<u>Comparing Selected Provisions in the Providence Teachers Union Contract</u> <u>To Other Rhode Island Teacher Contracts</u>

A Report to the Providence City Council Finance Committee, Education Subcommittee Tuesday, February 22, 2011

By Amit Jain

I. Introduction

With the current contract between the Providence Teachers Union and the Providence School Board set to expire in August, the City Council Education Subcommittee is conducting hearings to study the contract and prepare a "wish list" of suggestions for the negotiators. This report, which compares six key provisions in the Providence contract with those in other Rhode Island school districts, is part of that process.

The purpose of tonight's report is to provide information. The information it provides is only a small part of a broader policy picture, and the provisions herein referenced represent a very narrow slice of a remarkably lengthy and complex contract. The intent is *not* to negotiate the contract in public, but rather to help educate parents, students, and the community about the importance of the contract and provide some basic understanding of some of its provisions.

The report compares six provisions across the 36 Rhode Island districts: basic salary scales, length of school year, length of elementary and secondary school days, minimum annual teacher meetings, baseline professional development hours, and minimum annual parent conferences. All data has either been downloaded from the Rhode Island Association of School Committees members-only website or compiled from the contracts themselves, which are hosted on an RI-ASC Collective Bargaining Electronic Resource site maintained by Attorney Nicholas T. Long. Specific citations, including article and section numbers for each data point, can be found in the appendices.

II. Basic Salary Scales

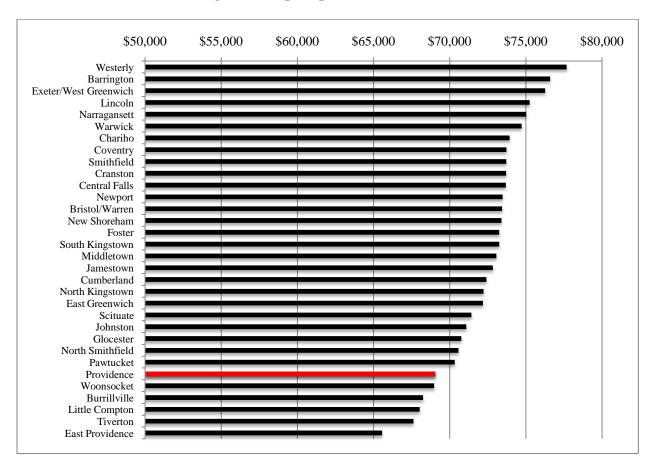
According to data from the RI-ASC members-only website, in most Rhode Island school districts, over 60% of teachers are on the top salary step. When districts are ranked by the top

salary step in the 2010-11 school year, Providence ranks 27th in a sample of 32 districts and falls into the 16th percentile (see table 1 and figure 1).¹ At \$69,064, Providence's top step salary is \$3,297 (or 4.6%) below the 32-district top step average of \$72,361.

Table 1: Basic Salary Scales, 1-9 Steps Average and Top Step (2010-11)

MEASURE	1-9 Steps Avg	Top Step
Providence	\$48,979	\$69,064
Mean	\$50,811	\$72,361
Median	\$50,829	\$73,158
PVD Ranking (out of 32)	27	27
PVD Percentile	16.1%	16.1%
PVD Diff from Mean (%)	-3.6%	-4.6%
PVD Diff from Mean (\$)	(\$1,832)	(\$3,297)

Figure 1: Top Step Salaries (2010-11)



¹ Data was unavailable for Foster/Glocester, North Providence, Portsmouth, and Warwick.

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In order to evaluate compensation for rising teachers who had not yet reached top step, we also compared the average salary from steps 1 through 9 across the 32 districts.² By this measure, Providence lies at the same low 27th ranking and 16th percentile (see figure 2). However, the district is not quite as far from the sample mean (3.6% below, or \$1,832), meaning that it is not as far behind in overall step 1-9 compensation as it is at the top step.

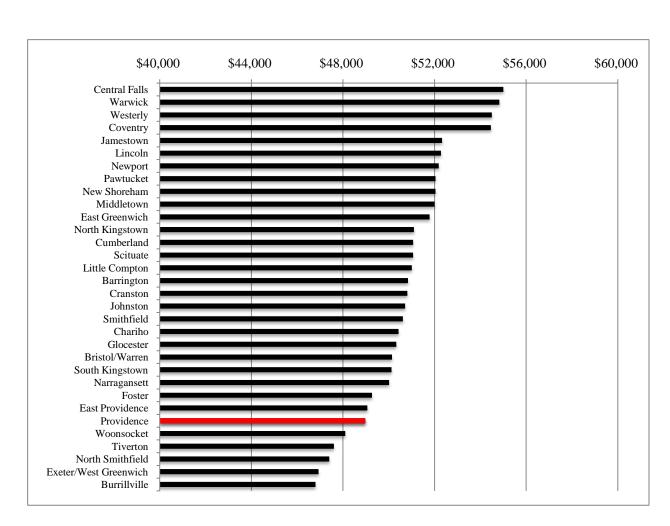


Figure 2: 1-9 Step Average Salaries (2010-11)

² One of the districts in the sample was on a 12-step system and six were on 11-step systems. For consistency's sake, we still only averaged these districts' steps 1-9.

III. Length of School Year

The typical school year in Rhode Island contains 180 instructional days for students. School districts typically include additional teacher workdays in the year for the purposes of mandatory orientation, professional development, and parent conferences. Article 8, Section 5 of the Providence teacher contract sets the work year at 181 days, with one day set aside for orientation and no mandatory professional development and parent conference days. This falls three days below the statewide mean and median (across 36 districts) and is the lowest in the state (see figure 3 and table 2).

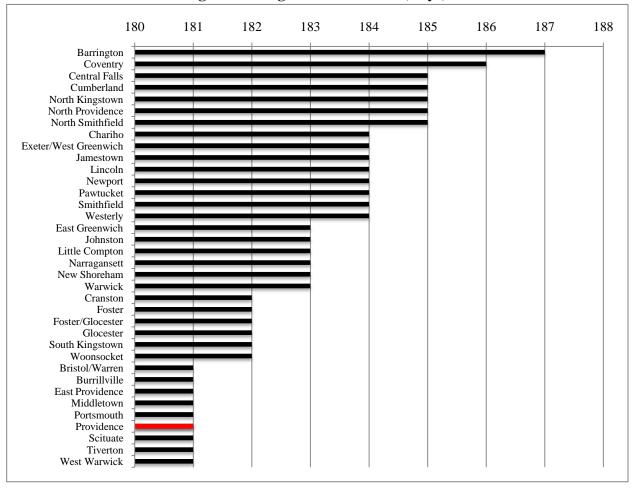


Figure 3: Length of Work Year (Days)

³ The 2010-11 calendar also includes three optional professional development days, usually compensated at \$25/hour (see section VI on Professional Development).

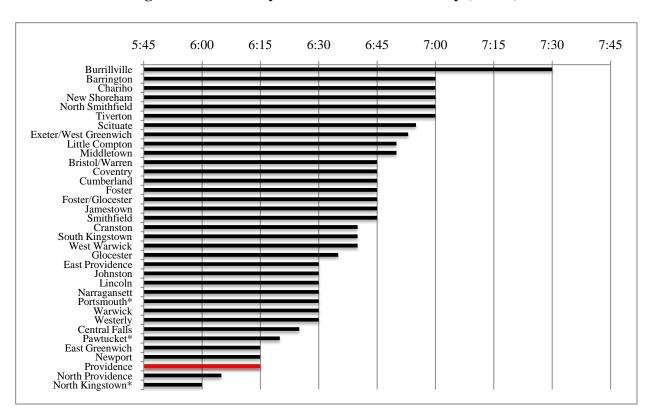
Table 2: Length of Work Year

MEASURE	Days in School Year
Providence	181
Mean	183.03
Median	183
PVD Ranking (out of 36)	28
PVD Percentile	0.0%

IV. Length of Teacher Work Day

The mean teacher work day in RI (across a 35-district sample) is 6:39 for elementary schools and 6:45 for secondary schools;⁴ Article 8, Section 5 of the Providence contract puts the district below par, with a 6:15 elementary workday and 6:40 secondary workday (see figures 4-5 and table 3).

Figure 4: Elementary School Teacher Work Day (Hours)



⁴ This dataset excludes Woonsocket, whose contract only prescribes that class time be equivalent to the 330-minute state minimum. Asterisks denote contracts that only specified student school days instead of teacher workdays.



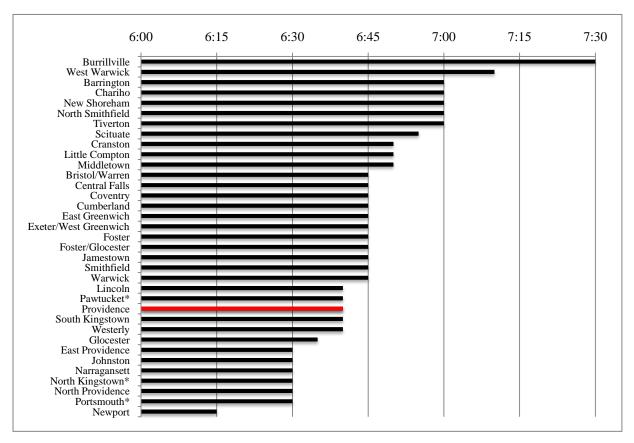


Table 3: Elementary and Secondary Teacher Work Day Lengths

MEASURE	Elementary Teacher Work Day Length	Secondary Teacher Work Day Length
Providence	6:15	6:40
Mean	6:39	6:45
Median	6:40	6:45
PVD Ranking (out of 35)	31	23
PVD Percentile	5.8%	23.5%

The teacher work day length affects the length of the school day for students. In the Providence contract, for example, Article 8, Section 5 sets the school day at 6 hours for elementary school and 6:30 for middle and high schools.

The Rhode Island Department of Education has published regulations requiring all schools to provide students with 330 minutes (5½ hours) of daily instructional time.⁵ These requirements do not include time spent in between classes, in homeroom, eating lunch or common planning time for teachers. The basic school day schedules described in the current contract provide the students of Providence with exactly the minimum amount of instructional time permitted under the State regulations. By definition, this means that Providence students have the shortest instructional day in the State.⁶

V. Required Teacher Meetings

Most districts in Rhode Island require teachers, as part of their employment, to attend at least 9 hours of faculty/staff meetings outside of the school day and without additional compensation. In addition, many districts have minimum required department and/or curriculum meetings. Article 14 of the Providence contract requires 10 mandatory teacher meetings (to be scheduled by the principal at the start of the school year) and 1 staff meeting to be called by the Superintendent for a total of 11 meetings (at 11 hours total, assuming a one-hour length for each meeting). This puts Providence 6.18 hours below the mean of 17.18 hours and median of 18 hours for secondary schools, at 21st place out of 29, and at the 29th percentile (see table 4 and figure 6). If the School Department wishes to schedule additional meetings, at the end of the

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⁵ See www.ride.ri.gov/Regents/Docs/RegentsRegulations/Regulations Governing the Length of the School Day.pdf.

⁶ This was priviled and high schools in Providence release students early once a week for teacher common planning.

⁶ This year, middle and high schools in Providence release students early once a week for teacher common planning time. Middle school students are released one hour early on Tuesdays, and high school students are released two hours early on Wednesdays. There is a question as to whether this early release program is permitted under the State minimum instructional time regulations.

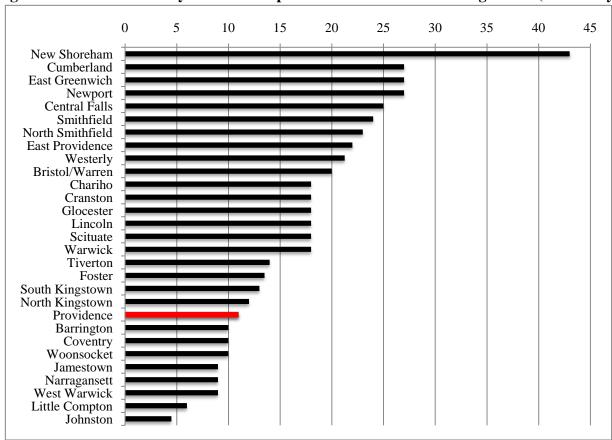
⁷ For comparative purposes, meeting length was assumed to be one hour if unspecified. Weekly and monthly meeting times were converted using a 36-week and 9-month school calendar. Some districts pooled time across teacher meetings, parent conferences, and professional development; these districts were left out of the quantitative calculations, but their provisions are detailed in the appendices.

school day or at any other time, beyond those provided for in the contract, it must pay teachers at their "hourly rate" for the extra time.⁸

Table 4: Minimum Faculty/Staff and Department/Curriculum Meeting Hours (Secondary)

MEASURE	Faculty/Staff and Department/Curriculum Meeting Hours (Secondary)
Providence	11
Mean	17.18
Median	18
PVD Ranking (out of 29)	21
PVD Percentile	28.5%

Figure 6: Minimum Faculty/Staff and Department/Curriculum Meeting Hours (Secondary)



will be paid their "daily/hourly rate." The "daily rate" is 1/181 of a teacher's annual salary (Section 8-5), so the "hourly rate" is equal to the "daily rate" divided by the number of working hours per day. Our calculations derive an "hourly rate" of between \$29 and \$63 for 2010/11, depending on the teacher's salary step.

⁸ For example, Section 8-34 of the contract provides for up to 36 hours of "professional time" for which teachers will be paid their "doi!u/hourly rate." The "doi!u rate" is 1/181 of a teacher's approved solony (Section 8.5), so the

VI. Included Professional Development Hours

The Rhode Island Board of Regents requires all middle and high school teachers in the state to complete an annual minimum of 15 hours of professional development. Also, the Providence School Department has its own professional development programs to support teaching and learning in the classroom. Some districts require teachers to undergo this training as part of the regular school year and without additional compensation. Others require teachers to seek out and pay for approved professional development opportunities independently, and still others provide professional development on a voluntary basis with additional compensation. The Providence contract takes the latter approach, offering professional development programs for which it pays its teachers an additional \$25/hour. 10

Accordingly, in a comparison of required professional development hours as a part of the baseline salary (i.e., hours for which the district need not provide additional compensation to teachers), Providence comes out at the bottom with zero hours. Other districts range from zero to 30 mandatory hours for high schools (see table 5). 11 Thirteen other districts join Providence with zero mandatory hours as part of baseline pay. Thirteen have specified requirements, and an additional nine include the option of requirements without specifying exact hours or days.

Table 5: Professional Development Hours Included in Baseline Salary (Secondary)

DISTRICT	Baseline Professional Development Hours
Jamestown	29.25
North Kingstown	26
North Smithfield	24
South Kingstown	22.5
Woonsocket	16.5
Chariho	15
Johnston	15

⁹ See *www.ride.ri.gov/Regents/Docs/RegentsRegulations/HS Regulations September*, 2008.pdf. ¹⁰ See Appendix B, section 8 of the Providence contract.

¹¹ Times were calculated as in footnote 5. When unspecified, days were assumed to be the district's workday length.

New Shoreham	14
East Greenwich	13.5
Newport	12.5
Cumberland	6.75
Foster	6.75
Glocester	3.25
Barrington	Unspecified (up to 7 days)
Central Falls	Unspecified (up to 4 days)
Pawtucket	Unspecified (up to 4 days)
Little Compton	Unspecified (up to 3 days)
Westerly	Unspecified (up to 3 days)
Foster/Glocester	Unspecified (up to 1 hour/week)
Exeter/West Greenwich	Unspecified
Narragansett	Unspecified
West Warwick	Unspecified
Providence	0
Bristol/Warren, Burrillville, Coventry, Cranston, East	
Providence, Lincoln, Middletown, North Providence,	
Portsmouth, Scituate, Smithfield, Tiverton, Warwick	0

VII. Parent Conferences

Most contracts in Rhode Island either set aside specific days/half-days in the calendar for parent conferences or require teachers to attend after-school parent meetings and open houses. Some set aside regular times during the school day during which teachers must be free for conferences. Many contracts also contain additional language indicating an obligation or expectation for teachers to meet with parents whenever requested. For example, Article VI, Section A of the North Kingstown contract stipulates:

Teachers shall be required to report before the start of the students' school day and to remain after the official closing of the school as long as is reasonably necessary to fulfill their obligations relating to special help for students, parent conferences and staff meetings.

The Providence contract contains no such language. Aside from a clause that requires teachers participating in job-sharing to have attended all parent conferences, no part of the contract requires teachers to meet with parents. This makes Providence one of only four districts in the state that neither specifies times for parent conferences nor obligates teachers to meet with

parents when requested (see table 6).¹² If it does wish to have parent conferences, the district has a few alternatives: it may release students early on a regular school day, it may provide extra compensation for teachers, or it may make parent conferences voluntary for teachers to attend.

Table 6: Parent Conference Hours

DISTRICT	Parent Conference Hours	Additional Expectation?*
Tiverton	14	Yes
Chariho	13	
Newport	12.5	Yes
Burrillville	8	Yes
Jamestown	8	Yes
Scituate	7.5	
Smithfield	6.75	Yes
Glocester	6.5	
Narragansett	6.5	
Bristol/Warren	6	
North Smithfield	6	Yes
Westerly	5.25	Yes
Central Falls	5	Yes
Foster	4.5	
Lincoln**	4.5	Yes
Coventry	4	
East Providence	4	
Johnston	4	
Cumberland	2	Yes
East Greenwich	2	Yes
Exeter/West Greenwich	2	Yes
Woonsocket	2	Yes
South Kingstown	1.75	
Barrington	Unspecified	Yes
Cranston	Unspecified	Yes
Warwick	Unspecified	Yes, in school only
North Kingstown	0	Yes
Foster/Glocester	0	
New Shoreham	0	
Providence	0	
West Warwick	0	

^{*}These contracts contain general language requiring teachers to be available to meet with parents as part of their basic responsibilities; for example, in Barrington the requirement is that teachers "to remain after the close of their work day as long as is reasonably necessary" for teacher conferences and other tasks.

^{**}In addition, the Lincoln contract calls for one release day for conferences.

¹² Times were calculated as in footnotes 5 and 7. Times also include open houses; when unspecified, open house length was assumed to be two hours. Some districts pooled time across faculty meetings, professional development, and parent conferences; these districts' provisions can be found under "Other Provisions."

OTHER PROVISIONS

Little Compton - V.H: 3 days split across professional development and parent conferences, 5 hrs each; V.I: "parents shall not be deprived of an opportunity to confer with [teachers]... outside of the regular workday"

Middletown - VI.C: 4 hours every 4 weeks max in all teacher meetings, including team meetings, parent conferences, analysis, curriculum development, open house, and professional development

North Providence - VII.24: Equivalent of 4 days allotted for professional development, parent conferences, and faculty meetings, with 6 hours for after-school conferences (payment not included in base salary)

Pawtucket - V.1: Equivalent of 4 days allotted for professional development, parent conferences, and faculty meetings; V.2f: Teachers must also be available for three evening school-sponsored events, 2 hrs each

Portsmouth - IX.B.2: 2 work days for parent conferences, curriculum revision/planning; IX.C.4a: Additional 18 hours unpaid and 30 hours paid for faculty meetings/parent conferences; XI.A: One 2-hour open house

VIII. Summary

As detailed in the sections above and the appendices below, the Providence contract:

- Is 27th out of 32 districts in both top step and 1-9 step average salaries
- Has the shortest school year in the state, 2 days shorter than the mean
- Is 31st and 23rd out of 35 districts in elementary and secondary work day length, respectively
- Has the shortest school day permitted under State regulations
- Is 21^{st} out of 29 districts in faculty/staff/department meetings, 6.18 hours below the mean
- Requires no professional development hours on baseline salary, compared to 19 districts that require some professional development without additional compensation (and another 13 that also require zero hours)
- Neither allocates specific days/meetings for parent conferences nor obligates teachers to meet with parents when necessary/upon request, compared to 32 districts that take one or both approaches (and another 3 that also require zero hours)

Again, the contents of this report are not sufficient to make any policy recommendations without further information and consideration. Nevertheless, the author hopes that the data contained herein will provide parents and taxpayers with some insight on a few key provisions within a complicated contract.

Sources

Rhode Island Association of School Committees: http://www.ri-asc.org/members/index.cfm

Contracts (maintained by RI-ASC and Nicholas Long): http://www.ntlong.com/cber/index.html