



**Enclosure 2a**  
**August 17, 2021**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**  
**June 29, 2021**

Pursuant to Executive Order 20-75, this was a hybrid meeting.

**COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

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Board Chair Cottam welcomed everyone to the June 29, 2021, hybrid meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, as Council members attended in person, with the exception of Council Members Gaines and Davis, and members of the general public, who joined remotely. She declared a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**In-Person:** Michael Almeida, \*Milly Asherov, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Patricia DiCenso, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

**Remote Participation:** Jo Eva Gaines and Karen Davis

**Absent:** Amy Beretta

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

Public access was provided to attendees of this Zoom webinar in compliance with the Open Meetings Act and the provisions of the Executive Order; contact information was provided for those experiencing technical difficulties.

Chair Cottam introduced and welcomed Milly Asherov, a rising Senior at Classical High School, as the new Chair of the Student Advisory Council and Rhode Island's student representative on the Council. Milly has been on the Student Advisory Council for the last three years and has experience working in youth-led spaces in a variety of areas. She also participates in the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization, where she organizes events for Jewish teens locally, regionally and internationally, in areas from community service to sisterhood. She joined the organization in 2018 and is currently president of the New England Region.

Chair Cottam also recognized Paula Zhuang, a rising senior at North Providence High School (NPHS), as the new Vice-chair fo the Student Advisory Council. Paula is an aspiring pathologist, who belongs to the incredible P-Tech Program at her school that prepares students for a career in healthcare, and she expects to graduate with an Associate's Degree. She plays Varsity Tennis, runs Track and Field and also volunteers at The Miriam Hospital, tutoring students at the elementary and middle schools, and assists students at North Providence High School through SOS Peer Mentoring. She also serves as the Managing Editor of the NPHS Cougar Courier.

**1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA**

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

**VOTED:** That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the June 29, 2021, hybrid meeting

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

## 2. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES

### a. Minutes of the June 3, 2021, Meeting

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

**VOTED:** That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the minutes of the June 3, 2021, remote meeting

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

## 3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Infante-Green began by letting Council members know that the following day she would be joining Governor McKee and RIDOH Director Dr. Alexander-Scott to discuss what school will look like in the fall. She expressed that the past year and a half was the most challenging period that schools have faced and what kept things going were our incredible students and families who never gave up. Under the leadership of Governor McKee, Rhode Island

has made great progress in crushing COVID. Tomorrow, guidance will be released that will allow the State to mark its next chapter and RIDE will continue to work closely with the Governor's team, public health experts, school leaders, and families, to ensure schools are safe for students to return in person, come September.

Next, Commissioner Infante-Green reported that last week, the RI House of Representatives passed the budget for the upcoming fiscal year and the Senate is expected to take it up this week. Included in the budget are a few positions (Social Studies Specialist, World Language Specialist, and two School Spending Analysts), who will help ensure every Rhode Island student has access to a high-quality education. In addition to the positions, \$400,000 is included to provide Advanced Placement Exams at no cost to students with financial aid need, \$565,000 to help cover STAs and a \$160,000 increase to the RI School for the Deaf for operational expenses and to ensure a continued high-level of service for families.

Next, Commissioner Infante-Green shared her excitement about the summer learning opportunities that RIDE will be hosting through EnrollRI. So far, 2,600 seats have been filled, with 50% of them by students of color, a strong sign for equity of access on the platform. Some of the most popular courses are for enrichment and summer camps, which shows that students just want to "be kids" this summer. She emphasized that EnrollRI is not just about summer learning, as courses are also being offered throughout the school year.

Lastly, Commissioner Infante-Green shared that earlier in the day, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) conducted a virtual site-visit on the Statewide Longitudinal Data System grant. The purpose of the grant is to reduce disparities and outcomes across student groups by broadening access among local school district leaders on both traditional and more novel types of school improvement data.

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

Andrew Bramson, President and CEO of the College Crusade of Rhode Island and Member of the Central Falls Board of Trustees, spoke on behalf of the Board of Trustees who enthusiastically endorse the approval of the employment contract of Dr. Stephanie Downey Toledo, the recently appointed Superintendent of the Central Falls School District.

Written testimony in support of the Secondary School Principles, was also received and shared with Council members.

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

##### **a. Providence Update**

Dr. Khechara Bradford, Deputy Superintendent of Learning, began by giving a recap of what the district has done in the process of reimagining school – adopted the gold-standard core curricula; redesigned highest-needs schools; launched the dual-language middle school program to sixth-grade; expanded the career and technical education programs aligned to high-wage RI

industries; launched a ninth-grade Academy model at Alvarez High School; reduced teaching vacancies; doubled the percentage of teachers of color hired; required teacher participation in parent teacher conferences; built a rapid response tool and a team dedicated to resolving families' issues; enriched Parent Academy with new offerings, including distance learning support; provided every school leader with consistent one-on-one coaching; and radically increased job-embedded professional learning for teachers and leaders. She went on to share the plans for returning safely to full in-person learning in the fall, emphasizing that the upcoming school year will not be a return to normal, but rather the start of a new experience at PPSD. The Deputy Superintendent also shared the district's general plans for using the \$180M stimulus funds over the next two years, which include addressing the impact of COVID-19 on student learning and social-emotional needs of students and families, ensuring safety as related to the pandemic, and the need to raise expectations for all students.

Member Purtill praised the district for placing mental health counselors at the elementary schools and asked what the district is doing to reach out to families of students who are chronically absent, about the summer opportunities.

Dr. Bradford responded that the district is reaching out to families in various ways and promoting summer learning as only half-days with Fridays off, and that classes are engaging and hands-on.

Member Callahan praised the work and asked that at a follow-up meeting, information be shared on what type of programs and training are being offered, and where the district has been able to deploy counselors. She also expressed that it would be nice to hear the perspective of educators and community members at a future meeting.

Member Martinez also praised the decision to place mental health counselors at every elementary school.

Student Representative Asherov expressed that she is happy to hear about the mental health support. She suggested that the district really think about how to integrate them into the schools and making them more accessible. Some students may not feel comfortable reaching out as there is so much stigma around mental health.

Member Almeida added that the district needs to think about how to collect data to measure the success of these individual initiatives so that continuation of the successes can be justified.

Commissioner Infante-Green replied that all of the work has metrics tied to it and the goal is to share some of the things that have worked, with other districts.

Member Davis suggested that as the mental health counselors work with students this year, that what they learn should be shared with other health professionals throughout the State.

Members Gaines expressed that there needs to be an understanding among the PPSD faculty of the necessity and the purpose of these counselors.

Next, Jennifer Efflandt, Executive Director, Multilingual Learners, began her presentation by reminding Council members that in 2018, PPSD signed an agreement with the Department of Justice (DOJ), where the district was identified for several areas of non-compliance that needed to be addressed. One of the priority areas to be addressed was the home language survey data and record of screening reports, required by federal law, which were never collected for thousands of students. She went over other areas of non-compliance that the district addressed - doing away with the Consultation Model, which was the result of not having enough ESL/Bilingual certified teachers in the district; addressing the over 4,000 students who were not receiving ESL services; reducing the number of families who had waived out of MLL services from 1,000 to 103; addressing how those services are being provided, sheltered versus integrated classrooms; incentivizing teachers to become ESL or bilingual certified; investing in curricula resources to support MLLs; providing more professional development (over 19,000 hours as of May 2021) for teachers to better support MLLs, as well as for administrators (over 1,000 hours); providing teachers with Ellevation, a tool for teachers to be able to pull student reports as well as look at videos of master teachers teaching MMLs and learn about strategies; designating a MLL instructional coach to every elementary and middle school; and investing in Lionbridge Interpretation (in over 380 different languages), Kinvo Messaging (in over 50 languages) to better communicate with multilingual families - over the phone interpretation and textmessaging, and LET'S TALK!, to help families navigate the district's website. Ms. Efflandt ended her presentation by highlighting that eight out of the eighteen PPSD's high-school valedictorians and salutatorians are current or former MML students.

Member Callahan asked if the district is encouraging teachers to get an ESL endorsement or if full certification is preferable.

Ms. Efflandt responded that due to the language in the DOJ agreement, the district is required to have teachers fully certified, if they are teaching English language development.

Member Purtill asked that with the goal of 52 percent of teachers having to be fully certified by 2025, will that reach every single student if the goal is reached, and if the \$3,200 incentive is available to every teacher.

Ms. Efflandt replied that the answer is yes, as 33 percent of the district's students are MMLs. As far as the stipend, last year it was only available to teachers who had been displaced, but this year it is being expanded to other teachers who are interested. The district has budgeted for about 300 teachers who want to become certified - 24% of the district's teachers currently hold ESL/bilingual certification.

Member DiCenso asked if the coaches are being recruited from the teaching staff.

Ms. Efflandt replied that the coach positions have been opened to both internal and external candidates and a campaign was launched last year to recruit more external candidates for both coaching and teaching positions.

Next, Joe Rodio, Jr., Counsel to the Council, joined the table to address a question that was raised at the last meeting of the Council on what and whether the Council should exercise authority in the Providence School District, as it relates to the State takeover of the district. Attorney Rodio expressed that it is very important to be reminded that we don't come to this question this evening fresh, and as was shared in the memo shared with the Council in advance of the meeting, that the history is very important. He shared that about two years ago, the Council took action and voted to authorize the intervention and delegate certain authority that the Council has to the Commissioner. That was just the initiation of the legal process of the Crowley Act, for the intervention in the Providence Public School District. He also noted that under the Crowley Act and under that Order, there are certain more "day to day functions" that are explicitly placed in the purview of the Department. While the Council did authorize the delegation of certain authority that existed, that was unnecessary related to personnel items, management of the budget, and certainly under those items, as the Crowley Act always remained with RIDE, specifically, and under the collaborative agreement with the district. On a go forward basis, we really don't come to this question and the initiation of the intervention, certainly recapturing a broad authority to the Council for approval of certain decisions would be contrary to the language of that decision and order and the collaboration agreement, thus not recommended.

Member Callahan voiced that to the question that the Council is hearing from the General Assembly and the Oversight Committee, is that the Council abrogated its responsibility and some challenge to that, is the fact that the Council no longer retains that oversight authority that the Senate believes that the Council still holds.

Attorney Rodio answered that what occurred is a valid delegation and intervention process and that authority, to the extent that the Council had it, because RIDE and the Commissioner had it all along in many of the day to day operations of the district, a delegation was unnecessary in those cases, and trying to change them now is not advisable as there has been no abrogation of that authority. He noted that it has been a long process at this evening's meeting of the general oversight and what has been happening in the district, is an appropriate exercise of the Council's function.

Chair Cottam noted that moving forward, updates on Providence are being pulled from the Report of the Commissioner, to presentations by the Superintendent and district personnel.

b. Nomination of New Member to the Appeals Committee of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education

Chair Cottam began by explaining the function of the Appeals Committee that is set forth in statute (RIGL 16-13-4, 16-39-3 and 16-60-6(h)), and nominated Praticia DiCenso as a new member of the three member committee, replacing member Martinez.

c. Recommendation of New Member to the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees

Commissioner Infante-Green nominated Dr. Jesús Remigio to fill one of three current vacancies on the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees that must be assigned to deaf or hard of hearing individuals. She note that she had the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Remigio and that he possesses the leadership, strength and commitment to advance the school's goals and mission, and she urged the Council to consider RIDE's recommendation of his appointment.

d. Secondary School Regulations – Policy Principles

Commissioner Infante-Green framed the discussion by expressing her excitement to start the conversation on reimagining high school and improving the high school experience. She explained that RIDE regulations, coursework, and tests, are all a part of the high school experience, but they are not the entirety of what students experience through their high school careers. Lessons learned from last year are that many students had to work to support themselves and their families, while balancing the pressures of academic and adolescence, so there is a need to create a high school experience that ensures every student is seen, heard, and supported. She reminded Council members of the Educational Opportunity Audit (EOA) that RIDE presented to them last year, which RIDE has taken action on and that by the end of the 2021-22 school year, RIDE will have completed the EOA with every high school in the State. She shared that RIDE has been leading in ways that it has never led before, but it still has a lot more work to do to ensure that ALL students benefit from the advancements being made so that they can graduate prepared for their futures.

Next, Steve Osborn, provided an update on the work RIDE is leading to reimagine the high school and revise the secondary school regulations and who needs to be engaged to make this work a success. He explained that in Spring 2019, RIDE launched the XQ+RI Design Challenge, which authentically engaged educators, students, families, and community members to reimagine high school in the State and produce an action plan on how to create a high school experience that students believe in. He went over key themes of the EOA, highlighting that the current high school graduation requirements are not aligned to the bare minimum college admission requirements at the University of Rhode Island and Rhode Island College. He also stressed the need to make the high school experience more engaging for students as they many struggle to access relevant learning experiences that connect learning to their passions and goals. More needs to be done to support families in helping their children have a fair shot at reaching their full potential. Many students are being asked to choose between academics and economic security in order to support working parents and help care for family members, which are the top two non-academic reasons students drop-out of high school.

**6. EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

- a. Terms and Conditions of Employment By and Between the Board of Trustees of the Central Falls School District and the Recommended Superintendent, pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-46-5 (a)(1)

Chair Cottam asked Council members that since they received and reviewed the materials in advance, if they felt the need to go into Executive Session.

She then asked for a motion to go into Executive Session, and hearing none, she moved on to the Action Items portion of the meeting.

**7. ACTION ITEMS:**

a. Approval of the Revised Educator Certification Assessments

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

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the proposed changes to the certification tests and passing scores, as presented

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

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

**NAYS:** 0

**ABSTAINS:** 0

b. Approval of New Member to the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees

On a motion duly made by Lawrence Purtill and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the Recommendation of Dr. Jesús Remigio to the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees

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

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

**NAYS:** 0

**ABSTAINS:** 0



- c. Approval of Terms and Conditions of the Employment Agreement By and Between the Board of Trustees of the Central Falls School District and the Recommended Superintendent, pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-46-5(a)(1)

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 Terms and Conditions of the Employment Agreement By and Between the Board of Trustees of the Central Falls School District and the Recommended Superintendent, for a three-year (3) period commencing July 1, 2021 and terminating on June 30, 2024

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

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

**NAYS:** 0

**ABSTAINS:** 0

## 7. ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion duly made by Patricia DiCenso and seconded by Lawrence Purtill, 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, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Patricia DiCenso, Karen Davis, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

**NAYS:** 0

**ABSTAINS:** 0

Meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.