



**Enclosure 2a**  
**April 5, 2022**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**  
**March 8, 2022**

Pursuant to Executive Order 22-01, this was a hybrid meeting.

**COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

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Board Chair Cottam introduced Patricia DiCenso as the new Chair of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. She shared that Ms. DiCenso began her distinguished career nearly 40 years ago as a teacher and certainly has a deep understanding of Rhode Island high school reform initiatives, as well as education for under-resourced students, curriculum, instruction, and retired as superintendent of the Pawtucket School System in 2019. She highlighted that among her accolades, she was named principal of the year in 2010. She then turned the meeting over to Chair DiCenso.

Council Chair DiCenso thanked Chair Cottam for the kind words and expressed that she looks forward to the opportunity to serve the students of Rhode Island with a group of fine people - from RIDE staff to members of the Council - who truly care about kids. She then welcomed everyone to the March 8, 2022, hybrid meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

**Present in person:** Michael Almeida, Barbara Cottam, Patricia DiCenso, \*Milly Asherov

**Present remotely:** Amy Beretta, \*\*Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, Lawrence Purtill

**Absent:** 0

[\*Ex-officio, non-voting member]

[\*\*Member Callahan departed the meeting at 7:04 p.m.]

**1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA**

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Lawrence Purtill, it was

**VOTED:** That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the March 8, 2022, meeting

**Vote:** 9 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

**YEAS:** Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

## 2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

### a. Minutes of the February 8, 2022, Meeting

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 approves the minutes of the February 8, 2022, meeting

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

## 3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Infante-Green began her report by acknowledging that March is National Women's History Month and today we are celebrating International Women's Day. It is a time to remember and celebrate the achievements of women across the world and a great opportunity to incorporate women's history into lesson plans and share widely how women have made the fabric of our state and country stronger. March is also National Nutrition Month and later in the week she will be stopping by Smithfield High School to celebrate National Breakfast Week. In addition, this week is National School Social Work Week and an opportunity to thank social workers throughout the State for the vital role they play in providing students, educators, parents, and the community, the support they need during these trying times. RIDE will be wrapping-up the week on Friday by celebrating Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Day in the Narragansett School System, to highlight how teachers incorporate SEL to support the mental health and well-being of students. In addition, later this month, RIDE will be launching the "Let It Out" program, which started as a pilot program in Providence, Pawtucket, and Woonsocket, and is part of a \$9M dollar Project AWARE grant and has resulted in thousands of mental health screenings and dozens of important partnerships at the LEA and school level with mental health providers statewide. Later this month and in April, RIDE

and Bradley Hospital will also begin Teen Mental Health First Aid evidence-based trainings that teaches teens ages 15-18 how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance abuse challenges in their friends and peers. The training gives teens the skills they need to have supportive conversations with their friends and emphasizes the importance of getting help from a responsible and trusted adult.

Next, Commissioner Infante-Green reported on the LEAP District Support Program (DSP) and reminded Council members that the DSP was announced last November and established to provide substantial, targeted support to districts most impacted by the pandemic – Central Falls,

East Providence, Johnston, Newport, North Providence, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick, and Woonsocket. She shared that the first quarterly report memo highlighting the major accomplishments of Phase I was shared with the Council earlier in the day, and there will be a presentation on the progress by the districts and RIDE, at the next meeting of the Council.

Next, Commissioner Infante-Green reported that a few weeks ago RIDE held the release of the School Building Authority's (SBA) latest school facility report at the Spaziano Elementary School in Providence. The report detailed progress in providing all students, regardless of their zip code, world-class, modern, and safe learning spaces that inspire them to succeed.

Commissioner Infante-Green also provided an update on the Green Ribbon Schools Awards, which honor schools, districts, and postsecondary institutions that are demonstrating progress in three pillars: reducing environmental impact and costs; improving the health and wellness of students and staff; and providing effective sustainability education. The award encourages education officials to consider facilities, health, and the environment, comprehensively. Rhode Island is leading the nation with Green Ribbon Schools and the State has the largest proportion of green ribbon school winners in the nation. RIDE just submitted two additional applications for Lincoln High School and McGuire Elementary School, North Providence, and hopes to celebrate even more successes in the near future.

Lastly, Commissioner Infante-Green announced that the proposed revisions to the Secondary Regulations are officially out for public review and comment for a period of 60 days and includes seven public hearings. She recognized Steve Osborn and Olivia Smith for the tremendous work they are doing to revise the statewide high school graduation requirements to reimagine the high school experience.

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

One individual addressed the Council. Written testimony is on file at RIDE.

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

- a. Providence Update

Commissioner Infante-Green framed the discussion by underscoring how important the work is to ensure that every Providence student gets the high-quality education they deserve, and she strongly believes that the turnaround process is taking hold in Providence. She stressed that even though the turnaround began only four months before the start of a once-in-a-generation global pandemic, community specialists have been hired to serve every middle and high school, a high-quality, standardized k-8 curriculum has been implemented, and guidance counselors and assistant principals have been placed at every elementary school. She underscored the need for collaboration in reversing decades of neglect and that everyone is committed to the turnaround effort and to work hand-in-hand with the community and in line with the plan they helped create. Commissioner Infante-Green expressed that there will most likely be opposition as we are trying to change the status quo, but when she meets with families and teachers, it is unbelievable how much gratitude there is for the work that is being done.

Dr. Javier Montañez, Acting Superintendent, began by expressing that the TAP was blindsided by the pandemic, however, he can tell from experience that when you are hit with a hardship in life, the best thing to do is focus on the things that you can control. When it comes to the TAP, the only thing we can control is how we react, adapt, and take actions going forward. The pandemic has set student learning backwards, so slower growth will be seen early on, followed by rapid increases. Acting Superintendent Montañez encourages the community to explore each of the metrics of the TAP.

Next, Dr. Joan Jackson, Senior Advisor to the Acting Superintendent, shared that PPSD has spent time reconvening all the groups that set the TAP metrics from the beginning and to set the process forward on how to achieve the goals, yearly. She stressed that a significant achievement gap already existed in Providence prior to the pandemic and studies show that four months of learning loss requires two years of normal seat time to fully recover. She shared PPSD's RICAS data compared to state and other urban core districts where growth has been declining (a challenge across the country) as well as Boston's MCAS results from 2019 and 2021.

Dr. Jackson went over the steps of the TAP; priority targets versus targets; explained how much student growth is normal; how to unpack the targets to accelerate student learning, increase student and teacher attendance, and family engagement; world class talent; and efficient district systems. Ms. Jackson explained that she would not be going over the metrics, which were in the meeting packets, but wanted the Council to understand that it is not just the targets, but what needs to be done to get to the targets – planning, the strategic plan, and collaboration and support that PPSD gets from RIDE to ensure that the district is meeting its metrics and targets.

Member Beretta asked if PPSD plans to share student data with classroom teachers to show them where they are and where they are not being affective.

Dr. Jackson replied that the district is in the process of purchasing a Datawarehouse with the goal of having a real time data dashboard at the district, school, grade level, down to the classroom level.

Member Purtill cautioned against creating more mental health issues by putting too much pressure on students. He also expressed the need to continue offering programs that students have a passion for, such as art, music, sports, etc., to keep them motivated.

Member Callahan asked whether professional development will be provided to teachers and administrators around the utilization of the tool. She is also curious on whether professional development is being provided to all educators around the strategies that need to be in place to accelerate learning. She understands that the targets have remained the same and have been pushed out until the 2026-2027 school year but is wondering how the targets were adjusted year over year, and how the decisions were made.

Dr. Jackson replied that the data protocol process is already in place and teachers are currently using the data in their biweekly meetings. Feedback is also being gathered on how to design the tool and the dashboards around what will be most helpful in their classrooms. Acting Superintendent Montañez expressed that is a collaborative effort and that everyone in the building is getting trained around the MLL coaching as well as the SEI sessions that the district is doing. As far as the targets, Dr. Jackson replied that as illustrated on slide eight of the presentation, there was a decrease in student performance in school year 2018-2019 and where students fell in 2021. The district has been meeting with the committees as well as Dr. Wong and RIDE staff. This has been placed on a J curve and that growth can be slow at first, but if students start hitting the priority targets, growth will accelerate.

Member Davis asked if the district is tracking parent attendance at teacher/parent conferences. She also asked how the ESL certification reimbursement is working as she is hearing that getting upfront payment for classes is challenging.

Acting Superintendent Montañez replied that the district has been keeping track of attendance at teacher/parent conferences.

As far as reimbursement for ESL certification, Commissioner Infante-Green noted that teachers must enroll through the district at the institutions of higher education that the district partnered with, and that those institutions get paid directly by the district. As far as those teachers who were already taking ESL courses towards certification prior to the announcement of the incentive, they will get reimbursed up to \$8,000 once they finish the program and get their certification.

Member Gaines also stressed the need to not put too much pressure on students to accelerate.

Student Representative Asherov expressed the need to emphasize the engaged community section as students need to be invested into this plan as much as teachers do. A good starting point would be with data from the current SurveyWorks and reaching out to the least engaged students in a school to get a sense of how they are feeling.

### b. Mental Health and Social Emotional Supports

David Sienko, RIDE's Director of the Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports, introduced the RIDE team: Samantha Brinz, School Climate Transformation Specialist; Natalie Fleming, who is working on U.S. Department of Education grant for building capacity for mental health services in schools; Kristen Petrarca, Manager of SAMHSA Project AWARE; and Dr. Rosemary Reilly-Chammat, RIDE's School Health Coordinator, all of whom provide supports to schools.

Prior to turning the presentation over to the team, Mr. Sienko highlighted that since COVID, RIDE has been getting an unprecedented number of outreach calls from schools about children and faculty adjusting to returning to in-person learning. Schools are reporting some emotional challenges in students that they have not seen before and don't feel well-equipped to address.

The team provided an update on the efforts RIDE has underway to address school climate, mental or behavioral health, and social emotional learning (the Nathan Bruno Act, which passed the General Assembly in the spring of 2021; the \$2.5M School Climate Transformation Grant from the USDOE; the \$10M School Based Mental Health Services Grant from the USDOE over five years; and the \$18M SAMHSA Project AWARE Cohorts 1 and 2), to ensure all students are supported for meeting academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes.

### c. Rhode Island's Statewide Tutoring Strategy

Spencer Sherman, RIDE's Chief for Innovation, began the presentation by highlight that high-quality tutoring is one of the most impactful ways to accelerate student learning following COVID. Rhode Island districts, like districts across the nation, are prioritizing tutoring as they make plans to spend their federal stimulus dollars. To support this work, RIDE is offering technical assistance to district leaders in developing tutoring programs and developing a menu of contracts with high-quality tutoring providers that school districts can use. He stressed that research shows that tutoring is more effective than 85% of other education interventions that have been tried and equivalent to moving a student at the 35<sup>th</sup> percentile of the achievement distribution to the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile. Tutoring is a priority that came out of the LEAP Taskforce that the Commissioner led and which many districts have identified as part of their ESSER plans. RIDE is providing professional learning to districts on how to run tutoring programs and districts manage the tutoring program, either directly or via a provider. RIDE also contracted with Amplify Education to provide a workshop series and technical assistance to schools throughout the state, and has created a list of providers to help districts contract with high-quality tutoring providers.

### d. Recommendation of new member to the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees

Commissioner Infante-Green explained that one of the many responsibilities of the Council is to appoint members of the Board of Trustees to the state-operated schools from nominations made by the Commissioner. Today she is recommending Antonio Lopes to fill a current vacancy on the

required 11-member Board of Trustees of the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center. She shared that RIDE interviewed Mr. Lopes and attested that he possesses the leadership, strength, and commitment to advance the school’s goals and mission. She urged the Council to consider RIDE’s recommendation of his appointment.

e. Community Education Dashboards

Scott Gausland, RIDE’s Director of Data and Technology Services, presented the community dashboard, one of many dashboards that are available on RIDE’s Data Center. He explained that one of the things that RIDE strives for is to look at data that is available at different angles and attempts to find some insights that may have not been discovered before. RIDE typically breaks up the map by school districts, but this dashboard was developed with data from the U.S. Census Bureau, with options to break-up the data in many different ways. The dashboard looks at attendance rates and poverty level by community, which can be used by other state and local agencies, as well as mayors, town councils, and school committees, in working together to target services and support.

**6. ACTION ITEMS:**

- a. Approval of new member to the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees

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 recommendation of Antonio Lopes to the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees, as presented.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 0 members abstained, as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Michael Almeida, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

[Member Callahan departed the meeting at 7:04 p.m.]

**7. ADJOURNMENT:**

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Michael Almeida, 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, and 0 members abstained as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis,  
Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

[Member Callahan departed the meeting at 7:04 p.m.]

Meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.