



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
March 31, 2026**

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Chair Patti DiCenso welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education and called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

Present: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, *Milissa O'Neil

*Ex-Officio Non-Voting Member

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

RECUSAL: 0

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the January 5, 2026, meeting

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members

voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: Marta Martinez

RECUSAL: 0

3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Infante- Green opened by announcing a new round of Facility Opportunity Initiative grants, which will invest \$6.5 million in high-impact projects within communities with the greatest need. The event was held at Providence's Jorge Alvarez High School, a recipient of these funds, which will support the development of new science laboratories. She added that currently, students enrolled in the high-demand Career and Technical Education (CTE) healthcare program must travel to another school to access laboratory facilities. She also shared that RIDE is pleased to release *Built to Learn, Built to Last*, a facilities progress report detailing Providence's historic \$1 billion school construction plan. These updates underscore both the magnitude of the challenge and the strong momentum underway, particularly in Providence. She further noted that RIDE has marked the completion of new and renovated school facilities in Middletown and East Greenwich, in addition to celebrating the opening of a new high school in Central Falls.

Commissioner Infante-Green then provided a brief update on SurveyWorks, the annual school survey, noting that it has officially surpassed 100,000 responses. An extension was granted due to the blizzard to ensure that more students, families, and educators can share their experiences.

Next, she shared that the Advanced Placement (AP) data recently released by the College Board underscores Rhode Island's continued national leadership in expanding access to rigorous coursework and improving student outcomes. She noted that over the past decade, Rhode Island ranked first in the nation for growth in both AP participation and student success. She added that since 2015, the number of high school seniors completing at least one AP course has increased by more than 50 percent, the highest growth rate in the country. During the same period, Rhode Island also led the nation in the growth of students earning a qualifying score of 3 or higher on an AP exam. She noted that today, 26.5 percent of Rhode Island public high school graduates earn a qualifying AP score, exceeding the national average. These gains reflect sustained state investments, expanded access, and close collaboration with educators to ensure that advanced coursework is both accessible and achievable for students across all districts.

She also highlighted a recent XQ Institute report recognizing Rhode Island as a national leader in improving the high school experience. She noted that the state was spotlighted for aligning policy, graduation expectations, accountability, and student-centered learning around clear postsecondary outcomes. She added that XQ's recognition affirms that Rhode Island's work on high school redesign is

not only strengthening relevance and student engagement locally but also contributing to national conversations on how states can modernize secondary education to better prepare students for success after graduation.

She took a moment to acknowledge the acts of violence that have deeply impacted students, families, educators, and communities across Rhode Island over the past several months. She noted that in moments like these, our responsibility extends beyond academics to the well-being of the people within our schools. In response, Governor McKee and she announced an expansion of mental health and emotional support resources for Rhode Islanders affected by gun violence, with a particular focus on supporting students and school communities. These includes the launch of a statewide virtual support hub, providing centralized access to mental health services, trauma-informed guidance, and resources for families and school leaders. She added that through RIDE's partnership with Hazel Health, access to virtual mental health services for all Rhode Island students and educators has been expanded to ensure timely and confidential support. She also noted that RIDE continues to work closely with districts to support responses grounded in care, compassion, and sensitivity.

Lastly, she provided an update on virtual instructional day plans for use by the LEAs in the event of inclement weather or other emergencies. She shared that a total of 35 LEAs have submitted plans for the 2025-2026 academic year.

4. OPEN FORUM

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

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS & ACTION ITEMS

5a. Board Appointments for the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center, the Rhode Island School for the Deaf, and the Central Falls Board of Trustees

Chief of Staff Krystafer Redden and State Strategy and Student Opportunity Officer Stephen Osborn provided an overview of the recommended nominees for the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center, the Rhode Island School for the Deaf, and the Central Falls Board of Trustees. Action was taken immediately following the discussion.

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the recommendation of Rodney Davis to the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees, as presented.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the recommendation of Chereva McClellan to the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees, as presented.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

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 Karla Vigil to the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees, as presented.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the Recommendation of Robert Hoffmeister to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees, as presented.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

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 The recommendation of Glenn G. Maurice to the Central Falls Board of Trustees, as presented.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

6. DISCUSSION ITEMS

6a. Emergency Reduction Days

Chief of Staff Krystofer Redden began by noting that during the week of February 22, 2026, Rhode Island experienced significant impacts from Winter Storm Hernando, resulting in a statewide state of emergency. The National Weather Service issued a blizzard warning for Rhode Island beginning Sunday, February 22 at 4:00 p.m. through Tuesday, February 24 at 7:00 a.m. A travel ban was also implemented during that time. He added that as a result, on Monday, February 23, and Tuesday, February 24, all LEAs experienced widespread disruption to normal instructional operations. School facilities were closed, and transportation systems were suspended. The severity of the conditions and associated emergency orders rendered the provision of in-person instruction impracticable and, in many cases, impossible.

He further noted that, given the scope and severity of the disruption, these closures were not isolated or localized but were instead systemic across Rhode Island's public education system. He continued by stating that, considering the statewide emergency conditions and resulting loss of instructional time, the Council is being requested to approve a two-day reduction in the minimum required length of the 2025-2026 school year for all Rhode Island LEAs, specifically for February 23 and 24. He added that this adjustment would reduce the minimum requirement from 180 days to 178 days (or the equivalent in adjusted instructional hours), and would correspondingly reduce the required total school and instructional hours associated with those two days.

Lastly, he said that if the Council approves this request, the minimum required school year will be adjusted accordingly for all LEAs. LEAs will retain the ability to submit district-specific calendar amendments as needed, and the Commissioner will review such amendments pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-2-2(a) and the *Regulations Governing the School Calendar and the Length of the School Day* to ensure compliance with the revised requirements.

6b. Certification Pathways for RI Educators - CTE

Director of Educator Excellence & Certification Services, Gina Masiello, opened the presentation with a brief overview of the material to be presented. She then referenced and reviewed the applicable Certification Regulations. She proceeded to outline the current requirements for issuance of a Career and Technical Education (CTE) certificate, noting that the certificate authorizes assignment as a Secondary Grades Career and Technical Education teacher (Grades 6-12) within a specific CTE certification program, satisfy pedagogy, content, and assessment requirements, and demonstrate three to five years of relevant occupational experience in the CTE field.

She further noted that RIDE has developed an additional pathway to CTE Certification for Rhode Island educators within the CTE career field. Under this proposed pathway, a Rhode Island certified secondary educator would be required to complete credential review, develop a plan of study, document occupational experience, pass the required assessment(s), to obtain CTE Certification. She stated that Council approval is being sought for criteria establishing the equivalent of occupational experience for Rhode Island certified educators. The proposed criteria include industry-based experience, ongoing professional learning, and/or completion of coursework at a technical college.

In collaboration with Stephen Osborn, she provided illustrative examples of the proposed pathways to CTE certification. Council members posed questions, which were addressed accordingly.

6c. Update on Right to Read & High-Quality Curriculum Materials

Director of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum, Dr. Phyllis Lynch began by summarizing the key takeaways from the presentation, noting that most LEAs have met the Right to Read requirements. She highlighted that Rhode Island is leading the nation in curriculum adoption, particularly in mathematics, and emphasized that Mississippi is not a “miracle” case, but rather an example of results achieved through sustained, intentional implementation. She further noted that schools are making progress in implementation, however, continued implementation remains a priority for Rhode Island and will require ongoing investment.

She shared that RIDE’s goal is to ensure that all students experience coherent, grade-level instruction daily. She noted that this goal is supported through the strengthening of teaching and learning in Rhode Island via high-quality curriculum implementation and the Right to Read Act. She presented a timeline indicating that all educators are expected to meet Right to Read requirements by 2025. She reviewed the provisions of the Right to Read Act, applicable regulations, and probationary status requirements. She further reported that 99% (11,312) of educators across 59 LEAs met the requirements, while 1% (102) of educators across 7 LEAs did not.

Associate Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Aréema Sweeney-Ashby continued the presentation by noting that Rhode Island made the right decision in adopting high-quality curriculum materials (HQCM) statewide, with implementation currently underway and early evidence indicating progress. She further stated that where HQCM is implemented with fidelity, strong results are already being observed. She emphasized that the difference between success and stagnation is effective implementation support, and that state investment at this stage will accelerate outcomes for students. She presented an overview of HQCM adoption in Rhode Island, highlighting commonly used curricula in ELA, Math, and Science across elementary, middle and high school levels. She referenced Mississippi’s literary approach, grounded in the Science of Reading and HQCM implementation, and noted that Mississippi’s effort is fully state-funded at approximately \$15 million annually, supporting statewide scale-up. She contrasted this with Rhode Island, where implementation was not accompanied by dedicated funding for HQCM procurement or Right to Read professional learning. She noted that despite this, Rhode Island improved from 25th nationally in 2013 to 14th in 2024. She further reported that, according to the Education Recovery Scorecard, Rhode Island ranks 14th nationally in math recovery and 13th in reading recovery.

She provided an overview of implementation guidance, noting that while achievement requires time, progress can be measured. She described the Curriculum Implementation Change Framework (CICF), which includes teacher and leader surveys on curriculum use and perceptions, as well as curriculum-specific observation tools to assess implementation quality. She noted Rhode Island’s participation in piloting a dashboard to visualize survey and implementation data. She emphasized the importance of continued support for curriculum-based collaboration, including for experienced educators, and referenced the role of instructional coaches in supporting classroom practice. She also highlighted the

development of a resource hub for families, educators, and community members as well as efforts to align educator preparation programs to strengthen implementation support.

Paula Dillon, Deputy Superintendent of Academics joined the presentation and shared PPSD implementation levers, outlining how the district is executing HQCM with fidelity through classroom walkthroughs and student data analysis to identify trends, curriculum-based professional learning, collaborative planning time focused on HQCM unit and lesson internalization using the PDSA cycle, individualized teacher coaching, and district-level professional learning sessions. She explained that to support phased implementation and continuous improvement, the district has adopted a building block approach over time, guided by focus areas, key shifts, and instructional priorities.

To conclude the presentation, Dr. Phyllis Lynch shared highlights and examples from the field, recognizing teacher professionalism and thoughtful leadership. She noted that sustained funding for curriculum-based professional learning, statewide monitoring of implementation progress, and continued investment in instructional coaching will accelerate student outcomes.

6d. Update on Charter Renewal Conditions

State Strategy and Student Opportunity Officer Stephen Osborn opened by outlining the presentation objectives, noting that the purpose was to provide the Council with an update on charter schools operating under renewal conditions. He reported that eight charter schools received renewals with conditions between 2023-2025. He further explained that RIDE issues conditions when review processes identify areas requiring additional attention to ensure sustained academic and operational success. He noted that such conditions are designed to address academic, financial, or compliance concerns, balancing accountability with opportunities for growth through structured oversight.

He provided a detailed overview of the renewal conditions for Apprenticeship Exploration School, Blackstone Academy Charter School, Times2 Academy, The Hope Academy, The Learning Community, Charette Charter High School, Nowell Leadership Academy, and Village Green Virtual Charter School. Lastly, he shared that moving forward RIDE proposes to provide the Council with an update on charter school renewal conditions annually each Fall.

6e. Regulations Governing Charter Schools

State Strategy and Student Opportunity Officer Stephen Osborn began by stating that RIDE has completed the public comment process and is presenting the final draft regulation to the Council for its review and approval. He noted that this discussion originated on January 6, and January 22, 2025, during the major amendment request for RISE Prep.

He summarized the proposed revisions, indicating that a sentence was added to Section 2.3.1, which governs the charter school amendment process. This addition clarifies that amendments may include the conversion from one type of charter school to another i.e., converting from a mayoral academy or district charter school to an independent charter school. He emphasized that the intent of this revision is to provide explicit clarity regarding the authority to make such changes.

He further reported that RIDE held two public comment sessions on December 9 at RIDE and December 10 in Woonsocket. A total of five comments were received, two verbal and three written submissions all from the Woonsocket School Committee, expressing opposition to the proposed regulatory revision.

7. ACTION ITEMS

7a. Request for a Two-Day Emergency Reduction of the 2025-2026 School Year Following Winter Storm Hernando

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws §16-2-3 approves a two-day emergency reduction of the 2025-2026 school year for Rhode Island Local Education Agencies due to the impact of Winter Storm Hernando on February 23 and 24, 2026, as presented.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative, 1 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso
Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: Amy Beretta

ABSTAINS: 0

7b. Certification Pathways for RI Educators - CTE

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 proposed criteria for equivalent occupational experiences for individuals who hold a valid Rhode Island teacher certificate as presented.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

7c. Regulations Governing Charter Schools

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 proposed revisions to Rhode Island’s Charter School Regulations effective immediately.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Michael Grey 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 pending litigation in *Angelica 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, which concerns an appeal from an arbitration decision;

K.L., through her parent L.L., on behalf of a class of those similarly situated v. Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, et al., C.A. No. 1:14-cv-00077 (D.R.I.), which concerns a proposed settlement of a class action decision in the plaintiff's favor holding that qualified students under the qualified students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act were legally entitled to receive benefits until they turn twenty-two (22) years of age;

Int'l Brotherhood of Elec. Workers, Local 2323 v. Rhode Island Department of Education et al., C.A. No. 1 :25-cv-00617 (D.R.I.), which is a request for a Declaratory judgement concerning: (a) whether an independent public Charter is a "private employer", the employees of which have the right to Strike under the National Labor Relations Act; and (b) whether the Employees of such a school have been deprived of their right to a "prevailing Wage" under the R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-77.3-2(a); and

City of Pawtucket and City of Cranston v. Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, et al., C.A. No. PC-2026-00649 (Prov. Cty. Superior Court), which is a request for a declaratory judgement holding that De La Comunidad Charter school is a "network" charter school that required "local written support" prior to the issuance of its charter.

Roll Call was taken by Christine Kechejian

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Following Discussion

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

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

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 members voted in the negative

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Chair DiCenso noted for the record that a unanimous vote taken to authorize the settlement for *K.L. through her parent L.L., on behalf of a class of those similarly situated v. Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, et al.*, C.A. No. 1:14-cv-00077 (D.R.I.)

On a motion duly made by Karen Davis and seconded by Colleen Callahan it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve to seal the minutes.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative,

0 members voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Michael Grey, Marta Martinezy,

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

8. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Marta Martinez 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, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso,
Michael Grey, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.