

ANGÉLICA INFANTE-GREEN
Commissioner



Providence Public School District
Office of the Superintendent
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www.providenceschools.org

DR. JAVIER MONTAÑEZ
Superintendent

PPSD Testimony Opposed to HB7271
May 7, 2026.
TO: House Education Committee

Dear Chair Joseph McNamara and members of the House Education Committee,

I write in **opposition of HB7271**, which would prohibit the Providence Public School District (PPSD) from terminating participation in the urban collaborative known as UCAP without the approval of the Providence School Board.

If passed, the bill would create a \$1.9 million budget gap during an already challenging budget year at PPSD. This is equivalent to cutting an additional 20 staff members on top of the reductions and cuts the District is looking to make to balance the budget.

Most importantly, however, this bill would force PPSD to continue a partnership with UCAP, where outcomes are weaker than what is being achieved at PPSD middle schools.

PPSD's planned transition would only affect about 40 UCAP students in 7th grade, and there is a clear plan in place to support each and every one of them.

What is UCAP?

The Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program, or UCAP School, is an independent public middle school serving around 130 students in grades 7-8. PPSD partnered with UCAP along with several other school districts, including Pawtucket, Cranston, East Providence, and Central Falls, to create a collaborative model to provide an alternative school setting for students who may need additional support.

However, a lot has changed over the years prompting all other school districts (Pawtucket, Cranston, East Providence and Central Falls) to either stop participating or drastically reduce their involvement in UCAP. **Today, Providence is effectively standing alone** forcing the District to bear the administrative and operational weight that becomes increasingly difficult to justify.

Why does PPSD want to end their partnership with UCAP?

Over the last three years, PPSD has been the sole remaining member of the urban collaborative. Superintendent Javier Montañez has consistently used his role as the only Board member to

express concerns and explicitly warned UCAP leadership that without the return of other school districts PPSD could no longer single handedly sustain this collaborative.

In December 2025, the Providence Public School District officially notified UCAP and the Providence School Board President about the end of participation, per *R.I. Gen. Laws §16-3.1-5*. (Appendix A)

PPSD is not the first school district to withdraw from UCAP. Superintendents from Pawtucket, East Providence and Cranston have been able to separate from the partnership previously with no legislative intervention. PPSD is following the same precedent to terminate participation.

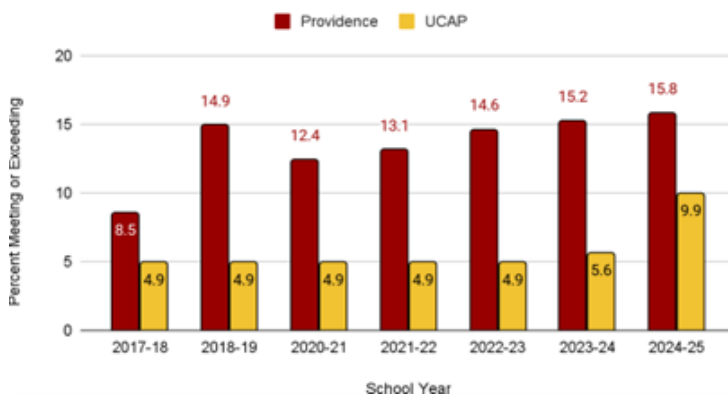
Furthermore, a comprehensive review of the UCAP School further supports the District’s decision. (Appendix B) Overall, it found that PPSD is better suited to serve UCAP students.

PPSD Students Outperform UCAP Students Academically

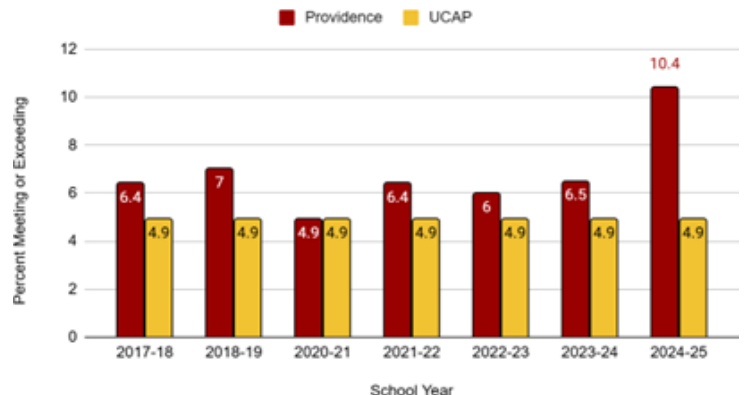
In both RICAS English Language Arts (ELA) and Math, the District has seen consistent upward trends in proficiency compared to UCAP’s results which have remained largely flat and near zero in recent years.

This is despite the fact that PPSD serves a higher percentage of high-need students, including those with disabilities, English language learners, etc. (Appendix C)

Providence and UCAP: RICAS ELA (GR 8)

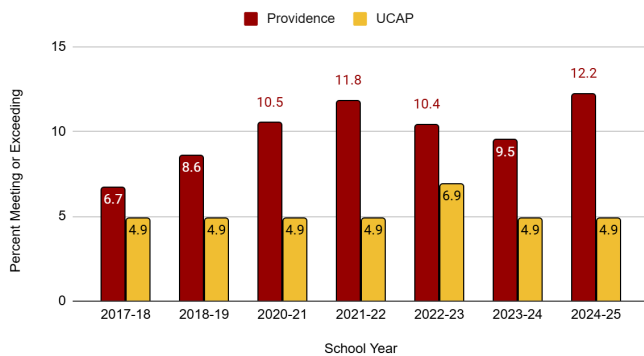


Providence and UCAP: RICAS Math (GR 8)

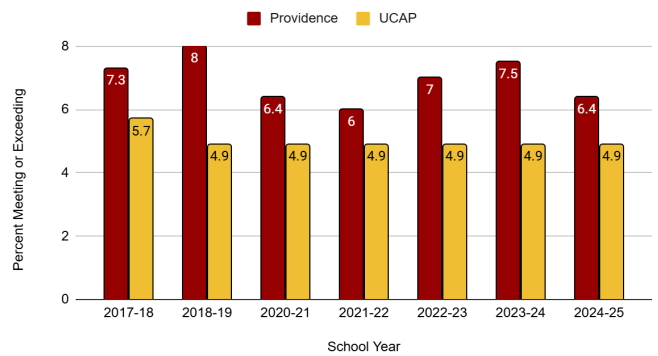


Since the transition will mainly impact 40 students in 7th grade, we also took a closer look at their RICAS scores and found similar trends.

Providence and UCAP: RICAS ELA (GR 7)

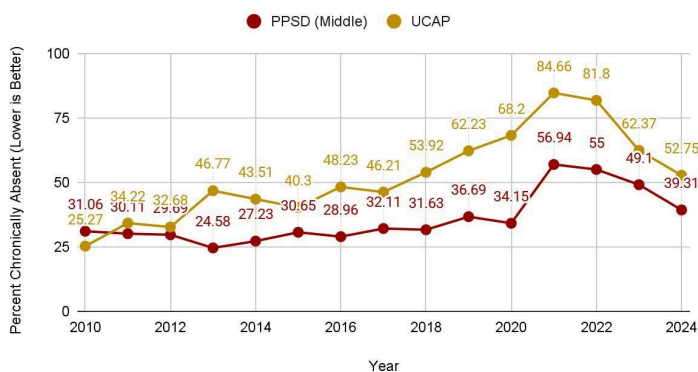


Providence and UCAP: RICAS Math (GR 7)



More Students in the Classroom at PPSD

PPSD (Middle) and UCAP



Students can't learn if they aren't in class. More than half (53%) of UCAP students are chronically absent compared to 39% across Providence middle schools.

UCAP Not Updating Student IEPs

One of the most alarming discoveries our review found was that UCAP was not reviewing or updating students' Individualized Education Plans, or IEPs, on a yearly basis as required by federal law, 34 C.F.R. § [300.324\(b\)](#).

We've seen cases of students returning to PPSD in high school with the same IEP they started UCAP with in 7th grade. That's two years where IEPs were not updated or reviewed.

This directly impacts whether students receive the support they are entitled to as a student's needs can improve, worsen or shift entirely over a school year.

UCAP Sends Struggling Students Back to PPSD

Every year, UCAP returns a handful of students mid-year after determining they are not successful in its program. In the third quarter of the school year, UCAP requested to transfer four 8th graders mid-year to PPSD. Last school year (SY24-25), another 4 students transferred back to PPSD mid-year.

PPSD remains committed to serving every student regardless of circumstance. Our District does not walk away from students and are prepared to meet the needs of the students currently enrolled at UCAP.

High Cost for Little Results

Given the significant amount of investment in this small program – estimated to be ~\$2.9M in FY26 across state and district contributions for 130 students – we would expect the same or better results for these students. Instead, we have seen worse results.

By bringing students back to the district we will be able to use funding into more direct student services like academic interventionists and social/emotional support instead of extra administrator and support staff.

Moreover, passing HB7271 would create a \$1.9 million budget gap that would be equivalent to cutting an additional 20 staff positions during an already challenging budget year with cuts and reductions.

What is PPSD's plan for UCAP students?

Bringing UCAP students back to Providence public schools will allow PPSD to deliver stronger instructional alignment, ensure continuity of services, and provide the stability needed to improve attendance and academic outcomes.

PPSD's plan will allow 8th grade students to transition into high school like usual. The remaining 40 UCAP students in 7th grade will be kept together as a cohort at Roger Williams Middle School.

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PPSD will reinvest the UCAP funding towards dedicated academic interventionists, who will specifically support students who are over-age or under-credited. These specialists will provide targeted support to ensure UCAP students do not fall through the cracks during the transition.

The cohort will also have additional social emotional support, including a school social worker and counselors.

During the transition period, PPSD also plans to re-assess and update IEPs to ensure every student is getting the services they need and deserve.

By ending PPSD's partnership with UCAP, the District is bringing students back into our schools where we can provide wrap-around support UCAP leaders themselves have repeatedly told the District they are not able to offer.

Despite having to navigate a tight budget, this decision should be centered around making sure students, especially those who need the most help, have access to the strongest academic environment to succeed.

I believe that place is Providence Public Schools for UCAP students, and we have a plan to ensure these 40 students are supported throughout the transition.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the students of Providence and for your consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Javier Montañez". The signature is stylized with a large, circular flourish at the end.

Dr. Javier Montañez
Superintendent

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Appendix A

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December 30, 2025

The UCAP School
75 Carpenter Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Ms. Prentiss,

Please be advised that the Providence Public School District (the "District") hereby provides formal notice of its intent to withdraw from its partnership with the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program (hereinafter "UCAP"), effective June 30, 2026, pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-3.1-5(b).

The District is now the sole remaining member of UCAP following the withdrawal of all other participating school districts. As a result, UCAP's core purpose and statutory intent have been effectively nullified. Under R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-3.1-11, UCAP was established to enable multiple school committees to engage in cooperative efforts to provide alternative education programs and related services for students achieving limited success in traditional settings. With only one district remaining, the statutory framework for a collaborative is not satisfied.

This decision follows a comprehensive review of program utilization and fiscal impact. Given the limited number of students served and the substantial financial investment required to maintain this arrangement, the District has determined that it can provide services of equal or greater quality within its own schools. Accordingly, continued participation in this partnership is neither educationally necessary nor financially prudent.

The District also notes governance and compliance concerns. UCAP is currently listed as a Rhode Island non-profit corporation on the Rhode Island Secretary of State's website, with the undersigned, Superintendent Javier Montañez, listed as its sole Officer (President) and Director. It is the District's understanding that UCAP's 2025 Annual Report was initially rejected by the Secretary of State because it lacks the minimum three (3) directors necessary to exist as a non-profit corporation under R.I. Gen. Laws § 7-6-23. Although UCAP certified that it would amend its bylaws and vacancies with superintendents from participating districts, it does not appear that either has been accomplished as of this writing.

We request that UCAP take all steps necessary to facilitate an orderly transition. Specifically, please coordinate to meet with the District regarding the development of a transition plan in the first week of January 2026 to include:

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- Communication with students, families, and staff members
- Process for students to enroll in another Providence school
- Other items that are necessary to close out the agreement by June 30, 2026.

All obligations and responsibilities under the current agreement shall cease as of the effective withdrawal date, June 30, 2026.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Javier Montañez", written over a light gray rectangular background.

Dr. Javier Montañez
Superintendent, Providence Public School District

CC:

Angelica Infante-Green, Commissioner of Education
Stephanie Downey Toledo, Superintendent, Central Falls School District
Charles Ruggiero

Appendix B

Providence Public Schools ends participation in UCAP Program

Providence Public School District's (PPSD) decision to stop participating and funding the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program (UCAP) is driven by **student outcomes and equity**.

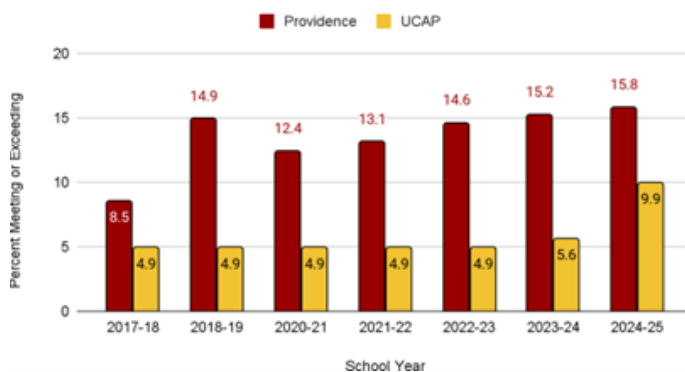
Providence Public Schools are currently outperforming the UCAP academically and in attendance. This transition will move students to a better environment, not taking something away.

Putting Student Outcomes First

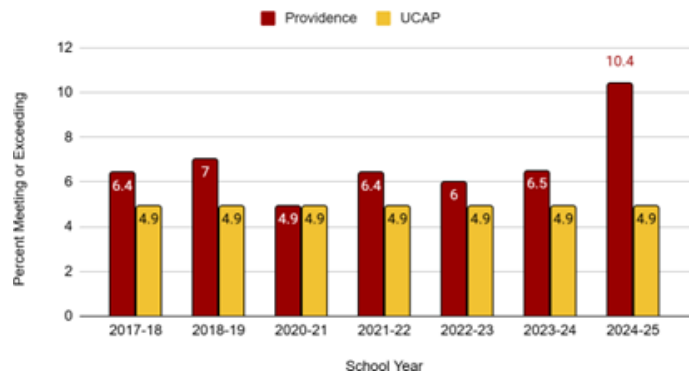
Academic Performance: District schools are consistently outperforming UCAP in both ELA and Math.

- *The Data:* While District schools show upward trends in proficiency (especially 8th grade ELA), UCAP results have remained flat and near zero (often <5%).

Providence and UCAP: RICAS ELA (GR 8)



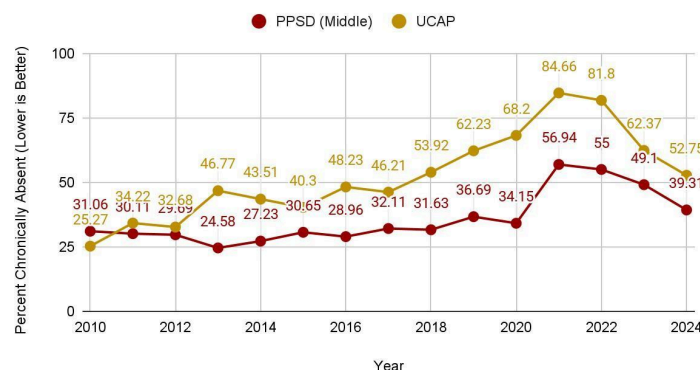
Providence and UCAP: RICAS Math (GR 8)



Attendance: We cannot teach students if they are not in school.

- *The Data:* Chronic absenteeism at UCAP is **53%**, compared to **39%** in PPSD middle schools.

PPSD (Middle) and UCAP



Instructional Quality: Our data suggests that the Tier I instruction and curriculum alignment available in our district schools provide better educational leverage than the current model at UCAP.

Individualized Education Plan: During the time students have participated in UCAP Individualized Education Plans have not been updated as required by law. Returning students will be reassessed and their IEPs will be updated upon their return.

Continuity of Care: Annually, UCAP sends back a handful of students that they feel are not successful in their school. PPSD welcomes all students.

The "Collaborative" Model Has Shifted

- **We Are Standing Alone:** The UCAP was designed as a multi-district collaborative (Providence, Central Falls, Cranston).
- **Partners Have Left:** All other partners have either stopped or drastically curtailed participation. We are the only district actively participating in governance; Central Falls sends only 5 students and does not govern.
- **Implication:** Continuing alone forces the District to bear the administrative and operational weight of a UCAP that other communities have already deemed ineffective for their students.

Financial Responsibility

- **High Cost, Low ROI:** The UCAP receives **\$2.9M annually** (\$2.3M State + \$0.6M District) to serve only ~130 students.
- **Better Use of Funds:** By bringing these students back to District schools, we project a combined savings of **~\$1.25M** for the state and district, which can be utilized more effectively to support student needs.

The Transition Plan for UCAP Students

- We have a concrete plan to welcome these students back.
- We are investing in additional **academic interventionists** specifically to support over-age and under-credited students to ensure they do not fall through the cracks.

Appendix C

2024-2025 DLM & RICAS ELA Subgroup

ELA	LEA	06	07	08
All Students	Providence	17%	12%	16%
	Urban Collaborative		3%	10%
Current English Learners	Providence	3%	1%	2%
	Urban Collaborative		0%	0%
Economically Disadvantaged	Providence	15%	11%	14%
	Urban Collaborative		3%	10%
Students with Disabilities	Providence	3%	1%	3%
	Urban Collaborative		0%	0%

2024-2025 DLM & RICAS Math Subgroup

Math	LEA	06	07	08
All Students	Providence	13%	6%	10%
	Urban Collaborative		3%	1%
Current English Learners	Providence	3%	1%	4%
	Urban Collaborative		0%	0%
Economically Disadvantaged	Providence	10%	5%	9%
	Urban Collaborative		3%	1%
Students with Disabilities	Providence	2%	1%	0%
	Urban Collaborative		0%	0%