

Pawtucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes



**Pawtucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes
July 28, 2026**

**Pawtucket School Department Administration Building
286 Main Street
Pawtucket, Rhode Island 02860
6:00 PM**

The meeting was called to order at 6:01PM.

I. Roll Call

Matthew Wildenhain, Juan Pablo Barrera (arrived at 6:08PM), James Chellel, Angeliz Rosa, Omar Reyes (arrived at 6:13PM), Kimberly Grant, and Joanne Bonollo were present.

II. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Joanne Bonollo

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A. July 1, 2026

Motion to approve: Kimberly Grant, James Chellel Second: Matthew Wildenhain

Yea: Matthew Wildenhain, James Chellel, Angeliz Rosa, Kimberly Grant, and Joanne Bonollo

Motion carries unanimously.

IV. Public Participation

Comments from the public are invited at this time. Persons wishing to speak must sign in with the Committee Chair before speaking prior to the commencement of the meeting.

The Committee is precluded from acting on items raised by Public Participation

Comments that are not already on the agenda. Public participation comments will be included in the meeting minutes.

Chair Bonollo set the time for comments at 3 minutes.

Connor Maddix, an alum of JMW, spoke about the planned merge of JMW with the new high school. He cited the community and environment of the small school, the dual focus of arts and academics, the wide variety of unique clubs and classes available to students, the opportunity for students throughout the state, and the removal of an arts education opportunity as reasons that the school should remain independent.

Amy Fitzpatrick, a Pawtucket resident and teacher at Curvin-McCabe Elementary School expressed concerns about the change in time for the school and stated that she feels disrespected as her opinion and the opinions of others were not considered. She stated that she spoke with many different parties and no one remembered being surveyed about the times, contrary to the report that surveys had been collected from the community. She gave an example of middle school students having to drop their elementary siblings off because of parent work schedules and the challenges faced by these families, especially at Curvin, which is a greater distance from the middle schools. She questions how the savings of 300k will come into effect with the extra hours of coverage for students. She also expressed concern with the last minute nature of the change and the challenges of changing schedules and appointments for families.

Robert Chiaradio, a resident of Westerly, addressed the committee regarding transgender athletes participating in girls sports, citing a Supreme Court ruling last month. He urged the committee to draft a policy to comply with Title IX and protect girls, citing concerns with male biology giving transitioned boys an advantage over girls as well as privacy concerns in bathrooms and locker rooms.

V. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Randy Buck updated the School Committee on the implementation of the Samuel Slater Middle School Redesign Plan and the district's elementary school start time changes. Superintendent Buck reported that the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approved the Slater Redesign Plan for implementation beginning in the 2026–2027 school year following an independent review that found the redesign met all evaluation indicators. While the approval included six implementation conditions, these were described as accountability measures to support successful implementation. District leadership has met with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) to review the conditions, which include professional learning, tiered implementation, long-range facilities planning, a redesign implementation project plan, progress monitoring, and ongoing reporting. The Superintendent emphasized that the district is now focused on implementing the redesign and establishing the systems necessary to achieve measurable improvements for students.

Superintendent Buck also provided an update on implementation of the elementary school start time changes previously approved by the School Committee. District staff have shifted from planning to implementation and are coordinating efforts to ensure a

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smooth transition for students, families, and staff. Before-school programming will be available at Curvin-McCabe, Agnes E. Little, and Potter-Burns Elementary Schools beginning at 8:00AM, providing one hour of supervision before the new 9:00AM. start time. The program will be offered at no cost to families, with breakfast available for participating students and priority enrollment for families demonstrating documented need. District staff are finalizing staffing and operational details while preparing comprehensive communications for families regarding registration, transportation, and program information. Transportation routes have been redesigned to support the revised bell schedule and are expected to eliminate approximately three bus routes, resulting in an estimated annual savings of \$360,000 while minimizing impacts on families. The Superintendent noted that multiple district departments and community partners have collaborated on the implementation effort and reported that no significant operational concerns have been identified that would affect the successful opening of the school year.

VI. Discussion

A. Samuel Slater Middle School Redesign – RIDE Quarter 4 Feedback and Implementation Update

Superintendent Randy Buck cited the Q4 feedback letter attachment formally closing the MOA, outlining the progress that the district has made. He reviewed district efforts to continue to improve and implement the redesign plan. The MOA has come to an end, but progress continues.

Chairwoman Joanne Bonollo requested that Superintendent Buck send his comments to the committee.

Chair Bonollo called Drew Echelson from RIDE to the stand for comment.

Mr. Echelson explained the process of redesign. Through the MOA and related communication, RIDE is seeking to communicate that they are trying to hone in on system level issues rather than focusing on individual schools. He stressed the importance of implementing improvement at the system level to provide greater support at the school level.

Robust discussion was had among members regarding the requirements of the plan, progress monitoring and data management, deadlines and reporting, progress and delays, and challenges at the district level. It was clarified that Superintendent Buck

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took this project over from a previous administration and has made significant improvements during his work on the proposal. Challenges were discussed, including academic infrastructure, facilities plans, and professional development.

Mr. Reyes requested a list of people on the district absence team and whether the teachers were involved, that the progress monitoring tool involve the teachers, and that a discussion about Slater Facilities be added to the next agenda. He stated that it would be beneficial for the chair and superintendent to have a conversation with the city.

Chair Bonollo stated that we have a deadline of March 1, 2027 to submit the facilities plan.

Kimberly Grant asked what the first day of school was, it was stated that the first day is 8/31 and she requested an update on the before and after school program by 8/15, prior to the next meeting.

B. RIDE Graduation Rate Methodology Update

Superintendent Randy Buck clarified the graduation rate statistic shared at the last meeting. We are federally required to use the 4 year cohort methodology for regular reporting. The figure shared in the last report did not use that method and instead looked only at the current senior class, which is not disallowed but is not reported as the official rate. The cohort rate should have been used in comparison to previous data. Moving forward, the district will only use that federally mandated methodology for public reporting. Internal calculations will continue to use alternate progress monitoring methods, but those will not be publicly reported. Deputy Chair Kimberly Grant expressed confusion with the use of multiple methodologies.

James Chellel expressed gratitude for the statistic being shared and knowing how many of our students graduated. Superintendent Buck reiterated that it is a helpful statistic to track but that care needs to be taken in sharing public data. Omar Reyes expressed concern with looking deceptive by reporting with different formulas.

Chair Joanne Bonollo called Drew Echelson back to the stand. He restated that the formula used to get the number of students that graduated this year took the number

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of graduates divided by the number of students that started the year. RIDE will publish the federally mandated numbers in the fall.

C. Pawtucket Phoenix Academy (PPA) - Update on Student Referral/placement and Transition back to home schools

Mrs. Michelle Depot presented as the Director of Student Services for PPA. PPA was created to support students who are struggling to manage behavior. They receive a therapeutic learning environment and academic support. The goal is for these students to return to their home schools. The program is now being limited to grades 6-12 for students with or without IEPs. She detailed the process of student placement and transition in and out of the PPA program. Mrs. Depot explained that the entire transition process has been revamped since she took on her role a year ago and the administration has been working hard to implement this new transition plan.

Deputy Chair Grant asked for clarification on the multi tier system and the significant timeline involved with data collection. It was clarified that to fully implement the intervention full time is needed. The process can move faster or slower depending on the individual student. Superintendent Randy Buck shared that administration is made aware of students that may have trouble and these students are monitored as the goal is to not displace the students. Deputy Chair Grant wants to confirm that the district is diligently working to support the teachers and the entire classroom due to limited staff and resources. It was clarified that when a student is in crisis, there is no hesitation and those individual students are given more immediate support. PPA also provides coaching for teachers.

Deputy Chair Grant and Angeliz Rosa requested that Mrs. Depot and Mrs. DeSilva return in October or November to share an update on the progress and programming. They also expressed gratitude for the presentation and the transparency.

Mrs. Rosa asked how many students returned to their schools, 10 students returned but one student was transitioned back to PPA. Mrs. Rosa also asked if there were followup meetings with the families after students returned to home schools, and these meetings had not been implemented. Superintendent Buck added some comments about the program and the process.

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The elementary classrooms formerly housed at PPA were transitioned to Winters and supplied with behavioral support staff. The transferred students all have IEPs and their needs will be evaluated based on those IEPs to determine whether they stay at Winters or return to their home schools. Parents are actively involved in the process. Omar Reyes requested that there be a regular report provided including the number of students entering the program. It was determined that every two months would be the appropriate amount of time. There are currently 55 students enrolled in the school.

VII. Discussion/Action

A. From Facilities:

1. Recommendation to Award the Joseph Jenks Junior High School and the Agnes E. Little Elementary School Parking Lot Improvements Project to Vinagro Materials LLC. in the amount of \$590,545

Motion to approve: James Chellel Second: Juan Pablo Barrera

Patrick Damour of Colliers indicated that Vinagro is a large company that completed work at TF Greene and Westerly Airports, given their size they should have the capacity to get the project done prior to the start of the school year.

Deputy Chair Kimberly Grant asked about a concern from a grandmother regarding students exiting the back and being in the parking lot. Patrick Damour said that he would be meeting with the principal to go over striping and arrangement.

It was also noted that the curbing on Ashton Street would be replaced by DPW in a 50/50 cost share between the district and the city. The city is also going to repair the Division Street curb.

Yea: All

Motion carries unanimously.

2. Quarterly Grease Trap Pumping and Cleaning Services Approval
RFP received no responses, there were two responses from an MPA request. The lowest bidder was Bay State. There are 8 schools that will all be cared for under the \$9,843.36 contract.

Motion to approve contract with Bay State Sewage Disposal: Matthew

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Wildenhain Second: Kimberly Grant, James Chellel

Yea: All

Motion carries unanimously.

B. Approval of BoysTown Contract

Omar Reyes recused himself as he has a personal relationship with a member of the board.

Lee Rabbitt stated that this contract would be working with Agnes E. Little and Joseph Jenks Middle School on title one parent and family engagement as well as with our homeless population. This contract will be funded through title funds.

Omar asked if the teachers have been looped in on the conversation. The school improvement team has determined the use of these funds and the request was made by Mrs. Moretti.

Motion: Juan Pablo Barrera Second: Matthew Wildenhain

Yea: All (Omar Reyes recused)

Motion carries 6-0.

C. Approval of CUNY Bridges Contract

This contract is supplemental materials for our MLL Students.

Deputy Chair Grant asked about companies, programs, or agencies that are within our area rather than using institutions in NY. Lee Rabbit clarified that we work closely with URI but they don't provide these materials.

Omar Reyes stated that almost every school in the district is below MLL Standards.

Rabbit stated that these materials are for newcomers, who are students that are new to the country. Chair Joanne Bonollo stated that for next year it would be good to research local alternatives, but due to the proximity to the school year we need to have materials in place.

Motion: Matthew Wildenhain Second: Juan Pablo Barrera

Yea: Matthew Wildenhain, Juan Pablo Barrera, James Chellel, Angeliz Rosa, Kimberly Grant, Joanne Bonollo

Nay: Omar Reyes

Motion carries 6-1.

D. District Accountability for Non-Union Administration, Directors, Principals

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Deputy Chair Kimberly Grant is following up on conversation had earlier in the year regarding accountability and making sure that policies that are in place are being used to stay in line with salaries and raise processes.

Superintendent Randy Buck stated that there are now regular meetings with administrators in which policies are reviewed and being implemented by principals. Deputy Chair Grant asked if evaluations have been completed by the Superintendent and if there is a scale for a raise. All principals and teachers are evaluated through RIDE, but central office staff doesn't fall under those RIDE evaluations. There was an internal process implemented by a previous superintendent that is not currently in practice.

Deputy Chair Grant further asked if there was an established process for giving raises to administrators. It was stated that raises are based on their contracts and distributed equitably rather than based on performance. Deputy Chair Grant asked if administrators would work harder if their raises were performance based, Superintendent Buck stated that there would be some concerns if raises were based on evaluations.

James Chellel stated that raises should be approved by the committee. Omar Reyes followed up on his comment by stating that since the committee can't make decisions on personnel, a policy should be implemented to standardize contracts and raises. He cautioned against making the policy too restrictive.

No formal action was taken on this item.

E. Superintendent Evaluation - Establishing Process and Timeline

Ms. Bonollo contacted RIASC several years ago regarding a superintendent evaluation. They recommended North Smithfield as having a good evaluation. The committee hasn't done an evaluation in quite a while, but it is something that should be done annually. According to the policy, the evaluation must be completed within 60 days of the end of the school year, which this year is 8/25/26. Chair Bonollo requested that the clerk collect evaluation forms and tabulate them. All members agreed to the process as discussed.

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Chair Bonollo requested that the committee hold a special meeting. The committee agreed to meet on Wednesday, August 12, at 6PM to discuss the results. Evaluations should be submitted by Friday, August 7th.

No formal action was taken on this item.

VIII. Subcommittee Updates

- A. Building - was cancelled for another month
- B. Facilities - There was a conversation about a lengthy list of issues at Baldwin, Colliers will be providing a comprehensive list to the committee. The roof at Curtis is being taken care of, there are no currently reported leaks. We are working with city arborists on tree trimming. There seem to be some roof leaks at Jenks and Matthew Wildenhain is working with the administration to try to get those issues rectified while the ceiling work is being done.
Angeliz Rosa asked about when we hired a roofing company at Curtis, it was stated that it has been an ongoing process. There is a plan to get a bid for repairs to the multi-purpose room.
- C. Finance - Omar Reyes asked about the audit, Joanne stated that it was being taken care of. The audit information will be on the next agenda.
- D. Policy - A meeting needs to be scheduled.
- E. Special Education - No update.
- F. Wellness - No update, but a back to school celebration is happening on Saturday 8/15 at Potter-Burns and Slater.

IX. Reports

- A. Budget Transfer Report
- B. Departmental Overtime Report
- C. Enrollment Report
- D. Monthly Distribution Report
- E. District Staffing Vacancy Report
- F. Work Order Report

Deputy Chair Kimberly Grant asked about the static TA vacancy number, Lee Rabbitt stated that there are 12 interviews scheduled this week and hires are expected.

Deputy Chair Grant requested communications regarding leadership movement in the district. She also asked if there have been any call backs to those who have been removed. Superintendent Randy Buck stated that communications would come in the coming weeks regarding the placements of assistant principals.

Angeliz Rosa asked about the amount of overtime in the summer, Superintendent Buck said that he would share the rationale.

X. Adjournment

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Motion to adjourn: Omar Reyes Second: Kimberly Grant

The meeting adjourned at 8:50PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emily Lotter".

Emily Lotter, School Committee Clerk