



MINUTES OF THE MEETING
August 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: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Marta Martinez

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Colleen Callahan, 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: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

RECUSAL: 0

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded Karen Davis, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the July 29, 2025, meeting

Vote: 4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members

voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: Mary Barden, Marta Martinez

RECUSAL: 0

3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Infante-Green began by announcing that many districts are returning to school and shared that she would be visiting several Providence schools to mark the first day. She noted that her visits will spotlight the district's new PK-8 school model, its first Blue Ribbon Elementary School, and one of five redesign high schools. She highlighted the progress made in Providence with the State's support – including gains in student achievement, reductions in chronic absenteeism, new 21st-century school buildings, expanded access to high-quality early education, and expanded CTE opportunities. She also mentioned that in the weeks ahead, she will be visiting districts across the state to engage with students, families, and educators.

She emphasized that RIDE is focused on ensuring students feel welcomed and supported as they return to school. Recently, RIDE announced a partnership with Bradley Hospital to strengthen student mental health and well-being. Funded by a \$154,000 U.S. Department of Education grant, the partnership will support up to 27 high-need districts by providing professional learning for educators, technical assistance, coaching, and resources to implement evidence-based mental health strategies.

She also shared that RIDE issued new guidance to help schools and districts use Artificial Intelligence responsibly, effectively, and equitably. She noted that AI is already shaping classrooms, and the goal is to ensure it enhances teaching and learning while unlocking every student's potential. This guidance, she added, represents an important step in aligning innovation with RIDE's priorities: advancing equity, personalizing learning, and preparing students for the future workforce.

Turning to school construction, she shared that RIDE has joined communities across the state to celebrate both groundbreaking and ribbon-cutting ceremonies for new 21st-century learning spaces. Recent highlights include the start of construction at the Apprenticeship Exploration School in Cranston, a tour of Blackstone Valley Prep's new PrYde Campus (a collaboration with the local YMCA), and the ribbon-cutting at Rogers High School in Newport. In Bristol, RIDE broke ground on the new Mt. Hope High School, while in Central Falls, a new playground opened at Raíces Dual

Language Academy. She added that in the coming weeks, additional projects will be highlighted, including Pawtucket's Baldwin Elementary School and Cumberland's B.F. Norton Elementary School.

4. OPEN FORUM

One individual addressed the council, and one written statement was submitted.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

5a. School Redesign Updates: RIDE Updates on School Redesign and the Chariho Alternative Learning Academy

Brian Darrow, opened with an overview of the presentation, which included a review of the purpose and requirements of redesign, an update from Providence highlighting early indicators of success in redesign schools and plans to continue these efforts, a Pawtucket update outlining the district's path forward with Samuel Slater's school redesign, and a Chariho update presenting the Alternative Learning Academy's redesign plan for the Council's consideration.

He provided background, explaining that under ESSA, school redesign is federally mandated for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools that remain in CSI status for four consecutive years. The redesign process is intended to fundamentally transform schools by addressing systematic barriers that hinder student achievement. He noted that LEAs may select from five research-based redesign models and emphasized that RIDE's school redesign application process is aligned with state and national best practices. The process incorporates key elements including an improvement framework, independent review, a multi-phased system of support, and Council approval.

Turning to Providence, he reported that PPSD's current redesign schools, approved by the Council in summer 2023, are already showing early indicators of success. He noted that these efforts build on the district's broader momentum, which has reduced the number of students in CSI schools by approximately 3,000 since the start of the state intervention. Schools demonstrating early progress include JSEC High School, Hope High School, Mount Pleasant High School, Alvarez High School, and Delsesto Middle School.

He then addressed Pawtucket, noting that Samuel Slater Middle School was identified for school redesign under the 2024 accountability cycle. Due to system-level challenges, the district was unable to submit a redesign plan. He explained that RIDE granted Pawtucket a one-year extension to complete Slater's redesign plan and to address key conditions at both the district and school levels. He noted that the terms and conditions are codified via an MOA and that the Pawtucket School

Department is currently off-track in submitting quarterly milestones that articulate an implementation plan to address the above conditions.

Regarding the Chariho Alternative Learning Academy (CALA), he explained that it is an alternative K-12 school within the Chariho Regional School District that has submitted a redesign application for the Council's consideration. CALA has been identified as a CSI school since 2018 and currently serves approximately 85 students. More than half of these students also participate in classes or programs outside of CALA, including CTE offerings, as well as services aligned with their IEPs, 504 plans, or individual needs. He emphasized that the school's model is centered on holistic, personalized support designed to meet students' unique academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs in a supportive setting. He shared that SchoolWorks recommended conditionally approving CALA's redesign plan, noting that a few standards had not yet been fully met. RIDE concurred, recommending conditional approval and agreeing with SchoolWorks' assessment that CALA has submitted a strong plan that will better serve its students' needs. He explained that the conditions are designed to allow CALA to move forward while ensuring full resolution of key remaining academic and operational issues. These conditions include a corrective action plan with specific metrics and goals to address standards rated as "partially meets" in the redesign application, as well as a sustainability plan to ensure continued improvement and academic outcomes should the school exit CSI status.

6. ACTION ITEMS

6a. School Redesign Plan - Chariho Alternative Learning Academy

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 moves to approve With conditions Chariho Alternative Learning Academy (CALA)'s School Redesign application to begin in school year 2025-2026 with full Implementation commencing in school year 2026-2027 as presented.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

6b. Regulations Governing Charter Schools

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 approves the proposed revisions to the Regulations Governing Charter Schools, for the purpose of Public Review and Comment and scheduling for public hearings as presented.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,

0 member voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a motion duly made by Mary Barden 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:

Discussion and possible action with respect to potential litigation Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Charge No. 523-2023-01383 filed by Mr. Ameer Benno with the area office of the EEOC; and

Discussion and possible action with respect to potential litigation

arising from the July 2, 2025 notice from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) regarding an authorized suit against the Department of Education (RIDE) and the Providence Public School Department (PPSD) pursuant to Section 707 of Title VII of the Civil Right Act of 1964, as amended, based upon the DOJ's conclusion that RIDE and PPSD have administered a student loan repayment program in violation of Title VII;

Discussion and possible action with respect to pending litigation in *State of California et al. v. Linda McMahon et al.*, United States District Court for the District of R.I., Case No. 1:25-cv-00329;

Discussion and possible action with respect to pending litigation in *State Of New York et al. v. U.S. Department of Justice et al.*, United States District Court for the District of R.I., Case No. 1:25-cv-00345.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,

0 members voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso
Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Following Discussion

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Colleen Callahan it was,

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

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,

0 members voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso,

Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Chair DiCenso noted for the record that no action was taken with respect to the matters discussed in Executive Session.

On a motion duly made by Marta Martinez and seconded by Amy Beretta it was,

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

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,

0 members voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Marta Martinez

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: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patti DiCenso, Marta, Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 p.m.