



MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
April 30, 2025

**COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

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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 5:32 p.m.

**Present:** Mary Barden, Gabriella Bautista Bolvito\*, Colleen Callahan, Aimée Couto\*, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Michael Grey, 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 Marta Martinez, it was,

**VOTED:** That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda.

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

RECUSAL: Michael Grey

**2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

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

**VOTED:** That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education

approves the minutes of the February 26, 2025, meeting

Vote: 8 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, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

RECUSAL: 0

### 3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Infante-Green began her report by mentioning that she had participated in a virtual community meeting with Governor McKee the previous evening on the Math Matters campaign. She noted that they spoke with teachers, school leaders, and community partners about the importance of math. She shared that RIDE will be holding a Math Extravaganza event on Saturday, May 31 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the RI Nursing Education Center located at 350 Eddy Street. She went on to add that, in alignment with the Math Matters RI Campaign, RIDE recently announced a second round of grants through its 21<sup>st</sup> Century Technology and Equipment Fund. These grants will provide nearly \$3 million to local education agencies to support the transformation of learning environments, with a particular emphasis on strengthening STEM and career and technical education coursework. She reminded everyone that this fund, originally launched in 2022, leverages resources from RIDE's School Building Authority Capital Fund, along with Housing Aid and commitments from the Statewide School Construction Bond. She expressed her gratitude to the Council for their support in making these funds available. She also noted that since 2019, RIDE has expanded Career and Technical Education programs by nearly 30%.

She then shared that one of these programs will be celebrated this weekend. The second annual *Menu for Success* Student Food Truck Roundup will take place on Saturday, May 3, at Crescent Park in East Providence. Attendees will have the opportunity to enjoy sample bites from up to five student-run food trucks, as students showcase their culinary talents and compete for the Governor's Cup and the Commissioner's Belt. She expressed her appreciation to the City of East Providence for graciously offering to host the event.

Next, she shared that RIDE recently announced the awarding of over \$2 million in competitive grants to expand access to high-quality Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs aligned with high-skill, high-growth industries of the future. These grants are part of RIDE's *CTE for All* initiative,

which aims to broaden access to engaging, high-quality workforce training programs in emerging and high-demand fields where no active CTE programs currently exist.

This grant funding will enable students in nine communities to explore exciting career pathways and graduates are prepared to thrive in the workforce of the future. She then announced that the Rhode Island Pre-K lottery is now officially open, with applications due by June 22, 2025. Rhode Island Pre-K offers programs serving over 2,800 children across 20 communities.

Furthermore, she noted that May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and RIDE will be hosting former Congressman and national mental health advocate Patrick Kennedy on Monday, May 5 at 1:30 PM at the Providence Career and Technical Academy. Governor McKee, Patrick Kennedy, and representatives from Hazel Health will join a roundtable discussion with students, school support staff, and mental health professionals. The discussion will focus on the national youth mental health crisis and highlight state and local initiatives to expand access to student support services across Rhode Island.

Lastly, she provided an update on virtual learning plans. Since the Council delegated authority in July 2023 to approve virtual instructional day plans for use by LEAs during inclement weather or other emergencies, a total of 37 LEAs have submitted and received approval for their plans for the 2024–2025 academic year. One additional LEA – the Foster School Department – has been approved since the last Council meeting.

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

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

#### **5. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

##### **5a. Recommendation to the MET Board of Trustees**

Chair DiCenso turned the meeting over to Deputy Commissioner Lisa Odom-Villella, who provided a brief overview of the discussion item before passing it to Michael Hobin, Director of the office of College and Career Readiness to present the recommended individuals for appointment to the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees (MET).

Director Hobin provided a brief overview of the two nominees, Misty Delgado and Mario McClain. He noted that both individuals were interviewed by RIDE and based on their professional backgrounds, qualifications, and stated goals, the Department is confident that they possess the expertise and dedication necessary to support and advance the mission and objectives of the MET.

## **5b. Certification Regulations**

Deputy Commissioner Odom-Villella provided context for the agenda item and then invited the Chief of Teaching and Learning, Lisa Foehr and Director of the office of Educator Excellence and Certification Services, Gina Masiello to present the proposed changes to the certification regulations. Chief Foehr delivered a comprehensive overview of the regulatory process, including a detailed timeline of key milestones. She elaborated on the statewide public comment period, emphasizing the Department's commitment to transparency and stakeholder engagement. The public comment window spanned 45 days, during which input was solicited and received through multiple channels, including email submissions, mailed correspondence, google surveys, and four public hearings conducted across the state. In total, the Department received 568 comments, reflecting a broad spectrum of perspectives and feedback, which was considered in the finalization of the proposed regulations. She acknowledged the challenge and opportunity of balancing flexibility with maintaining high professional standards, while also expanding pathways into the educator workforce and promoting greater diversity within Rhode Island's educator community.

Supported by Chief Foehr, Director Masiello provided an in-depth review of each key takeaway and proposed regulatory change, articulating how each proposal aligns with the Department's strategic priorities, the rationale behind the recommendations, and any revisions made in response to public feedback. The presentation addressed several key areas, including: updates to the Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards; the implementation of the Praxis pilot program; the introduction of the Expert Residency Preliminary Certificate; adjustments to grade span configurations; the expansion of certification opportunities for experienced Rhode Island educators; and the creation of new certification pathways for School Business Administrators, District-Level Directors of Multilingual Learners (MLL), and the Multilingual Learner Integrated Content Certification.

Council Members offered their feedback and posed questions which were addressed appropriately by RIDE staff.

## **5c. Certification Test Changes**

Chief Foehr began by providing a comprehensive overview of Educational Testing Services (ETS), noting that RIDE partners with ETS to administer a suite of educator content assessments. These assessments serve as a critical component of the educator certification process, offering a standardized measure of content knowledge to ensure candidates meet rigorous professional standards. She emphasized that ETS provides a wide range of licensure assessments aligned to national benchmarks, which support the state's efforts to uphold quality and consistency in educator preparation and certification. Director Masiello explained that ETS regularly conducts regulatory reviews of the assessments used by states to ensure they remain current and relevant. Each year, ETS

facilitates multistate standard-setting studies to evaluate alignment with up-to-date standards, content, and instructional practices.

Several of these multi-state studies have been conducted in certification areas relevant to Rhode Island.

The multi-state studies resulted in new test questions and new scores. She outlined the newly adopted assessments, which include a combined Health and Physical Education Praxis II test, as well as newly available Praxis II exams for Japanese and Russian. Additionally, she noted the introduction of new testing options offered through the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) to support certification in a broader range of world languages.

Then she presented the recommended panel scores and outlined the flexibilities available for world language certification, which include the use of both Praxis and ACTFL assessments. It was further explained that panels composed of practicing educators are responsible for establishing the recommended cut scores. These assessments are periodically regenerated to ensure alignment with current educational standards and instructional practices.

Council Members offered their feedback and posed questions which were addressed appropriately by RIDE staff.

#### **5d. PPSD Update**

Deputy Commissioner Echelson began by stating that the update would address three primary points. First, he noted that the City of Providence recently released a plan outlining the proposed transition of its schools back to local control. While the effort and dedication involved in developing the plan are acknowledged, stakeholder analysis has determined that the plan, in its current form, is incomplete and lacks critical components necessary for a comprehensive transition. Second, he emphasized that the Council's directive – communicated through the Commissioner – has been clear and consistent. Specifically, the Council requested that city leadership, city council leadership, PPSD leadership, the PPSD Board, and RIDE engage in a coordinated and collaborative effort to develop a transition plan. To date, such a collective process has not occurred. Third, he reiterated that RIDE's position remains unchanged. The Department remains optimistic about the potential for an accelerated return to local control; however, this outcome is not guaranteed. It is contingent upon all relevant parties working together in good faith to meet the conditions established and communicated by the Council. He proceeded to elaborate on each of the points outlined, providing detailed context and supporting information to reinforce the assessment. His remarks offered further insight into the rationale behind each concern and underscored the importance of meeting the established conditions for a successful transition to local control. He emphasized that both RIDE and PPSD are fully committed to doing the necessary work to support a successful transition. However, he underscored that achieving this goal requires active collaboration and shared responsibility of all stakeholders involved. Council Members offered their feedback and posed questions which were addressed appropriately by RIDE staff.

## 6. ACTION ITEMS

### 6a. Recommendation to the MET Board of Trustees

#### Misty Delgado

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 Misty Delgado to the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees:

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, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

#### Mario McClain

On a motion duly made by Marta Martinez and seconded by Michael Grey, it was,

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the recommendation of Mario McClain to the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees:

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, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

### 6b. Certification 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 proposed Certification Regulations, 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, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

### 6c. Certification Test Changes

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

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the changes to certification tests, 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, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

## 7. 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 move into executive Session pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-5(a)(2) with respect to:

To discuss, and possibly approve, Tentative Agreements between RIDE and Local 2012, AFT, pertaining to the terms of a successor collective bargaining agreement between the parties; and

To discuss pending litigation against the President, the Secretary of Education and other federal officials challenging the freezing of federal aid to education, dismantling the U.S. Department of Education and threatening to withhold federal education funding for failure to certify compliance with certain recent Executive Orders.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative,

0 members voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

### Following Discussion

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

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the Tentative Agreements between RIDE and Local 2012, AFT, pertaining to the terms of a successor collective bargaining agreement between the parties.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahn and seconded by Marta Martinez it was,

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

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Chair DiCenso noted for the record that a motion was voted on in Executive Session to approve the Tentative Agreements between RIDE and Local 2012, AFT, pertaining to the terms of a successor collective bargaining agreement between the parties. The motion was approved unanimously.

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

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

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

## 8. ADJOURNMENT

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

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

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m.