Pawtucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 13, 2026

Joseph Jenks Junior High School
350 Division Street
Pawtucket, RI 02860

Meeting called to order at 6:01PM

I. Roll Call

Matthew Wildenhain, Juan Pablo Barrera, James Chellel, Angeliz Rosa, Kimberly Grant, and Joanne Bonollo were present.

II. Pledge of Allegiance was led by Joanne Bonollo

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A. September 29, 2026

Motion to approve: Kimberly Grant Second: James Chellel

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

Abstain: Juan Pablo Barrera

Motion carries.

IV. Public Participation

Chair Joanne Bonollo set the public comment time limit to 3 minutes.

Sheila Duckworth, a music teacher at Fallon Elementary School, addressed the committee regarding support at Fallon. She also shared about passing time between classes and the difficulty that the lack of time provided.

Jodi Lamoie, a kindergarten teacher at Varieur Elementary School, addressed the committee regarding an incident that occurred on a school bus. She shared that a student suffered an assault and requested that a review of our contracts with First Student, specifically the job responsibilities of our bus monitors, be conducted. She expressed concern regarding the safety of the students on the buses and requested that work be done to improve the situation.

Deputy Chair Kimberly Grant asked when this incident occurred and Ms. Lamoie shared that it happened on Monday, September 28.

Jacqueline Lawler addressed the committee as a teacher from North Kingstown. She shared some of her background and that she now lives in Pawtucket. She expressed concern that the district's best isn't enough and is evident to be a systems problem. She recently learned that the vice principal position in her child's elementary school had been cut, with others also being cut, and that these cuts are being felt by the entire community.

Gail Ahlers, founder of the Empowerment Factory, addressed the committee regarding the Empowerment Factory. She shared a handout that explained past programs with the committee and explained the background and work of the organization.

V. Special Reports of Student Representatives

A. Charles E. Shea High School

There was no representative present from Shea.

B. William E. Tolman High School

Ashley Fernandes, a senior at Tolman who plans to study psychology at URI, shared updates on several student engagement and community initiatives at Tolman High School. Student government elections will be held to establish student leadership positions and class representatives from all four grade levels, promoting student voice and participation in school decision-making. Tolman and Shea High Schools will also host a unified Homecoming Dance to foster relationships, school spirit, and unity as Pawtucket's high schools work toward a shared future. On October 5, 2026, Tolman held its first blood drive of the school year in partnership with the Rhode Island Blood Center. The event welcomed 37 donors, resulting in 21 successful donations, while 16 donors were deferred. Five Tolman students assisted with outreach, registration, and coordination, and the JROTC program provided space and logistical support. Ms. Fernandes expressed appreciation to its students, families, staff, and community partners for their continued support of student success.

Chair Joanne Bonollo asked how things were going with no cell phones; Ms. Fernandes shared that it has provided improvement in student engagement and social interaction.

C. Jacqueline M. Walsh School for Performing and Visual Arts

Alex Greenman, a senior at JMW, reported on recent activities and upcoming events. On September 18, junior and senior theater students attended a student matinee of The Smuggler at the GAMM Theatre, continuing the school's partnership with the theater. The school held its Open House and annual Title I meeting on October 1, providing families with information about school expectations and available programs and services. On October 7, Superintendent Buck visited a Client Media Film Production class to

provide students with real-world insight for a public service announcement assignment focused on school attendance. Senior music major Makayla Baez was recognized on October 8 with the Annual Hispanic Heritage Impact Student Leader Award for her leadership and community contributions. The school also announced a flu vaccination clinic scheduled for October 19 and a college visit to New England Institute of Technology for juniors and seniors on October 20. Seniors have also received college presentations from representatives of the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and the Community College of Rhode Island. Teachers have begun non-evaluative instructional walkthroughs to identify classroom trends and inform school improvement efforts. Ms. Greenman expressed excitement for the school's participation in Pawtucket's first unified Homecoming Dance on October 17 and preparations for JMW's Prospective Student Open House on November 18, alongside visits to area middle schools to promote its five arts majors and educational opportunities. Upcoming events include the JMW Ultimate Student Competition on November 6 and the Prospective Student Open House on November 18, 2026.

Joanne asked how things were going with no cell phones; Ms. Greenman shared that she appreciates the communication with other students.

Chair Bonollo called a brief recess at 6:25; the meeting was called back to order at 6:26

VI. Discussion

A. Building Futures Presentation

Megan Havrilla of Colliers introduced project partners Building Futures representatives Shelby Mack and Sydney Healy. They presented the organizational mission to address the construction industry's workforce needs by connecting Rhode Islanders with Registered Apprenticeship opportunities and family-sustaining careers. The presentation highlighted its pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship readiness programs, which provide classroom instruction, hands-on training, industry credentials, career placement, and ongoing support. Building Futures also offers specialized programs for young adults and incarcerated individuals, as well as recovery and mental health services for construction workers. The presentation reviewed the organization's partnership with the City of Pawtucket, Colliers, Shawmut, and the Rhode Island Building & Construction Trades Council through its Apprentice Utilization Program, which seeks to ensure that registered apprentices perform at least 15% of total labor hours on participating projects. Regarding the Pawtucket Unified High School project, presenters reported that apprentices had performed 15% of electrician labor hours and 16% of carpenter labor hours on foundation

work, including work completed by Building Futures graduates. The program supports apprentice placement, monitors project progress, and helps contractors meet participation goals. The presentation concluded by emphasizing the importance of creating career opportunities for Pawtucket residents and continuing partnerships to expand apprenticeship opportunities on the high school project and future construction projects.

Matthew Wildenhain asked how many apprentice hours are gained through the three year Building Futures program. Ms. Mack shared that the program is pre-apprenticeship but the program provides an advantage upon graduation.

James Chellel asked about the CTE signing day and whether an agreement will be needed. It was clarified that this would be complementary to existing CTE programs and the signing day referenced was a celebration of students signing employment contracts.

Angeliz Rosa asked about placement and whether students involved can move around before they choose a pathway. It was clarified that these programs can be tailored to various ages and that they allow for exploration.

Mr. Wildenhain asked what the placement rate was and Ms. Mack shared that they have a nearly 100% graduation rate due to a rigorous vetting process. She also shared that a significant majority of graduates do move on to apprenticeship programs.

Chair Joanne Bonollo followed up on her questions from the building committee regarding Pawtucket student involvement in the program. She requested numbers over the last 6 years regarding how many jobs were provided to Pawtucket residents. Ms. Mack committed to share this data by the next meeting. Chair Bonollo also asked how often they visit Pawtucket high schools. Ms. Mack shared that they are willing to be there as often as is desired. Chair Bonollo requested that Ms. Mack connect with the superintendent to bring programs into the school.

Juan Pablo Barrera expressed gratitude for the presentation and the work that Building Futures is doing. He asked who the program is open to; it was clarified that both students and parents are welcome to the program. He also followed up on Chair Bonollo's request for statistics, adding that he would like to see long term information.

Chair Bonollo asked how Building Futures market to students. It was shared that there was a lot of word of mouth marketing as well as social media.

B. New High School Update

J.R. Roberts from Shawmut shared photo updates and commentary from the construction site.

Matthew Wildenhain asked about the roofing schedule and what was being done to

ensure that the membrane is protected. It was clarified that there will be slip sheet and plywood, with additional insulation installed in high-traffic areas. Mr. Wildenhain also asked if there would be platforms built around the HVAC units to prevent future work being done requiring ladders. It was clarified that the majority of the units are accessible from ground level and won't require ladders. It was also shared that there will be reinforced walkway paths installed.

C. Drainage Presentation

Megan Havrilla introduced Jonathan Levi and Eric Wilhelmson to share the drainage plans for the site. Mr. Levi shared that there is no relation between the Baldwin drainage issues and the new high school drainage. He went on to share the many systems being planned and installed for drainage on the site, including catch basins, permeable pavement, underground retention systems, and artificial turf fields and collection basins.

Matthew Wildenhain asked how durable the permeable pavement is. He also asked about the catch basins and their placement given the elevation. It was clarified that the site grades away from the building toward the street. It was also shared that the permeable pavement is asphalt but it has a lot of holes in it to allow for drainage. It is maintained in the same way as regular asphalt and holds up in the same way.

James Chellel asked about drainage for the athletic fields. It was shared that the fields are permeable and the water collects under the fields.

Chair Joanne Bonollo asked about the material of the grids under the fields; it was shared that they would all be PVC. It was clarified that she was asking about the grates; it was shared that any grates would be cast iron.

D. Outbuildings for Athletic Fields

Jonathan Levi shared plans for a possible concession stand facility for an add/alternate containing bathrooms and a concession area with food preparation equipment. This facility tucks underneath the stadium. It was also shared that there would be ample space between the security gates for food trucks to park.

Matthew Wildenhain asked about the add/alternate status and about the bathroom venting. There is confidence that the exhaust will be well diluted in the outdoor air, causing no issues.

James Chellel asked about the location of the concession window; it was clarified that there are two. There is one large window planned for the front, facing the school, and a smaller window to the side. Mr. Chellel further asked about traffic flow; it was clarified that the design was started by putting the bathroom plumbing together for economy's

sake and that there was a large pavement area for queuing.

Mr. Wildenhain expressed gratitude for Megan Havrilla and Rose Gaitan of Colliers sitting with him and discussing alternate locations for restrooms. There was discussion about alternative restroom options.

E. PSD RICAS Assessment and Accountability Scores

Joanne expressed gratitude to all of the people present for this item. She read the core beliefs of the Pawtucket School Committee.

Superintendent Buck presented the Pawtucket School Department's 2026 RICAS assessment and accountability results, reviewing districtwide achievement trends, school-level performance, state accountability designations, and the district's plans for improvement. Districtwide proficiency declined from 2025 to 2026, with English Language Arts (ELA) decreasing from 18.5% to 16.7% and mathematics decreasing from 17.8% to 15.9%. Results varied across schools and student subgroups, with particular concerns regarding students with disabilities and multilingual learners. Nathaniel Greene and Potter-Burns elementary schools improved in both subjects, while Samuel Slater Middle School demonstrated continued improvement in ELA.

The presentation reviewed the state's 2026 school accountability ratings, which included five one-star schools, six two-star schools, and five three-star schools. Six schools were identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI): Charles E. Shea High School, Fallon Memorial Elementary School, Joseph Jenks Middle School, M. Virginia Cunningham Elementary School, Samuel Slater Middle School, and William E. Tolman High School. Lyman B. Goff Middle School exited CSI status, while Fallon Memorial and Cunningham were newly identified. Despite Goff's exit, its proficiency results declined in 2026, indicating a continued need for academic improvement.

Superintendent Buck outlined the district's strategic priorities, including strengthening grade-level Tier 1 instruction, improving curriculum implementation and evidence-based literacy and mathematics practices, supporting principals through instructional coaching and professional development, and expanding targeted interventions for students who need additional assistance. Additional priorities included improving attendance and student engagement, expanding after-school and summer learning opportunities, strengthening family and community partnerships, recruiting and retaining qualified educators, improving facilities and operations, and aligning fiscal resources with district goals. The presentation concluded with a commitment to communicating assessment results and accountability changes transparently to families and the community and

reporting progress toward improved student outcomes.

Matthew Wildenhain asked about the 6 schools in csi; it was clarified that Fallon Elementary School and Cunningham Elementary School moved from ATSI to CSI. Mr. Wildenhain further asked how many schools are approaching redesign. Superintendent Buck shared that Goff Middle School was removed from CSI status; he also shared that up to 4 schools may enter redesign next year if the status remains unchanged.

Deputy Chair Kimberly Grant asked what was done to try to prevent ATSI schools from entering CSI status that didn't work. Superintendent Buck shared that there have been clearer priorities established regarding instruction and attendance. They have also implemented leadership changes. Superintendent Buck shared that these efforts were not enough and that they need to be greater. Deputy Chair Grant further asked clarification on why more wasn't done to promote supports in schools and stressed the importance of listening to teachers and administrators asking for TA positions. Superintendent Buck shared that a significant challenge has been identifying necessary budget cuts and the impacts that those cuts have on the district. Deputy Chair Grant expressed concern about only knowing how many positions are vacant and not knowing when people are only out on leave, what happens when those educators are on leave. She expressed the importance of ensuring that the district has directors that will advocate for their schools.

Deputy Chair Grant asked about results from Pawtucket Phoenix Academy and whether those results are counted in their home schools. It was suggested that since PPA is housed in Winters those students are counted at Winters. Superintendent Buck committed to follow up on that question.

James Chellel asked if there was someone in the district who oversees the curriculum given the improvement at Agnes Little Elementary School. Superintendent Buck shared that the directors have been collaborating with other districts that have successful systems and are working to bring those back to Pawtucket.

Mr. Chellel also asked if these scores can be shared quarterly to be able to track performance; it was clarified that this is an annual report. This is an annual test, so there isn't data that exists during the interim. It was clarified that there is a tiered progress monitoring data system that is accessible throughout the year. This process has been newly created on recommendation from RIDE.

Mr. Chellel expressed that the school committee and administration needs to be committed to improvement and monitoring of our schools to ensure continued improvement.

Chair Joanne Bonollo asked about whether our curriculum is working. Superintendent Buck clarified that the curriculum is not being effectively implemented, and that it is his job to ensure that this is being monitored. It was also shared that Savvas math was not a good curriculum and asked whether there were available supplements.

Superintendent Buck shared that there is emphasis being placed on tier 1 instruction. There are superintendent learning walks being planned to determine gaps that need to be addressed, especially in special education and MLL programs.

Deputy Chair Kimberly Grant shared that she doesn't blame any one person for the situation, but that as a whole the district needs to listen to the teachers from the principal level all the way up to the superintendent. The teachers are in the schools with the kids every day and know what is working and not working.

Joanne called a 3 minute recess to allow people to leave. The meeting was called back to order at 8:28PM.

F. Tone Policing of School Committee Members

There was no discussion on this item.

VII. Discussion/Action

Motion to move item B before item A: Kimberly Grant Second: Matthew Wildenhain and James Chellel

Yea: all

Motion carries unanimously

B. Taekwondo MOA

Dr. Mark Andrade presented that this MOA will provide a 4 week Taekwondo program in schools. Master Park, owner of the Rhode Island Taekwondo Center, was introduced to answer questions. He shared an overview of the layout of the class and the learning outcomes at the request of Chair Joanne Bonollo.

James Chellel expressed appreciation for this program. Angeliz Rosa and Juan Pablo Barrera echoed Jim's appreciation. Deputy Chair Kimberly Grant expressed gratitude for the physical education teachers for committing to give up their time. She also expressed gratitude to the parents for supporting their children.

Matthew Wildenhain asked how Master Park felt that the program went last year; it was shared that the arrangement exceeded expectations. It was also clarified that instruction in Pawtucket runs about 40 minutes during the school day in accordance with the existing school schedule with one class per week.

Motion to approve: Juan Pablo Barrera Second: Angeliz Rosa

Yea: all

Motion carries unanimously.

A. Virtual Instruction Day Plans

Dr. Mark Andrade presented the plan for the 2026-2027 Virtual Instruction Day proposal to be submitted to RIDE. He emphasized a revision to the Professional Development clause suggested by the PTA.

Deputy Chair Kimberly Grant asked if the packets for special ed instruction have been provided to families in case of a virtual day. It was clarified that these packets will be provided in advance of a virtual day and that there may be hesitance to make the effort to do this work in advance of approval. James Chellel echoed that these questions should be answered prior to this plan being approved. This item was continued with committee members requesting that packets for special ed students be provided to the students.

C. Tolman Mass Insight Contract Approval

This is a contract to continue support of Tolman High School's related to their CSI Status, particularly around Tier I instruction. This contract was brought forward by the Tolman instructional team, reflecting the school's assessments of its needs. This contract includes up to 4 on-site visits per month, support for departmental collaborative planning, instructional walkthroughs, and classroom data analysis. This support builds the capacity of our own teacher leaders rather than relying on an outside entity to identify problems. The total cost of this contract is not to exceed $62,000 extended through June 30, 2027, funded through Tolman's CSI allocation.

Matthew Wildenhain asked clarification on whether this company already works with the district; it was clarified that they do work districtwide and that this contract is for specific support for Tolman.

Deputy Chair Kimberly Grant asked if the school staff had been consulted on whether this was something that the money should be going toward. It was clarified that this contract is being supported by CSI funds and that administrators and staff had brought this contract forward. There was question on whether that communication actually happened due to disagreement from educators that were present.

Chair Joanne Bonollo requested that this item be continued to allow for conversations to be had between school leadership and educators.

James Chellel asked if there was staff in house that could do this work; it was clarified that this position may not be fundable by CSI funds.

Mr. Chellel told Superintendent Buck that he needed to hold people accountable for these miscommunications.

Angeliz Rosa echoed Mr. Chellel's comments and shared that better systems are needed.

Chair Bonollo asked if the contract went before legal; it was confirmed that it had.

Deputy Chair Grant asked why school leadership teams don't come to present contracts.

VIII. Committee Member Community Updates

Angeliz Rosa expressed gratitude to the chair for presenting the core beliefs.

Matthew Wildenhain expressed gratitude to the community for voting in the primary.

James Chellel and Deputy Chair Kimberly Grant echoed Mrs. Rosa and Mr. Wildenhain.

IX. Possible Executive Session

A. The School Committee may vote to go into executive session for discussion and/or action pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws §42-46-4 regarding those items of business exempt from open meetings under Rhode Island General Laws §42-46-5:

1. Pursuant to RIGL § 42-46-5(a)(1) a discussion related to the job performance of a District employee.
2. Pursuant to RIGL § 42-46-5(a)(2) a discussion pertaining to collective bargaining agreement of Local 930.

At the request of legal counsel, item A1 was passed.

Motion to Enter Executive Session: Matthew Wildenhain Second: Kimberly Grant

Yea: All

Motion carries.

Open session entered recess at 9:15PM.

Juan Pablo left before executive session.

X. Return to Open Session

Open session was called back to order at 10:03PM.

A. Roll Call

Matthew Wildenhain, James Chellel, Angeliz Rosa, Kimberly Grant, and Joanne Bonollo were present.

Juan Pablo Barrera was absent.

B. Reporting out any votes subject to disclosure pursuant RIGL § 42-46-4.

1. Motion to seal Executive Session minutes: Matthew Wildenhain

Second: Kimberly Grant

Yea: All

Motion carries unanimously.

2. Motion to adjourn closed meeting: James Chellel Second: Matthew Wildenhain

Yea: all

Motion carries unanimously.

XI. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Kimberly Grant Second: Matthew Wildenhain

Yea: all

Motion carries unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 10:04PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Lotter

Emily Lotter
Pawtucket School Committee Clerk