

Senate Study Commission  
Report on Improving  
Providence Schools



# About the Commission



Membership

Charge

Who Testified



# Commission Members

Senator Samuel D. Zurier - *Chair*

Senator Meghan Kallman - *Senate Appointee*

Senator Jessica de la Cruz - *Senate Appointee*

Zachary Scott - *Providence Public Schools*

Lisa Odom-Villella - *RI Dept. of Education*

Thomas Kerr-Vanderslice - *City of Providence*

Erlin Rogel - *Providence Public School Board*

Wobberson Torchon - *Principal, Mt. Pleasant High School*

Jeremy Sencer - *RI Federation of Teachers*

Nirva LaFortune - *PPSD Parent*

Marcus Tremblay - *Student, Classical High School*

Susan Lusi - *Ex Officio Member*

Steve Smith - *Ex Officio Member*



# The Commission's Charge & Its Importance

- Review the professional standards and the labor-management relationship for employees of the Providence Public Schools, particularly as defined by State law; and
- Develop recommendations that promote a rewarding professional environment and great school-based flexibility and accountability for the district's professional educators.

*This is important because high quality educators, working together,  
create powerful student learning.*





## People Who Testified (in order of appearance)

Jo Anderson Jr. - *Founder, Consortium for Educational Change*

Heather Peske - *President, National Council on Teacher Quality*

Nancy Mullen - *Retired Principal (Providence and Massachusetts)*

Paul Reville - *Founding Director, Harvard University Education Redesign Lab*

Evan Stone - *Co-Founder, Educators for Excellence*

John Papay - *Director, Brown University Annenberg Institute for School Reform*

Peter McWalters - *Former Commissioner, RI Department of Education*

Andres Alonso - *Former Harvard University Professor of Practice and CEO of Baltimore Public Schools*

Saul Rubinstein - *Director, Rutgers University Collaborative School Leadership Initiative*





# Overview

Vision for Providence Schools  
- Today's Reality

Shared accountability

- What it is
- Why it's important for teachers & kids

Commission's recommendations

A central graphic featuring five hands of different skin tones (light, medium, and dark brown) arranged in a circle, palms facing each other. The hands are set against a white background. Surrounding the hands are four geometric shapes: a purple semi-circle in the top-left, an orange L-shaped corner in the top-right, an orange L-shaped corner in the bottom-left, and a blue semi-circle in the bottom-right.

# The Vision: Shared Accountability

- Excellent education for every student
- Schools that attract and retain high quality, diverse teachers and other educators
- Educators who work together to educate students well
- Teachers have meaningful participation in decision-making
- Teachers are responsible for maintaining high standards within the profession

# Shared Accountability is Crucial for Kids

Teachers working together improves student learning

- Share best practices and data
- Offer informed insights
- Learning from one another

Every teacher needs to be good; but research shows that good teachers, working together, help students learn even more










**How do we get  
there in Providence?**



# Commission Recommendations

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1. Negotiate a teachers' contract that requires shared accountability
  2. Provide support and training
  3. Amend state law to remove legislative barriers
  4. Hold administrators accountable for collaborative decision-making
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# A Very Different Teachers' Contract – Look For:

- Decision-making at the school level and an approach to putting it in place, e.g., teacher leadership teams
- School-level accountability for continuous improvement – developing and acting on a plan in each school
- School-level control of professional development
- Differentiated teacher responsibilities and resulting compensation
- Shared accountability for supporting teachers who aren't performing and dismissing those who don't improve after support with expedited dismissal





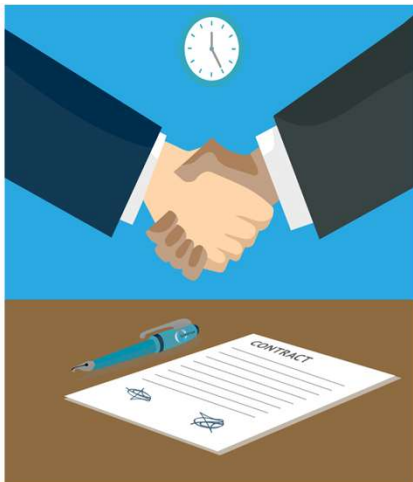
# A Promising Example – The Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership

## Contract Highlights:

- Joint commitment to collaboration
- School based shared decision-making through teacher leadership teams
- Streamlined dispute resolution and due process
- Best qualified staff chosen from internal and external candidates
- Reduced emphasis on seniority in teacher assignment and lay-offs
- Career ladder

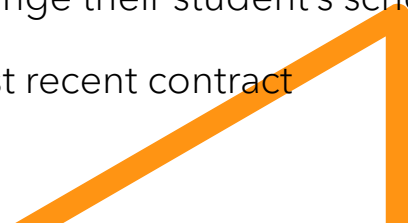


# A Promising Example – The Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership



Results:

- +160% school leaders of color and +54% teachers of color over 5 years
- +40% high school graduation rate 2017-21
- In 2020-21:
  - 9 of 12 schools decreased suspensions
  - 10 of 12 increased attendance
  - 10 of 12 decreased chronic absenteeism
- 69% of parents wouldn't change their student's school
- 96% of teachers ratified most recent contract



# Support and Training

- Collaboration and best practice
- Collaborative dispute resolution
- Time for planning, collaboration and professional development
- Time for working with families and community





# Amend State Law

Law	In order to:
Constitutional Amendment	Create legally enforceable right to education
RIGL 16-13-6 (specific to Providence)	Base teacher lay-offs on criteria in addition to seniority
RIGL 16-13-4 (specific to Providence)	Expedite due process when union and management agree performance is unacceptable
RIGL 16-7-29 (specific to Providence)	Allow negotiation of a career ladder that rewards teachers for taking on additional responsibilities
RIGL 16-7.1-5 (Crowley Act)	Permit State to require action if changes aren't made through negotiations

# Hold Administrators Accountable for Collaborative Decision-Making

- Provide training and mentoring in collaborative decision-making for building and district administrators
- Prioritize collaborative skills and behaviors in administrator evaluations
- Prioritize supporting site-based management in district administrator evaluations







# Today's System Does Not Serve All Students



*The system was never set up to serve all kids. It has very, very, reliably serviced about 30% - no matter what we do - and about 40% get through it - and about 30% don't do very well. And [that percentage rises to] 50% if you're [in] a targeted population. And that is not a new number. . . . We've been doing that consistently, and we are still doing that.*

Peter McWalters, Former Commissioner of Rhode Island

Every adult in Rhode Island owes it to Providence students to change this.





Questions?

Thank you!