



MINUTES OF THE MEETING
June 24, 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 5:31 p.m.

Present: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Karen Davis, 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, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

RECUSAL: 0

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the April 30, 2025, meeting

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, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

RECUSAL: 0

3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Infante-Green began her report by sharing that as of this week, all local school districts are officially on summer break. While many see this as a time to slow down, at RIDE, this period is used to plan and prepare for another successful school year. She highlighted that progress has been made in several key areas, though there is still important work ahead. She also shared that newly released data shows statewide graduation rates are rising. In addition, preliminary attendance data for the current school year indicates that chronic absenteeism is continuing to decline. As she previously mentioned, an independent report from experts at Harvard, Stanford, and Dartmouth found that Rhode Island is leading all New England states in academic recovery. The report also placed the state among the top 15 nationwide in recovery in both math and ELA. She expressed encouragement at these positive signs of progress and emphasized her eagerness to continue the work needed to keep Rhode Island moving in the right direction.

She reported the return of the statewide Free Summer Meals Program, highlighting the ongoing issue of food insecurity for many students and families during the summer break. RIDE continues to collaborate with nonprofit partners, school districts, and municipal leaders to establish distribution sites across Rhode Island. She shared that she participated in the program's kickoff event at the Wanskuck Community Library in Providence and will also attend the launch in Central Falls, noting that families can call 2-1-1 to find the nearest distribution site.

Next, she shared that RIDE has prioritized math as a key focus area at the state level and emphasized the importance of recognizing outstanding educators for their contributions in this field. She announced that Alondra Robles, a junior at North Kingstown High School, won the 2025 STEAM Logo Design Contest. Aligned with the Math Matters RI campaign, the contest invited high school students statewide to design a logo and slogan in celebration of STEAM Month. Alondra's design will be featured on marketing materials throughout the next school year, including for the annual STEAM Educator Awards. RIDE also announced that applications are now open for the annual STEAM Educator Award. This award recognizes one elementary, one middle school, and one high school educator whose innovative and engaging lessons inspire creativity, curiosity, and problem-solving.

skills in their students.

She concluded by sharing that Rhode Island continues to receive national recognition for its educational efforts. RIDE recently hosted the Math Matters Extravaganza, a statewide celebration that welcomed hundreds of attendees and featured participation from more than a dozen local and national education organizations. The event, along with the state's broader efforts to improve math achievement, was featured in *Forbes*. She expressed pride in Rhode Island's growing national profile and reaffirmed RIDE's commitment to working with partners to continue elevating the state's visibility and success.

4. OPEN FORUM

No individuals addressed the council, and 3 written statements were submitted.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

5a. Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching

RIDE's new Associate Director for the Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum, Areema Sweeney-Ashby began by providing an overview of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST), noting that three Rhode Island educators have been named state finalists. She explained that the program is administered by the National Science Foundation on behalf of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Unfortunately, she shared that PAEMST is not included in the proposed federal budget, meaning there will be no federal recognition for Rhode Island's 2025 finalist, no financial award, and no trip to Washington, D.C. She then announced the three state finalist, Kathleen Bubrick from South Kingstown High School, Kerri Krawczk from Kickemuit Middle School, and Kelly Grennan Smith from Davisville Middle School. Commissioner Infante-Green shared a brief background on each of the finalists and presented them with a citation in recognition of their achievements.

5b. Recommendations to the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees

Stephen Osborn presented Jesse Suchman and Ashley Deckert as recommended nominees to the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees. He provided a brief overview of each candidate's background and noted that both had been interviewed by RIDE. Based on their qualifications, experience, and alignment with the Board's mission, RIDE expressed confidence in their ability to contribute meaningfully to the work of the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center.

5c. Recommendations to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees

Stephen Osborn presented Sarah Fish and Evelyn Rankin as recommended nominees to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees. He provided a brief overview of each candidate's background and noted that both had been interviewed by RIDE. Based on their qualifications, experience, and alignment with Board's mission, RIDE expressed confidence in their ability to contribute meaningfully to the work of the Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

5d. Necessity of School Construction Approvals

Krystafer Redden, Chief of Staff began by highlighting the need for school construction approvals in the Chariho and Westerly school districts. In Chariho, the proposed scope of work, totaling \$15,159,999 includes renovations to the High School, Career Technical Center, and Middle School campus, with a focus on site safety and security enhancements, building envelope repairs, system upgrades, and interior finishes. Additionally, the plan includes the replacement of unsafe playground equipment at two elementary schools. In Westerly, district-wide renovations totaling \$20,025,542 are proposed, including site safety and accessibility improvements, building envelope upgrades, and enhancements to electrical, mechanical, and plumbing systems, along with updates to interior finishes.

5e. Pay-Go Adjustments

Krystafer Redden began the presentation by providing background on the pay-as-you-go (pay-go) formula, which allocates 15% of project funding up front to local education agencies (LEAs), proportional to the size of the approval. Between 2018 and 2021, every district in the state was offered pay-go funding. However, because the funding is tied to project size, communities with limited bonding capacity or financial resources are disproportionately impacted. He noted that in January 2022 and May 2023, the Council approved pay-go adjustments to support Rhode Island's most financially challenged communities in completing high-impact projects that would otherwise be out of reach. Currently, \$2.5 million in unused pay-go funds must be reallocated to other projects, in accordance with state law. Woonsocket and Cranston were identified as having fewer approvals and less access to bond funding compared to other large districts. The recommendation presented was for the Council to approve a one-time adjustment to provide pay-go funding for projects in Woonsocket and at the Apprenticeship Exploration School.

5f. 21st Century Technology and Equipment Fund

Krystafer Redden began by providing a brief history of the 21st Century Technology and Equipment Fund, created by RIDE to support districts in expanding and enhancing STEM and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. The fund is designed to provide innovative technology and equipment that promote project-based learning in science, technology, engineering, and math, and ensure equitable access to high-quality CTE and STEM learning environments. It also prioritizes investment in facilities that currently lack such programs. He shared that the opportunity was well-

received statewide, with 44 LEAs submitting applications for over 80 projects. A cross-office review team evaluated the proposals and recommended funding for more than 40 high-priority STEM and CTE projects across 37 LEAs. RIDE recommends that the Council approve the allocation of **\$4,000,000** from the FY25 School Building Authority Capital Fund to support these projects.

5g. FY2026-2027 Executive Pay Plan

Dr. Anade Long, Chief of Human Resources began by stating that RIDE is recommending Council approval of the updated Executive Pay Plan and salary ranges. She clarified that there are no changes to the minimum or maximum salary ranges within any pay grade category. The proposed updates since the plan's last review and approval include the elimination of the Communications Director position, the reclassification of the Chief of Staff role to reflect the current level of responsibilities, duties, and scope of work, and the addition of the "Officer" title to the list of exempt positions. This last change aligns with current agency roles, including the transition of the Chief of Equity and Diversity to the Equity and Diversity Officer. RIDE recommends these adjustments to ensure the pay plan accurately reflects the agency's organizational structure and current position classifications.

5h. PPSD Update

Deputy Commissioner Echelson began by outlining the key takeaways of his presentation, emphasizing that PPSD continues to make strong progress, RIDE remains actively supportive of both PPSD and the Board, and collaboration among all entities has improved. However, he noted that the two critical barriers to the return to local control remain unresolved.

He shared that RIDE has been working closely with all governance partners to advance the conditions outlined by the Commissioner in correspondence with the Mayor, City Council, School Board, and PPSD Superintendent. His presentation would provide an update on progress in each of the five focus areas: governance, finances, facilities, legislation, and the transition to local control. He indicated that the presentation would include an evidence- and data-based evaluation of progress and conclude with summary reflections and recommendations for next steps.

Before beginning his formal remarks, he congratulated the PPSD Class of 2025 and extended a special thank-you to PPSD staff for delivering a joyful and celebratory experience for all graduates.

In presenting the data, Deputy Commissioner Echelson highlighted that PPSD's four-year cohort graduation rate has increased, and the gap between PPSD and the statewide graduation rate has been reduced by more than half during the same period. He reiterated the importance of meeting the operational benchmarks required for an accelerated return to local control and emphasized that significant progress – particularly in governance and transition planning – is still needed.

He stated that the PPSD School Board must continue to evolve into a governing body that centers its work on improving student outcomes. Regarding the five key areas, he noted that the City of Providence and City Council leadership have committed to fully honoring the terms of the settlement agreement, including addressing the two areas previously flagged by RIDE. He also highlighted measurable improvements in collaboration, communication, and oversight among the City, PPSD, and RIDE in support of transforming school facilities for current and future PPSD students.

In the area of legislation, he explained that the relevant operational benchmarks emphasize joint preparation and coordination for the FY27 legislative session, with work scheduled to begin in August and September 2025. He concluded by noting that while a work plan has been initiated by the City, RIDE, and the Board, development of a comprehensive, collective transition plan has not yet begun in earnest.

6. ACTION ITEMS

6a. Recommendation to the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees

Ashley Deckert

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Michael Grey, it was,

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

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Jesse Suchman

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

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

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

6b. Recommendation to the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees

Sarah Fish

On a motion duly made by Karen Davis and seconded by Michael Grey, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the recommendation of Sarah Fish to the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees:

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Evelyn Rankin

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the recommendation of Evelyn Rankin to the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees:

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

6c. Necessity of School Construction

Chariho

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Michael Grey, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the necessity of school construction projects totaling \$15,159,999 pursuant to 16-7-41.1 as follows (please note that when the applicable reimbursement share ratios are applied to the estimated total project costs, the state share is expected to be \$9,247,599.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

6d. Necessity of School Construction

Westerly

On a motion duly made by Karen Davis and seconded by Michael Grey, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the necessity of school construction projects totaling \$20,025,542 pursuant to 16-7-41.1 as follows (please note that when the applicable reimbursement share ratios are applied to the estimated total project costs, the state share is expected to be \$7,008,940.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

6e. Pay-Go Adjustment

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Michael Grey, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the a one-time adjustment for Pay-As-You-Go funding to be offered to projects approved at the June 24, 2025, Council meeting in the amount of \$2,500,000.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

6f. 21st Century Technology & Equipment Fund

On a motion duly made by Michael Grey and seconded by Karen Davis, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the allocation of \$4,000,000 of the Fiscal Year 2025 SBA Capital Fund as presented.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

6g. FY2026-2027 Executive Pay Plan

On a motion duly made by Karen Davis and seconded by Michael Grey, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the FY 2026-2027 Executive Pay Plan as presented.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a motion duly made by Michael Grey 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 three items:

To discuss, and possibly take action with respect to pending litigation in *K.L., through her parent L.L. on behalf of a class of those similarly situated v. The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, et al.*, United States District Court for the District of R.I., Case No. 14-cv-00077-WES-LDA;

To discuss and possibly take action with respect to the collective Bargaining agreement reached between the Providence Teachers' Union AFT Local 958, AFL-CIO and the City of Providence; and

To discuss pending litigation in *Angélica Infante-Green, in her capacity as Chief Executive Officer, and on behalf of, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education v. RIDE Professional Employees' Union, Local 2012*, AFT, R.I. Superior Court Case No. PM-2025-02739.

Christine Kechejian called each member individually for an aye or Nay.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 members voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Following Discussion in Executive Session

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the proposed class action settlement in *K.L. v. The Council*.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 members voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

On a motion duly made by Mary Barden and seconded by Michael Grey it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the Proposed collective bargaining agreement between the Providence Teachers' Union and the City.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 members voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

On a motion duly made by Mary Barden and seconded by Michael Grey 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 action was taken with respect to two matters in Executive session, pertaining to First, pending litigation in *K.L., through parent L.L. on behalf of a class of those similarly situated v. The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, et al., United States District Court for the District of R.I. Case No. 14-cv-00077-WES-LDA*, and Second, to approve the proposed collective bargaining agreement between the Providence Teachers' Union AFT Local 958, AFL-CIO and the City of Providence.

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

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

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,
0 members voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

8. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Mary Barden and seconded by Michael Grey 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,
Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.