



MINUTES OF THE MEETING
July 29, 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: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Robert Mitchell

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

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 accepts the agenda.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

RECUSAL: 0

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On a motion duly made by Robert Mitchell and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the June 24, 2025, meeting

Vote: 4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members

voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: Amy Beretta, Jo Eva Gaines

RECUSAL: 0

3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Infante-Green began by providing an update on the federal landscape and its implications for RI, noting that recent federal funding and policy changes have created uncertainty nationwide. She reported that at one point, the federal government was withholding nearly \$7 billion in congressionally approved education funding, including \$30 million designated for RI to support professional development for educators, STEM initiatives, English language instruction, and after-school and summer programs. She emphasized her advocacy for the timely release of these funds and noted that leaders from across the political spectrum joined in expressing concern. She indicated that, following bipartisan efforts, the federal government has committed to releasing funds this week, however award notifications had not been received.

Next, she discussed summer learning and the importance of extended learning opportunities. To highlight this, RIDE recently celebrated National Summer Learning Week by touring several Learn365 RI and Math Matters RI programs. She noted that RI is leading New England in academic recovery, attributing much of this success to the state's commitment to extended learning programs, including summer learning. She shared that from Providence to Newport and beyond, exciting summer learning programs are keeping students engaged, accelerating their learning, and helping them build confidence.

She then addressed meal benefit applications, noting that many local summer programs provide students with access to nutritious meals at no cost through the Summer Meals Program. She highlighted that all RI youth under the age of 18 are eligible to visit a meal distribution site to receive free meals and snacks. Families seeking more information on sites and schedules can contact United Way's 2-1-1 line. Additionally, RIDE is assisting families with completing meal benefit applications, which help determine eligibility for free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch for the upcoming school year.

Finally, she shared that preliminary data for the 2024–2025 school year indicates continued progress in reducing chronic absenteeism statewide. The data highlights a clear correlation between consistent attendance and academic achievement, with a more than 20-percentage-point achievement gap

between students who are chronically absent and their peers. Additionally, recently released graduation data revealed nearly a 40-percentage-point gap in graduation rates between students who were chronically absent throughout high school and those who were never chronically absent. She noted that RIDE is preparing to relaunch the Attendance Matters RI campaign to sustain momentum and further improve attendance and academic outcomes for students across the state.

4. OPEN FORUM

One individual addressed the council, and 8 written statements were submitted.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

5a. Recommendation to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees

Stephen Osborn presented Raymond Niford as a recommended nominee to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees. He provided a brief overview of the candidate's background and noted that he had been interviewed by RIDE. Based on his qualifications, experience, and alignment with the Board's mission, RIDE expressed confidence in his ability to contribute meaningfully to the work of the Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

5b. Regulations Governing Charter Schools

Stephen Osborn began by stating that, as referenced on January 22, 2025, Council meeting, RIDE is proposing revisions to the regulations governing charter schools to clarify that a charter may change its charter type through a major amendment request. He noted that this evening's presentation constitutes the first reading of the proposed revisions and that RIDE will seek the Council's approval at the next K-12 Council meeting to release the regulations for public comment.

5c. Virtual Learning Plans - Request for Delegation of Authority

Krystafer Redden began by reporting that in January 2022, the Council granted the Commissioner limited authority to approve LEA virtual instructional day plans while the Governor's emergency executive order declaring a public health emergency remained in effect. This authority expired on May 11, 2023, with the official end of the public health emergency. On June 20, 2023, the Council voted to delegate this authority to the Commissioner on a biennial basis, thereby maintaining the existing approval process. The Commissioner will continue to provide the Council with updates on approved districts and an end-of-year summary of plan utilization. This evening, RIDE is requesting the Council's approval to extend this authority for an additional two years.

6. ACTION ITEMS

6a. Recommendation to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees

Raymond Niford

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the recommendation of Raymond Niford to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees:

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

6b. Approval of the Request for Delegation of Authority for Virtual Learning Plans

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education delegate To the Commissioner, its Chief Executive Officer, the authority to (1) approve any plans for virtual learning submitted by school districts pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-2-2 (c) and (2) if the plan is acceptable to count day or days of virtual instruction as a “school day” or days under 16-2-2 (a) provided however that in exercising such authority, the Commissioner shall report to the Council on the submission of virtual instructional days plans by school districts, and provided further that this authority shall remain in effect contingent upon review every two years, as presented.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

8. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta 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: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso,
Jo Eva Gaines, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.