

Renton Technology Coordinating Council (RTCC)

Meeting Minutes

May 19, 2026

ATTENDING

Dr. Ellen Dorr, Alex Castro-Wilson, Chris Cronas, Mike Cruz, Dr. Bob Ettinger, Kristine Farwell, Mawiyah Fields, Jennifer Hefford-Anderson, Woody Sobey, Cat Stabio, Susan Talley, and Kerrie Thornton

AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions
- Digital Citizenship
- Celebrations

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ellen welcomed the council and thanked them for their attendance. She welcomed the newest member of RTCC, Cat Stabio.

Ellen reminded the council that the role of RTCC is to serve as a forum to review technology decisions to ensure they align with the district's core values and strategic framework and maximize student performance and achievement.

Ellen went over the agenda and asked everyone to introduce themselves by sharing their name, role, and a book/podcast/series they have been into recently.

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 and that teachers are well supported.

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 [March 31, 2026 Minutes](#) and asked for questions, corrections, clarifications, or additions. She reminded the council that we had spent the bulk of the March meeting digging into the cell phone guidance survey feedback. She advised that she would be following up about the survey feedback after the minutes review.

- **Cat:** I read through the minutes and wanted to know what the pouch was?
- **Ellen:** The pouches are a tool to help enforce the cell phone guidance at secondary schools. The cell phone guidance for secondary students is to keep their phones out of sight and silent during instructional time. If a student continues to access their cell phone after being redirected to put it away, they will be given a locking pouch. They place their cell phone into the pouch, lock it, and then the pouch goes into their backpack. At the

end of the day, the pouch is unlocked. The goal is to remove access but allow them to maintain possession of their phone. We recently purchased new pouches, because the one we selected previously had some significant faults.

- **Cat:** How many pouches are there? Enough for 50% of students?
- **Ellen:** It is actually less than that. It is 10% at middle school and 5% at high school.

Cell Phone Guidance Feedback

Ellen provided a brief high-level summary of the cell phone guidance feedback the council reviewed at the March meeting. She explained that the feedback was also reviewed with secondary administrators. Similar to the review model at RTCC, administrators were asked to identify some key takeaways, as well as opportunities for improvement. She commented that these details would also be shared at the Board Meeting on Wednesday, March 20th.

Overall Strengths

- District-wide guidance, same across schools
 - It is helpful that everyone is following the same rules.
- Strong Tier 1 strategy
- Focused on responsibility
 - Both staff and students spoke about this strength. Students noted they prefer a model where they are trusted to behave responsibly with their mobile device and that their access is only removed if they are unable to (vs. a model where cell phones are preemptively removed from their possession).
- Helpful to have a resource (pouch) as a consequence

Administrator Identified Strengths/Responses

- The difference [this year] is striking. I do not see cell phones in classrooms.
- The pouches have been a great deterrent for students.
- We see students on phones much less both in classrooms and hallways during instructional time.
- **Building a culture focused on increasing focused attention in class is what has made an impact.**
 - The cell phone guidance seemed secondary to the focus on how students are engaged in the classroom.

Overall Challenges

- There were some requests for full day restriction, particularly by middle school families
- Inconsistency was named by all groups (following the guidance, implementing the guidance, etc.)
- Students speaking a language other than English identified that lack of access meant they were less able to engage
- Families noted challenges getting a message to students (particularly at secondary school)

Opportunities

Cultural:

- Improve consistent enforcement
- Connect to instruction, engagement, and learning
- Increase collaboration with families

Technical

- Continued training on de-escalation tactics for staff

- Improved pouch solution
- Re-assess pouch distribution method
 - The students figured out pretty quickly when there was only 1 pouch in a classroom, so they knew that once that pouch was in use, they could access their phone with limited consequence.
- Use phone bank/locker
 - Some schools have determined alternate strategies for managing cell phones. At Talley, they prefer to use a phone bank in the central office to store cell phones. Renton High prefers to put phones away in cubbies during class time.

Ellen noted that the biggest takeaway is that the policy appears to have changed the perception of how significant an issue cell phone use is in schools.

Ellen opened the floor to additional questions. There were none.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

Ellen gave a brief review of the priorities RTCC had committed to addressing during the 2025-26 school year and the work completed to date.

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
New Staff Devices*	To identify device for refresh this summer/fall	Device testing by RTCC members
Digital Citizenship	To support students using technology responsibly	Tonight: Review resources and TIS ideas

*Ellen gave an update regarding new staff devices. She noted that while Technology Services pursued early purchasing of staff devices and executed a purchase order in February, there is still no ship date. This is largely due to a nationwide chip shortage and why it was so important to start the process early.

To begin the discussion on digital citizenship, Ellen invited the council to consider two questions and to discuss their ideas in table groups:

1. How would you describe digital citizenship?
2. Why should we need to teach students about it?
 - a. How does that need show up in the classroom?

After providing an opportunity for table discussion, Ellen opened the floor for council members to share their thoughts with the entire group.

- **Mike:** The questions tie into one another. We live in a day and age where information is abundant and widely available, and we have to teach young people to navigate it. How do we give students the tools to determine how to find quality information, what information to trust, and what to be wary of?
- **Alex:** Students have such easy access to technology, so we talked about digital citizenship in terms of how we teach students to use technology appropriately and safely. We also discussed teaching students to use technology as a tool for learning vs. a way to hide or cause harm to others. Essentially, we teach digital citizenship to create safety and security for kids - for everyone.

Ellen turned the floor over to Dr. Bob Ettinger who shared the definition RSD stakeholders had developed in previous years:

- **Digital Citizenship** is being responsible, healthy and ethical in a digital world.
- **Media Literacy** is the ability to understand and evaluate different types of messages.

Bob shared that digital citizenship and media literacy are often mistaken as lists of “don’ts” (what not to do). But they are also about the “do’s” that empower learners to see opportunities instead of risks as they curate a positive digital footprint.

Bob went on to share information gathered at the recent Technology Integration Specialist (TIS) meeting. He explained that TIS are full-time teachers who are paid an additional stipend to serve as instructional leaders on the use of technology at their schools. Prior to their meeting, the TIS were asked to add an artifact to their meeting slide deck, demonstrating work they did during the school year to teach students and/or staff about digital citizenship. Then at the meeting, the TIS commented on each other’s work. Bob advised the council to access the slide deck so that they could review some of these artifacts to get an idea of what was already in practice at schools.

Ellen highlighted a slide created by Risdon Middle School about their use of Minecraft. She commented that while many schools insist Minecraft should be blocked, Risdon has come up with a way to use the game to support student learning and has built an advisory around it. Ellen said she thought this was a good example of finding ways to use tools that students are already interested in to help engage them in learning.

Bob pointed out that Common Sense Media is mentioned repeatedly throughout the slides, and for good reason. Common Sense Media is:

- Award-winning K-12 curriculum
- Research-based, 8 years in the field
- Developed in partnership with Howard Gardner and the Harvard Graduate School of Education
- Robust family & community resources
- Available in Spanish and English
- Aligns with ISTE, ELA, CASEL standards

He explained that, in the past, there was a group of Digital Learning Coaches who developed digital citizenship lessons using resources from Common Sense Media and made them available to teachers and leaders through Curriculum Center 2.0. Some people have completed the lessons, and the most common word we hear in connection with them is “*actually*.” “Those lessons are *actually* helpful,” and “That was *actually* pretty good.” However, this work was developed about six or seven years ago, and Common Sense Media now has newer iterations of many of these lessons. Without Digital Learning Coaches, who previously maintained and updated the resources, we need to start thinking about how—and who—will maintain this work moving forward.

Bob went on to explain that media literacy is now incorporated into the new Washington State English Language Arts (ELA) standards. The standards are structured into five core domains, two of which now include language around media literacy:

- **Speaking, Listening, and Digital Forums:** Emphasizes respectful, meaningful communication in person and through digital platforms, integrating social-emotional learning and digital citizenship.
- **Research and Media Literacy:** A specialized strand added to help students navigate digital media, analyze intentions behind messages, and fact-check information.

Bob shared information provided directly from OSPI regarding why media literacy is now a part of the ELA standards:

- Many aspects of media literacy are already present in Common Core ELA
- Expansions and additions make sense in ELA context
- Students need these skills NOW

He walked the council through a few examples of the way media literacy shows up within the standards and guidance at different grade levels, and noted how many of the Common Sense Media lessons align with those learning targets.

In January, Bob shared this information with TIS and asked them to brainstorm ideas about what these changes mean for the district and how we might implement them. Building off that brainstorm, the TIS started to tease out different strategies for execution and were also tasked to identify WHO would be responsible for this work.

Bob shared 5 slides that detailed:

1. A clearly identified next step
2. Who (specifically) would do it

To engage RTCC in the conversation, Bob designed an activity where each table group was given 5 virtual sticky dots (one color for each group). He asked the table groups to read through the suggestions and place their sticky dots on the suggestions that they think will have the most impact and could realistically be executed. Bob and Ellen clarified that groups could place more than one sticky dot on a single suggestion.

The council took some time to review and make their selections. Bob and Ellen shared the options that people upvoted including:

- Send calendar invites reminders for specific lessons, executed by TIS.
- Match Common Sense lessons to new standards, executed by Instructional Facilitators.
- Pace lessons into literacy, social students and social-emotional learning pacing guides with units that align with goals (no individuals or teams specified).
- Add updated Common Sense Media lessons into our scope and sequence (no individuals or teams specified).

The two most popular suggestions were as follows:

- Add a required AI/Digital Literacy research project in ELA, managed by school site departments.
 - **Bob:** We were having a conversation around ELA specifically and how it already provides an authentic “who” and place to do some of this learning.
 - **Ellen:** And it aligns with the standards as well.
- Teach practical tools and AI Literacy at August PD Days (for teachers) led by TIS, Administrators, and the Professional Development Team.
 - **Ellen:** What do the administrators in the room think about having this work done at August PD Days?
 - **Chris:** At the school level, there will always be a tension between what needs to get done, what we have committed to our staff, and all the other things we want to touch on but don’t necessarily have time for. That being said, maybe we eliminate the “August” part of this and instead commit to doing this work at other PD days throughout the year.
 - **Ellen:** I also think an important word to keep in mind when we consider this kind of work is “embed.” Instead of approaching this work as a standalone topic, consider how it can be incorporated into the other work we are doing.
 - **Chris:** Which aligns with how we actually use the tools. It is already embedded in the work we do.

CELEBRATIONS AND APPRECIATION

Before closing the meeting, Ellen opened the floor for people to share their celebrations or show appreciation for team members present or not present. She started by celebrating Alex Castro-Wilson, who has completed his 3-year term with RTCC. She thanked him for his partnership and his service on the council. In addition, she announced that it was also Woody's last meeting for the time being, as he would be taking a sabbatical to the United Kingdom for the next year.

- **Bob:** Thank you to Chris and Kristine for your insights.
- **Cat:** Thank you to Chris and Ellen
- **Mawiayah:** Chris thank you for the feedback around mindset and social emotional learning.
- **Chris:** Thanks to Dr. Dorr. This is a great collaboration of many stakeholders and facilities.
- **Ellen:** I appreciate everyone really engaging in this work. I appreciate the discourse, your honesty, and transparency.
- **Ellen:** Thank you to Director Talley for being our permanent board member representative.

MEETING ADJOURNED

5:41pm

ADDENDUM

Dr. Ellen Dorr, Chief of Technology and Strategic Initiatives

On Sunday, I started a book called "Go Gentle" by Maria Semple and finished by Monday night. It is in "Peak Picks" at the Seattle Public Library right now if you want to pick it up. I highly recommend it.

Alex Castro-Wilson, Special Education Teacher and Building Technology Assistant, Bryn Mawr Elementary

On my way to work I like to listen to a podcast called "Teachers Off Duty." It is hosted by teacher-comedians who talk about the highs and lows of teaching and tell funny stories about the school experience.

Chris Cronas, Principal, Sartori Elementary

I am currently reading Jonathan Haidt's "The Anxious Generation." I highly recommend it and everything he writes.

Mike Cruz, Director of Technology Infrastructure

My wife and I stopped watching "The Office" after Steve Carell left, but we have decided we are going to tackle those last two seasons. Before we do, though, we are going to rewatch the first 7 seasons, and then finally finish the series.

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

We have been watching an Australian show called "Colin from Accounts" which is about an injured dog and the trials and tribulations of helping said dog. It is really funny.

Kristine Farwell, Director of Technology Customer Services

My husband and I like to watch sports docuseries on Netflix. We have watched one about track and field, and one about tennis. The one we just started is called "Full Swing." It premiered in April and is about golf.

Mawiayah Fields, Assistant Principal, Nelsen Middle School

I am listening to a podcast called "Native Land" hosted by Angela Rye. They talk about politics from a black person's perspective. It is really informative and digs into politics and history in a way that makes it attainable. I am also reading a book called "Culturally Responsive School Leadership."

Jennifer Hefford-Anderson, District Assistant Principal on Special Assignment

I am a couple years behind, but I read “Remarkably Bright Creatures” last month and then I watched the movie.

Woody Sobey, *Career & Technical Education Instructional Facilitator*

I’ve been listening to Heather Cox Richardson’s podcast, “Letters from an American.” She breaks down current events and puts them into historical context. With so much happening right now, I’ve found the historical perspective—and her thoughts on where things may be headed—really helpful.

Cat Stabio, *Parent*

I recently read “Grandma Gatewood’s Walk.” It is about a 67-year-old woman who was the first woman to walk the Appalachian Trail in the 1950s, and the first person to complete the distance 3 times. She didn’t have a lot of specialized gear for her hike which put a lot of attention on her journey and exposed the poor condition of the trail, which ultimately led to the improvement of the trail.

Kerrie Thornton, *Information & Communication Specialist*

I just finished the second season of “High Potential.” I love this show so much that I am just going to start it over. It is so smart and engaging.