

Morgan Dimaio

From: Catone, Keith <kcatone@rwu.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2023 8:02 PM
To: Morgan Dimaio
Subject: Re: [EXT] Special Senate Legislative Commission to Study Providence Public Schools

Hello Morgan,

Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend the final in-person listening session tomorrow. Please accept the written comments below about areas I believe are related to the promotion and support of a rewarding professional environment and greater school-based flexibility and accountability for PPSD educators. These thoughts are based upon my past experiences as a classroom teacher, teacher educator, education researcher, and education justice advocate and organizer.

Teacher Leadership

Any rewarding professional environment for teachers must include supports for teacher leadership and autonomy. These supports should include incentives for teacher-led innovation and reward/celebrate teaching practices that integrate best practices to advance deeper learning, social and emotional well-being among students *and* teachers, and equitable whole-child assessments. There are a lot of new and exciting developments across the field in these areas. Teachers need to be supported (with time and compensation) to develop their own understanding and knowledge of new practices to implement in classrooms. Those teachers who express interest and promise to play leadership roles in efforts to advance and enhance instructional initiatives should be supported and rewarded accordingly.

Professional Development

More broadly, all PPSD educators should be afforded professional development and supports to enhance instruction. In addition to the areas named above, I believe that students would benefit from teachers who are supported to implement project-based learning, culturally responsive & relevant curriculum/pedagogy, effective strategies for multilingual learning/learners, and instructional practices that work for students with disabilities and/or learning differences. I would further encourage investments in smaller class sizes, increased classroom push-in supports, and comprehensive wrap-around services for students and families, all of which are moves supportive of teachers and the teaching profession by enabling them to focus most intently on improving teaching and learning.

Especially at secondary levels, PPSD educators would benefit and learn a lot from youth-led and student-directed professional development that leverages the expertise and wisdom of the Providence youth development and leadership community. Providence has a rich ecosystem of community-based youth leadership organizations from which much can be learned. Organizations like the Alliance of RI Southeast Asians for Education (ARISE), Youth In Action, Young Voices, Providence Student Union, Providence Youth Student Movement (PrYSM), STEAMBox RI, New Urban Arts, Youth Pride Inc., Community Music Works, AS220 Youth, and more, are an underutilized resource for the ultimate improvement of Providence Public Schools. Investing structures and mechanisms for organizations like these, and the youth who are supported by them, to share their wisdom and expertise can greatly enhance teaching practice and develop much needed connections between teachers and the Providence community.

Connections to Students, Families, and Community

Given the work that I lead at the Center for Youth & Community Leadership in Education (CYCLE), I would further emphasize the importance of structures and supports to strengthen teacher-student, teacher-family, and teacher-community connections and relationships. There is plenty of research that underscores the importance of these connections, but they do not happen without intentional focus and supports. I would encourage the exploration of proven models and practices like Parent-Teacher Home Visiting, Community Schools, student-led conferences, Academic Parent Teacher Teams, etc., that are designed to develop and deepen connections between teachers, students, families, and communities. Authentic connections and deeper relationships lay an important foundation for stronger accountability.

CYCLE's Schools & Communities Organizing for Racial Equity (SCORE) project is predicated upon a belief in the power of community-based accountability in education. In Providence, an intergenerational community research has developed a set of educational equity indicators focused on the priority areas of instructional equity, student mental health & social emotional learning, communication with families, and school culture & restorative practices. Leveraging and investing in partners like CYCLE and projects like SCORE can help develop community-driven and data-informed strategies for educational improvement, ultimately building supportive professional environments that are responsive and accountable to community-defined priorities and needs.

Thank you for inviting these reflections. If any members of the commission would like to follow-up with me to learn more or ask questions, my contact information is below.

Keith C. Catone, Ed.D. | he, him, his

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From: Morgan Dimaio <mdimaio@rilegislature.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, October 10, 2023 11:03 AM

To: Catone, Keith <kcatone@rwu.edu>

Subject: [EXT] Special Senate Legislative Commission to Study Providence Public Schools

Dear Keith:

The Rhode Island Senate has organized a study commission with a charge to:

- 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 greater school-based flexibility and accountability for the district's professional educators.

To ensure that the voice of the community is heard, the Commission has scheduled three listening sessions to take place in Room 313 of the State House, 82 Smith Street, at 5:00 p.m. on the following dates:

Tuesday, October 10

Tuesday, October 17

Thursday, October 26

We would like to hear from you and members of your organization in person if convenient. If not, we welcome your written comments forwarded to policy analyst Morgan DiMaio at mdimaio@rilegislature.gov

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,



Morgan E. DiMaio
Policy Analyst

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