



Ken Wagner  
Commissioner

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
Shepard Building  
255 Westminister Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Enclosure 7a  
January 6, 2016

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**TO:** Members of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education  
**FROM:** Ken Wagner, Commissioner  
**RE:** **Approval of the renewal of Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College with Amendment**

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**OVERVIEW**

Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College (RINIMC), located in Providence, opened in the 2011–2012 school year and is currently in the fifth and final year of its first charter term. Students begin at RINIMC in Grade 10 and attend a second senior year (referred to as a “12 plus” year), which is designed to provide RINIMC students a “middle college model,” with opportunities to complete college coursework before graduating from high school. RINIMC employs the use of agreements with higher education institutions and hospitals to allow students the opportunity to obtain college credit, industry certifications and work experience before graduating high school.

The school serves approximately 200 students, with a maximum authorized enrollment of 272 students, in grades 10 – 12+ from eighteen (18) cities and towns across Rhode Island in accordance with the school’s statewide enrolling area. The school’s current charter term expires at the conclusion of the 2015-2016 school year.

In accordance with the Rhode Island Board of Regents Regulations Governing Public Charter Schools, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) coordinated the process of evaluating RINIMC’s performance during this charter term. Renewal of RINIMC’s charter and the continuation of the school are dependent upon the Commissioner’s recommendation and subsequent renewal of the Charter by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education.

RINIMC has also requested to amend their charter to reconfigure their grade span to a more traditional high school configuration of grades 9-12 beginning in the 2016-17 school year. This amended structure would apply to their new charter term (2016-17 through 2020-21) starting in academic year 2016-17.

## PERFORMANCE REVIEW PROCESS SUMMARY

In order to support the Commissioner's renewal recommendation to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, the Office of Transformation and Charter Schools conducts a review of the school's performance based on the three following core questions:

- 1) Is the school's educational program an academic success?
- 2) Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for academic success?
- 3) Is the school a viable organization?

The **first** standard of review considers relevant student outcome measures using the most generalizable data available. Those measures include Mathematics and Reading NECAP performance, IDEA SPP indicators, ESEA waiver requirements, and, if applicable, student-level growth and ACCESS proficiency.

The **second** standard of review considers implementation relative to standards set forth in the Board of Regents Basic Education Program (BEP), including and in addition to instructional leadership, board oversight, staffing, classroom instruction, and curriculum development. Evidence for this portion of the review is gathered through a three-day site visit accompanied by a review of annual reports, school policies, board minutes, and other documentation.

The **third** standard of review considers organizational viability, including financial health, parent/guardian satisfaction, student attendance, and compliance with federal and state statute and regulatory requirements.

The school completed a Renewal Application. This application provides the school an opportunity to:

- 1) Present any important new or supplemental information pertaining to the above guiding questions, to enable a more comprehensive assessment of school performance; and
- 2) Articulate the school's strategies and capacities for sustaining success and continuing to improve over the next charter term.

## PERFORMANCE REVIEW RESULTS SUMMARY

- ❖ **Is the school's educational program an academic success?** RINIMC performed at or above the typical performance of the sending districts (public schools its students would otherwise attend) and similar schools (schools with similar rates of disadvantaged students) in each year of its charter term where RINIMC had measurable student outcomes. RINIMC earned a "Leading" school classification in 2013 and a "Typical" school classification in 2014. In 2013, the school did not meet expectations for making statistically significant overall performance gains in math.

- ❖ **Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for academic success?** RINIMC received a rating of “met the standard” or “approaches the standard” in all indicators. In no area did RINIMC receive a rating of “does not meet the standard.” In particular, RINIMC has a clear organizational structure with a mission-driven board and leader, developed clear policies and practices around curriculum development, and engaged families and community partners. Some recommended areas of focus include: systems for supporting students while completing college coursework; monitoring student success against the school’s mission; building out school-level data and monitoring systems; and tightening financial controls in accordance with recommendations from auditors.
  
- ❖ **Is the school a viable organization?** RINIMC received a rating of “met the standard” or “approaches the standard” in all indicators in the prior two years of operations. RINIMC received a rating of “does not meet the standard” in three financial indicators during the school’s first year, but RINIMC proceeded to meet expectations in the subsequent two years. The school has remained compliant with federal and state requirements.

As described in the *RI Charter School Performance Review Handbook*, the final determination of whether a charter school is an academic success, is providing the appropriate conditions of success, and is a viable organization, will be based on a preponderance of evidence gathered over the course of the charter term. This comprehensive review of performance informs the Commissioner’s recommendation regarding renewal to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education.

## Summary of Ratings

For comprehensive information about the following indicators and all supporting evidence, please see the full *Renewal Report* for Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College.

### 1. Is the school's educational program an academic success?

		2012	2013	2014
1.1 Is the school making measurable gains in NECAP performance?	<b>Reading</b>	n/a (baseline year)	Typical Performance	n/a (no NECAP)
	<b>Math</b>	n/a (baseline year)	Below Typical Performance	n/a (no NECAP)
1.2 Is the school outperforming its students' sending districts as measured by NECAP?	<b>Reading</b>	Typical Performance	Above Typical Performance	n/a (no NECAP)
	<b>Math</b>	Typical Performance	Typical Performance	n/a (no NECAP)
1.3 Is the school outperforming demographically similar schools as measured by NECAP?	<b>Reading</b>	Above Typical Performance	Above Typical Performance	n/a (no NECAP)
	<b>Math</b>	Typical Performance	Above Typical Performance	n/a (no NECAP)
1.4 Is the school's student-level growth percentile higher than the state's median (elementary and middle school only)?	Growth not calculated in high schools			
1.5 Are students with Limited English Proficiency making typical growth in English fluency as measured by ACCESS?		n/a (no ELLs)	n/a (no ELLs)	n/a (no ELLs)
1.6 Is the school meeting its mission-specific educational goals?	RIDE did not review nor hold RINIMC accountable for school-developed mission-specific goals			
1.7 Is the school meeting federally required academic performance targets?		n/a (baseline year)	Leading	Typical

## 2. Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for academic success?

	Rating
2.1: Does the school's leadership lead the focus on student learning and continuous improvement?	Approaches the standard
2.2: Does the school offer guaranteed and viable curricula in the core content areas?	Meets the standard
2.3: Has the school implemented a set of coherent, organized instructional strategies designed to meet the needs of all learners?	Meets the standard
2.4: Does the school recruit, support, and retain highly effective staff?	Meets the standard
2.5: Does the school engage families and communities?	Meets the standard
2.6: Does the school provide safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments?	Approaches the standard
2.7: Does the school use information to improve results?	Approaches the standard
2.8: Do all stakeholders share a common understanding of the school's mission?	Meets the standard

### 3. Is the school a viable organization?

	2012	2013	2014
3.1.1 Unqualified opinion of auditor?	Yes	Yes	Yes
3.1.2 USDOE Financial Responsibility Score	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
3.1.3 Liquidity	Does Not Meet Standard	Approaches the Standard	Meets Standard
3.1.4 Cash Reserves	Does Not Meet Standard	Approaches the Standard	Approaches the Standard
3.1.5 Level of Debt	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
3.1.6 Working Capital	Does Not Meet Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
3.2 Is the school maintaining low rates of chronic absenteeism?	Above Typical Performance	Typical Performance	Typical Performance
3.3 Is there a high level of parent and student satisfaction?	Parent and student satisfaction at RINIMC is similar to findings from across the state. Please see renewal report for more information.		
3.4 Has the school established and implemented a fair and appropriate pupil enrollment process?	RINIMC's documented policies comply with the statutory and regulatory requirements for a fair and appropriate enrollment process. However, enrollment levels are lower than expected. RINIMC must ensure that it is enrolling students and maintaining enrollment at no less than 90% of its charter enrollment cap of 272 students.		
3.5 Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to ESL students and students with disabilities?	RINIMC has had no material compliance violations during the course of the charter term.		
3.6 Is the school meeting applicable statutory and regulatory compliance requirements?	RINIMC has had no material compliance violations during the course of the charter term.		
3.7 Is the school meeting its school-specific organizational and management performance goals?	RIDE did not review nor hold RINIMC accountable for school-developed organizational and management goals.		

## AMENDMENT REQUEST SUMMARY AND CHARTER FORM

For the complete charter form, please see the *RINIMC Charter Form*.

### **Amendment Request**

RINIMC's model is designed to provide dual enrollment opportunities toward a nursing degree and prepare students for a career in nursing and/or allied health. The school's unique grade configuration begins at Grade 10 and students graduate after they complete the requirements of the "12 Plus" year (an extension of 12<sup>th</sup> grade).

On Thursday, October 15, RIDE received a written request from Pam McCue, Chief Executive Officer of RINIMC, to amend their charter primarily to reconfigure their grade span to a more traditional high school configuration of grades 9-12 beginning in the 2016-17 school year.

RINIMC proposes that the amendment is justified and would better serve its students for the following reasons:

- Research has shown that dual/concurrent enrollment opportunities can be successful within a typical 9-12 high school grade configuration. These opportunities are now widely available to high school students in RI.
- Students would no longer have to endure a second, atypical high school transition, from grade 9 to grade 10.
- Students would graduate high school on a typical timeline, with a more recognizable, standard transcript.

According to RINIMC, students will still experience a rigorous 4-year program and gain access to college courses and credits, industry certifications, and work experiences. The school mission, number of students authorized to be served, organizational structure, higher education and industry partnerships would not change because of the amendment.

Moving forward, existing students will be grandfathered to provide those students the opportunity to complete their 12+ year in accordance with the previous charter under which they were enrolled.

### **Charter Form**

The purpose of the charter form is to codify the terms and conditions of each new and existing charter. The form is designed to provide a clear and transparent legal document that each charter will receive at the beginning of a new charter term. RINIMC's charter for its upcoming term reflects the requested amendment detailed above.

After a performance review of Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College (RINIMC) during this prior charter term, the Commissioner recommends:

**RECOMMENDATION: THAT, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to renew and amend the charter of the Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College for a term of up to five (5) years to continue operations in accordance with its Charter, from July 1, 2016, to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, as presented.**