

## Renton Technology Coordinating Council (RTCC)

Meeting Minutes  
December 9, 2025

### ATTENDING

Dr. Ellen Dorr, Mike Cruz, Dr. Bob Ettinger, Kristine Farwell, Mawiyah Fields, Jennifer Hefford-Anderson, Aleta Konkol, Lizz Quinlan, Woody Sobey, and Kerrie Thornton

### AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions
- Cell Phone Guidance Review
  - Feedback Options
- Focus for 2025-26
- Technology Plan Presentation
- Celebrations

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ellen welcomed the council and thanked them for their attendance. She gave updates regarding absent council members and introduced the newest council member: Mike Cruz.

Ellen shared that the role of RTCC is to serve as a forum to review technology decisions, consider how they align with the district core values, support the strategic framework, and ensure they maximize student performance and achievement. She emphasized that the work of the council is typically focused on a few priority items each year (identified by the council) to address varying needs across the district. She also shared details about how the work of the council has evolved over time. One example she noted was the council used to have subcommittees focused on specific topics, such as the Internet Filtering Subcommittee. Now discussions and considerations regarding topics such as this would be discussed with the entire council as one of the priority focus areas.

Ellen went over the agenda and asked everyone to introduce themselves by sharing their name, role, and use of technology they are excited about.

See [addendum](#) for individual responses.

### **Core Values and Strategic Framework**

Ellen grounded the meeting with a reminder that our work is in service of students: to ensure they have the resources they need for learning.

Ellen noted that all departments in the district are working in alignment with the [District Core Values and Strategic Framework](#) and outlined how that alignment looks for Technology Services.

- **Service:** providing a strong foundation
- **Excellence:** improving systems and support
- **Equity:** right support for each and every learner

### **Minutes Review**

Ellen gave the council time to review the [October 14, 2025 Meeting Minutes](#), and asked for questions, corrections, clarifications, or additions.

**Correction:** Jennifer Hefford-Anderson was not listed as attending in the minutes but was at the meeting. *October 2025 minutes updated in December 2025.*

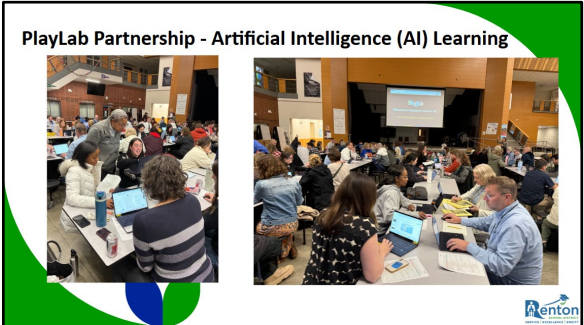
**RTCC FOCUS 2025-26**

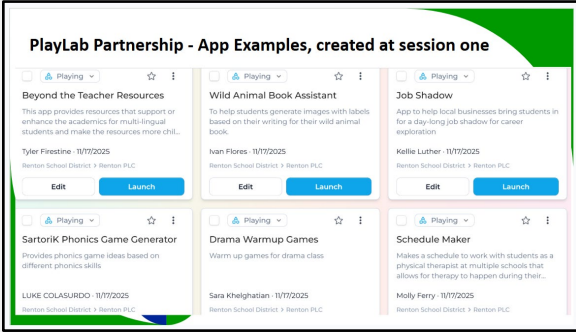
Ellen reminded the council that at the previous meeting the council discussed the top areas to focus on for the 25-26 school year and entered their ideas onto a Padlet. Prior to this meeting, the entries were color-coded by category and then the top priorities were identified based on the number of upvotes the topic received.

What	Why	How
Artificial Intelligence (AI) Learning	To learn how to use AI to support learning	PlayLab partnership
Cell Phone Guidance Implementation	To evaluate implementation of new guidance	Surveys, observations, focus groups
Digital Citizenship	To support students using technology responsibly	<b>Ellen:</b> We will need to come up with some ideas for this. There are great resources available but getting staff to access and use them with everything else on their plate, is something we will continue to work toward.
New Staff Devices	To identify device for refresh this summer/fall	Device testing by RTCC members

**TECHNOLOGY LEVY ANNUAL UPDATE**

Ellen and Bob will present the Technology Levy Annual Update to the Board of Directors on Wednesday, December 10th. Ellen shared some of the information highlighted during the presentation.

Slide	Description
	<p><b>Ellen:</b> This image was from the first night of the PlayLab AI Learning professional development. We had about 115 people in the Risdon Commons. As you can see, people were really digging in and learning. The second session was last night.</p>



**Ellen:** We will share some of the different apps people created during the first session.

- **Bob:** I love looking at this because it really demonstrates the wide range of problems people are trying to solve using this one platform.
- **Aleta:** I missed the session last night because I was dealing with a discipline issue, but my team came back from the session so excited. My staff really appreciated this experience. One staff member said she wasn't sure if she belonged there because she isn't technically savvy, but after the second session, she was very excited to engage with the program.
- **Ellen:** Bob and I met with the Playlab team multiple times and one of the things we asked them to do was to review the apps created by staff and help us identify which people were ready to move to refinement and who would need more foundational support. I think splitting the session by comprehension level was helpful, because there were over one hundred people and only 1-2 facilitators. In addition, we are going to review the feedback we received with PlayLab on Friday and potentially set up some office hours for additional support.
- **Aleta:** My team is so excited they want to bring it to the full staff.
- **Ellen:** We are working on securing funding to do a second-year partnership with PlayLab.

## PlayLab Partnership - feedback

I found last night to be truly **invigorating**. I am by nature a slow adopter of things. And when it comes to tech, I feel very stifled by my ability to analyze all the parts and ultimately struggle with trusting the implications of tech sources, as well as my ability to navigate it. **I did not experience any of these barriers** yesterday....I learned some new stuff and gained a different perspective and ultimately appreciation. I look forward to my continued learning and am grateful for the opportunity to grow my practice in this manner. It has been about **20 years since I have been so excited by a professional development experience.**

- RSD Administrator

Getting right in there and making an app! What?! So cool! - RSD Teacher



**Ellen:** I will also share these two quotes from participants. The first came from an administrator who had emailed Bob and me after the session. This administrator had commented that she doesn't usually love new technology, she gets stuck and it creates barriers, but she experienced none of that during the session and it was actually helping her solve a real-world problem.

## CELL PHONE GUIDANCE REVIEW

Ellen opened up the cell phone guidance review by sharing some data with the council. She explained that the data shows the number of pouches that have been provided to secondary students each month. Pouches are given to students who continue to use their cell phones during class time despite warnings and redirections. Once given, the student places their cell phone into the pouch to remove easy access and maintains possession of the cell phone through the remainder of the day. Each time a pouch is given, it is tracked on a shared spreadsheet, which is how this data was collected.

School	September	October	November	Total
Dimmitt MS	39	23	6	68
McKnight MS	177	97	33	307
Nelsen MS	218	150	81	449
Risdon MS	48	46	30	124
Hazen HS	29	53	8	90
Lindbergh HS	65	158	76	299
Renton HS	40	27	1	68
Talley HS	16	8	3	27
Renton Academy	0	0	0	0
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1432</b>

Ellen made general observations about the data. For example, she noted the November numbers were lower than the rest of the months, but there were also fewer instructional days. She also noted the difference in the overall pouch numbers between schools, and commented how Hazen High School is the largest school but reports only ninety pouches given. She asked the secondary school council members to share some feedback regarding their experience and thoughts on the data.

- **Mawiayah (Nelsen):** We started very strong on the first day of school with staff in full agreement: no cell bell to bell. The staff agreed, this also included headphones. In September, all the staff were on the same page in enforcing the policy. If a student refused, then an Admin would come to the classroom to support and send a strong message that no one was exempt from the policy. By October, we realized we weren't getting all of our pouches back. So, we added a brown paper bag system where students put their cell phone in brown paper bags and then place it in their backpacks. This was something a CTE teacher had been doing before we had pouches. Our numbers could be slightly higher because we added this system on. Sometime in mid-October, a teacher volunteered to sew the bottom of the pouches so that students could not easily get their pouches out. So, with that extra reinforcement, we had less incidents. Between the end of October and November, the number of pouches we had in our possession had significantly decreased due to loss or vandalism. Even though we had numbered the pouches and tracked the pouch assignments in the spreadsheet, we were still having trouble keeping track of the pouches, so we assigned specific number sets to teachers to help with that.
  - **Ellen:** I also brought replacement pouches to Nelsen, Hazen, and Risdon. So, there were some schools that requested additional pouches.
  - **Mawiayah:** When we did our discipline review, we went back to the strategy that if any student was refusing the consequence, it was an immediate call for support. I think that having administrators be so involved with the enforcement has helped to decrease the number of infractions.
- **Ellen:** Are you seeing anything different in classrooms? I had a meeting with a student at McKnight who had feedback regarding the pouches. It was a really good conversation. Principal Frey came in to support and shared with the student that the pouches themselves were not a full solution, but a tool to help building better habits.

Principal Frey’s comment to me afterwards, was that the difference since the districtwide policy was put into place is striking. She does not see cell phones in classrooms.

- **Aleta (RHS):** I am looking at our numbers for November and I don’t believe that data is accurate at all. When we started, we decided the Dean would be the person who would bring the cell phone pouches to classrooms when a consequence was required and not put it on teachers. But it got to the point where we needed more hands because the Dean had other things to do. So, it later became all administrators would be responsible for “pouching.” Later, we brought in Security, which I think is why the number dropped in November - the tracking piece likely got lost. We numbered the pouches as well to keep track of them, but we also charged a \$25 fine for pouch damage. That worked for a while, and I think it is still kind of working. One of the things teachers are commenting on is that more students are talking to each other because they don’t have their cell phones out. That is good in some classes and not so good in others, but it is quite interesting.
- **Ellen:** These are just data points that lead to more questions. It doesn’t tell the whole story.
- **Mawiayah:** Can I add that every teacher that gives a pouch is expected to fill out the form, and I think that consistent tracking paints a more realistic picture of what is happening in classrooms.
- **Ellen:** It also brings up questions about the different approaches teachers take and what contributes to that. It also brings into consideration the time of day that pouches are given. Are there times of the day that it is more likely a student will receive a pouch?
- **Aleta:** As an admin team, we decided that if we are in observations and see students with cell phones out or earbuds in, we are commenting on that with our teachers to make sure we are enforcing the policy consistently - not just in their classroom, but across the school.

**Surveys:**

Prior to the meeting, surveys were drafted to gather feedback from secondary students, families, teachers, and secondary administrators regarding the cell phone guidance. Ellen split the council into small groups to review the surveys. She advised them to take the survey and consider any feedback/suggestions they have, as well as identify other strategies for gathering feedback outside of the surveys. For example, even though there is a secondary survey, she will also be gathering feedback during the Superintendents “Listening Sessions.” Each year, the Superintendent visits each secondary school and a few elementary schools. He has a set list of questions he will ask students, and a couple of those questions will be regarding the cell phone guidance. Ellen plans to participate in as many of these as possible to hear some of that feedback directly.

The council members took time to review the surveys and provided the following suggestions and ideas with the full group.

**Secondary Student Survey**

Reference Question / Topic	RTCC Feedback
“Was the guidance shared with you during class time?”	Clarify what guidance we are referring to.
“From your perspective, have you noticed any change in classroom behavior since the guidance was introduced?”	Use a Likert scale from 1-5 (1 being much worse and 5 being much better), with a follow-up question about why they chose their rating.  Repeat this question a second time, but have it be about learning instead of behavior because ultimately this guidance is not about cell phones, it is about learning.

Other Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advertise the survey on Instagram.</li> <li>● Incentivize the completion of the survey.</li> </ul>
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**Family Survey**

Reference Question / Other	RTCC Feedback
“Have there been instances where you have needed to reach your child but could not? What was the impact of the situation?”	This question may be confusing for families where English is not their first language. Consider adding a “Yes/No” option as a way to guide them.
Other Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Add a link to resources for elementary students.</li> <li>● Utilize social media to advertise the survey.</li> <li>● Administrators can put it in the newsletter.</li> </ul>
Discussion	<p><b>Ellen:</b> Last year, I attended a Family and Community Engagement meeting to talk with families about cell phone guidance, so that could be another opportunity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Mawiyah:</b> Could the family survey be available on the district website outside of a designated time period to continuously receive feedback?</li> <li>● <b>Ellen:</b> The challenge I find with leaving a survey open-ended is determining when we review it and what we act on with the data. It could be something we do annually though.</li> <li>● <b>Aleta:</b> That is a good idea, maybe it is something we could repeat annually or follow up during conferences either by discussion or by asking them to complete the survey.</li> <li>● <b>Quinn:</b> We could also leverage the PTA.</li> </ul>

**Staff Survey**

Reference Question / Other	RTCC Feedback
“How easy was the guidance to implement in your classroom?”	The survey is designed for both teachers and support staff. This question likely works for secondary since the restriction is bell to bell. At elementary school it is all day, so there are likely many touch points that are not in the classroom, so we may want to consider re-wording.
“How helpful are the pouches in supporting enforcement of the guidance?”	<p>Elementary schools do not have pouches. Instead, maybe we should ask elementary schools to provide feedback on how they handle cell phone infractions in their building.</p> <p><b>Jennifer:</b> In my experience, kids who had their phones taken away will forget to pick them up at the end of the day, and then the parents contact the school angry because their child didn’t have their cell phone walking home.</p>

Other Suggestions	We may want to do either a separate set of questions for elementary schools OR give them an entirely different survey to gather feedback about the unique experience at that grade band. What are the challenges? And what is working well? Maybe if one school has a good system, it can be replicated at the other elementary schools.
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**Secondary Administrators**

Reference Question / Other	RTCC Feedback
“What grade level of students do you support?”	If this is specific for a high school administrator, then what we have is sufficient. However, if you want to include other staff like the deans or counselors, then we may want to have grade levels instead of grade bands.
“How easy was the guidance to implement at your school?”	I like the question, but I also want an “other” option so people can say: “this was easy for me, but I noticed...”
“What remains challenging about the use of cell phones in schools? Are there any new challenges as a result of the cell phone guidance?”	These are two separate questions that could give some different data points.
“From your perspective, have you noticed any change in classroom behavior since the guidance was introduced (positive or negative)?”	I liked the idea Bob had of adding a question like this with a focus on academic growth/engagement.
Other Suggestions	<p><b>Aleta:</b> I think it would be helpful to set aside a 1–2 hour session during a Principal or Assistant Principal meeting to talk about what we’re doing and to hear from other schools. I’m hearing about the work happening at Nelsen, which is very different from what we’re doing at Renton High, and it would be great to learn what’s working well and what people are proud of.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Ellen:</b> We did this with high school administrators, but what I am hearing you say is that we should do it with both middle and high school together.</li> <li>● <b>Jennifer:</b> I think it would be helpful for elementary schools to be included as well, to ensure alignment across grade bands and to set clear expectations that support students as they transition from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school.</li> </ul>

**Additional Thoughts/Ideas**

- **Mawiyah:** I am interested in the perspective of substitutes and guest teachers on their experience with the cell phone guidance at our school.
  - **Ellen:** Yes, and we could get their perspective on the different experiences between schools.
- **Aleta:** I think it’s interesting to see how our support staff step in to enforce the policy when substitutes are present. They really lean into it, which speaks to their recognition of the value of the cell phone guidance.

Ellen thanked the council for their helpful feedback and advised that she will bring their ideas to the District Instructional Leadership Team and/or Cabinet to finalize the surveys and determine when we want to send them out. She noted that we will have a meeting dedicated to reviewing the feedback collected (likely March 31st).

Ellen advised the council she will send clarifications about what we will do next time. She anticipates that we will be reviewing staff devices and device specs as well as dig into digital citizenship.

Ellen shared a list of the remaining meetings for the school year and the topics we hope to tackle.

Remaining Dates	Topics to Dig Into
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● February 3, 2026</li> <li>● March 31, 2026</li> <li>● May 26, 2026</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Artificial Intelligence</li> <li>● Cell Phone Guidance and Digital Citizenship</li> <li>● New Staff Devices</li> </ul>

**CELEBRATIONS**

Ellen opened the floor for any celebrations or appreciations people wished to share before closing the meeting. She started with thanking Kerrie for the beautiful snack display and her work on the surveys.

- **Mawiayah:** Thank you Dr. Dorr for your consistent support on cell phone implementation. You have been very responsive, and we appreciate it.
- **Mike:** I am happy to be back!
  - **Ellen:** We are happy to have you back!
- **Woody:** I appreciate getting through a whole meeting without Susan Talley harassing me (*joke*).
- **Ellen:** I really appreciate that so many people are involved in the PlayLab work. Thank you, Bob, for having that connection! I appreciate the dedication of several people in this room who are having multiple late nights this week and for choosing to be here and engaging in this work.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**

5:40pm

**ADDENDUM**

**Dr. Ellen Dorr, Chief of Technology and Strategic Initiatives**

This is not super new or very exciting, but it has had a positive impact on my family. I made a shared photo album on my iPhone and shared it with my aunts who are in their seventies. They were able to access it, view the pictures, and leave comments. It has been really fun to have a way to share pictures that they haven't experienced before and is easy enough for everyone to engage with.

**Mike Cruz, Director of Technology Infrastructure**

I was previously with the district for six and a half years. For the last two and a half years I have been working for the City of Kent. So, I am returning. A recent use of technology that I have been focused on is around how we are organizing our documentation internally. In the district we are currently living in the worlds of Google and Microsoft simultaneously. So, the exploration we have been doing is around how and where we manage our documentation, workflows, and collaboration resources.

**Jennifer Hefford-Anderson, Assistant Principal on Special Assignment**

I'll share about PlayLab since no one else did. I have been participating in the PlayLab professional development, and it

has been cool to see what you can do with it. Last night, I was able to produce what I was trying to create after many fixes.

- **Bob:** What did you produce?
- **Jennifer:** My app was for teachers or administrators to put in the student's name, class, and the behaviors they would like to support. It takes that information and gives you a 4-6 week intervention plan with strategies and a tracking sheet. Then you can take all of that to your student support team if more interventions are needed. I think it could be really helpful since this comes up often. And, it pulls from a lot of resources I might not have thought of looking at.

**Dr. Bob Ettinger**, Director of Curriculum, *Instruction & Assessment*

I will build on Jennifer's comment about PlayLab. For those of you who don't know what it is, PlayLab is an organization that teaches educators how to build apps using AI to solve real-world problems. We recently held two professional development sessions where staff members were using these tools to do lots of different things. In addition to what Jennifer already shared, there was a Dual Language teacher who was using it to create a list of chained words in Spanish that varied by one syllable, to help teach students Spanish phonics. There was a Chief of Schools building an app to help with providing feedback to classified staff. There was an elementary principal using it to make our literacy curriculum a little easier to understand. People were solving really disparate problems with this one fairly basic platform. It is very cool.

- **Ellen:** One of the things that is really great about this platform compared to other AI platforms, is that it pulls from narrower resources instead of the entire internet, which means the results are more refined and there is a lesser impact on the environment because it isn't pulling from huge datasets. And, you can add new inputs for the platform to work with, such as connecting it to Common Core State Standards.

**Kristine Farwell**, Director of Technology Customer Services

We are currently working on completing our first small and attractive asset audits (i.e., Chromebooks, laptops, hotspots, etc.) all in incidentIQ. We have had a lot of small and attractive asset audits previously, but not all in one place before. What has really been helping with this work is our ability to integrate Microsoft and Google to auto-verify devices if the assigned owner is logging into them. Which means we are able to verify our very mobile 1:1 student and staff devices, even if we cannot put our hands directly on them. However, it also brings up questions regarding devices that cannot be verified. It's fun to dig into.

- **Ellen:** Just to clarify, we are required to complete an annual audit by the Office of the Washington State Auditor. An auditor will visit the district and ask for a spreadsheet of assets. They will select an item from the spreadsheet, and we must prove that the item exists and that it is located where we say it is. So, it is really important that we track our resources well and demonstrate how we are being fiscally responsible with our assets.
- **Kristine:** They will also do the reverse, where they point at a physical asset and say: "Find this asset in your inventory system."

**Aleta Konkol**, Assistant Principal, *Renton High School*

Recently, I was introduced to the Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) interventions. It didn't excite me when I first saw it, but then after I played with it a little bit, I realized how cool it would be to have everything in one place for interventions with students. That has gotten me really excited.

**Lizz Quinlan**, Director of Player Experience and *Kennydale Parent*

I am neck deep in a spreadsheet for staff modeling and it is consuming all of my thoughts.

**Woody Sobey**, *Career & Technical Education Facilitator*

Last weekend the new Link light rail opened in Federal Way. We were on the third or fourth train that went down there and it was really exciting. I am even more excited that this new link will eventually be connected to the one near my parents' home in Redmond, making it easier to get over there using the light rail, especially with a 9-year-old. She is getting closer and closer to the age where she can just take the light rail over to her grandparents' house by herself.

**Kerrie Thornton**, *Information & Communication Specialist*

I support SharePoint (also known as RSDnet). I was recently tasked with finding a way to automate and provide visibility for the device fine process using Power Automate. It was super challenging, but figuring out the logic to get the list to perform specific actions based on answers was a fun puzzle to solve. Since it was my first attempt at using this tool, the outcome was not perfect. However, it was a great start to get this solution in place.