Rhode Island students have rebounded from the pandemic more quickly than their peers across the region. She noted that the 2024 state assessment results align with NAEP scores, showing Rhode Island maintaining steady performance in ELA and making modest gains in math. Statewide, math scores on the state assessment have now surpassed pre-pandemic levels. She emphasized that this report demonstrates Rhode Island is moving in the right direction. Additionally, she highlighted that the Providence Public School Department (PPSD) is leading the way in recovery compared to similar urban districts within the state and throughout the region. She expressed her gratitude to all students, teachers, administrators, and partners who are working tirelessly to ensure Rhode Island continues to progress.

Next, she discussed the Math Matters RI campaign, highlighting a kickoff event held at Providence's Asa Messer Elementary School, which achieved a remarkable 12-percentage-point increase in math proficiency – one of the highest in the state. Asa Messer was also the only elementary school in Rhode

Island to improve from 1 to 3 stars. Additionally, \$2.85 million in grant funding was awarded to 38 communities to support efforts aimed at enhancing math skills.

She then noted that February marks National Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month, an opportunity to highlight the incredible programs and pathways available to students across the state. She added that Rhode Island has expanded these programs statewide by nearly 30%. She also mentioned that throughout the month, RIDE has highlighted several programs to showcase some of the most innovative and engaging opportunities available to students. She added that the first week of February was also National School Counseling Week. To celebrate, she joined the RI School Counselor Association for a surprise announcement at Smithfield High School, where Kristen Luongo was named the 2025 Rhode Island School Counselor of the Year.

Lastly, she provided an update on virtual learning plans, noting that since the last council meeting, four additional local education agencies (LEAs) have been approved.

4. OPEN FORUM

No individuals addressed the council, and 13 written statements were submitted.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

5b. Standards Endorsement

Dr. Phyllis Lynch began the presentation by outlining the timeline and sharing information about the development of the state standards in 2019, along with the procedures that followed through 2025. At this point, the Council will review and assess the standards and curriculum materials every four years to ensure high quality is consistently maintained. She discussed the four-year cycle for standards review, which begins with the Council endorsing the revised standards, followed by a state survey designed to gather input on the current standards. After reviewing the feedback, key stakeholders recommend a timeline for the review and revision process to the Council. Educators actively participate in revising each set of standards under review. She added that RIDE adheres to a set of principles to ensure a transparent and consultative process for standards revision every four years.

She explained that, as required by RIGL 22-30-33, academic standards have been adopted to establish high expectations for student performance, promote respect for Rhode Island's cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity, and demonstrate sensitivity to various learning styles. She also outlined the legislative criteria for academic standards review and provided an example of a standards review summary.

Additionally, she discussed the standards review process, noting that RIDE staff developed an academic standards review summary for each set of standards and created a survey to gather stakeholder feedback. The standards, review criteria, and survey were shared through multiple channels, including virtual meetings, RIDE field memos, and content-specific listservs that reach teachers, school leaders, higher education faculty, educators, and community partners.

She presented the stakeholder feedback along with RIDE's responses concerning the World Language standards, the National Core Arts Standards, and the Next Generation Science Standards. She then stated that, based on the findings from the review process, no changes to the reviewed standards are recommended and noted that RIDE advises continued endorsement of the standards.

5c. MLL Regulations

Chief for Innovation, Improvement, and Data Brian Darrow began by highlighting key takeaways that outlined the process for the proposed multilingual learner (MLL) regulations. He explained that RIDE conducted an extensive public comment process, including six public hearings held statewide. He shared those public comments reflected both strong support for many of the core concepts within the proposed MLL regulations and practical concerns about their implementation. He noted that RIDE's finalized proposed regulations addressed these comments by offering greater clarity on regulatory requirements, as well as providing flexibility and time for implementation at all levels. Additionally, he mentioned that RIDE will develop an agency-wide implementation plan that offers essential support and guidance by public feedback.

He discussed the implementation timeline, noting that RIDE is extending the regulations timeline by a year to provide additional support and flexibility for LEAs and educators to implement the MLL regulations once approved. He also mentioned that LEAs facing fiscal or operational challenges may request a commissioner waiver for up to two additional years of implementation. However, to be eligible for the waiver, LEAs must demonstrate progress and present a clear plan to meet the established deadlines. He explained in detail that, along with the extended timeline, RIDE is offering additional clarity within the updated regulations to support the implementation of the professional learning requirements and provided examples of the support being offered.

Next, Chief Darrow highlighted key updates to the regulations, including encouraging the expansion of bilingual and dual language programs, promoting family and student engagement, and extending applicability to pre-kindergarten. He outlined the next steps, stating that RIDE will collaborate with the Office of Regulatory Reform and the Secretary of State to formally promulgate the updated regulations. Additionally, RIDE will develop support and guidance to help all stakeholders effectively implement the regulations.

5a. PPSD: Continuous Improvement and Governance Updates

Deputy Commissioner for System Transformation Drew Echelson began the presentation by outlining the discussion objectives, which included providing an update on PPSD's continuous efforts, sharing progress updates from the City of Providence and PPSD, previewing next steps, and presenting recent communication from the Commissioner to the Mayor, Superintendent, and City Council President. These updates reflect the ongoing progress with district data and updates on collaboration between the City of Providence, PPSD, the Providence School Board, RIDE, and the City Council following the December 17, 2024, Council meeting.

He provided an update on school board governance, with a timeline from January 6, 2025 through March 1, 2025 including the confirmation of school board members and the scheduling of school board meetings and professional development training. He then presented clear and compelling evidence of continuous improvement within PPSD, along with research-based evidence of post-pandemic recovery.

Next, he discussed a timeline of correspondence, beginning with a letter from the Mayor, City Council President, and School Board President addressing progress toward key deliverables and plans to finalize a comprehensive transition plan and timeline for PPSD by April 2025. This was followed by a PPSD-published report containing a letter outlining the district's analysis of the SchoolWorks and Harvard reports, as well as a letter to stakeholders from the Commissioner detailing a path to local control, including aspects related to facilities, state legislation, and the transition plan.

He also noted that the Commissioner has requested monthly meetings between the City, City Council, PPSD, School Board, and RIDE leadership, to begin once the new PPSD Board has established leadership. Additionally, he emphasized the continued focus and partnership toward completing the work outlined in the Commissioner's letters to stakeholders.

6. ACTION ITEMS

6a. Standards Endorsement

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 endorses the following content standards:

Next Generation Science Standards
National Core Arts Standards
World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

6b. MLL Regulations

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 approves the Regulations Governing the Education of Multilingual Learners, for the purpose of completing the regulatory process and file revised regulations

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

7. 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: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 members voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m.