



**SOUTH KINGSTOWN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
POLICY & PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Monday, March 2, 2026 - 5:15 PM
Administration Building Conference Room
307 Curtis Corner Road
Wakefield, Rhode Island

1. **Call to Order - Roll Call:** James Restivo, Chairperson; Michael Podraza, Superintendent; Daniel Seger, Assistant Superintendent; Kateri Collins; Michelle Manning; Johnnie Rodriguez; Brianne Shea
Members Absent: Paula Whitford; Stewart Lander

2. **Discussion/Action: Approval of Meeting Minutes from 11/3/25**
MSV(1) - Motion made to approve the Meeting Minutes from 11/3/2025.
Motion made by: Michael Podraza
Motion seconded by: Daniel Seger
Motion approved: 6-0

3. **Discussion: Report and Updates**
 - a. **Fundraising Policy #2110 - Update from Nov 25, 2025 SC Meeting**

Mr. Restivo provided an update on the Fundraising Policy #2110. This policy was brought before the full School Committee on November 25, 2025. Members voted to approve the policy.

4. **Revision to Existing Policies**

- a. **Discussion/Action: Administrative and Exempt Evaluation, Salary and Benefits #5325**

Mr. Podraza expressed his concerns that the current policy is overly prescriptive, appearing to guarantee annual raises and tightly linking contract length to evaluation scores, which limits flexibility when issues arise late in the year. He also highlighted that administrative benefits are currently tied to bargaining unit agreements, which constrain the district's ability to pursue cost-saving or more attractive options (e.g., HSAs or alternative health plans). Mr. Podraza would like more freedom to work out pay and benefits on a case-by-case basis with each administrator, instead of having a one-size-fits-all package. Discussion ensued regarding the project stipend, which allows extra pay for "projects". There was general agreement that this language should either be removed or rewritten. Mr. Podraza will draft proposed revisions to: (1) remove or rework the project stipend language, (2) decouple administrative benefits from specific bargaining units while still ensuring a comprehensive benefits package, and (3) provide more flexible, criteria-based language for salary adjustments and contract terms. No formal action was taken at this meeting.

- b. **Discussion/Action: Student Conduct #8315 continued discussion**

MSV(2) - Motion made to table this item for a future meeting.
Motion made by: Johnnie Rodriguez
Motion seconded by: Brianne Shea
Motion approved: 6-0

c. Discussion/Action: High School Grades and Honorary Diploma Policy #8435

Mr. Podraza explained that, in response to NEASC feedback and with faculty support, the high school is proposing to replace the current 4-point learner quality rubric (aligned with the 7C “vision of a graduate” competencies) with a simpler 2-point scale (e.g., developing/accomplished), to reduce subjectivity and better communicate habits of work without impacting GPA or appearing on transcripts. Discussion ensued regarding how often learner quality scores are issued, how they account for significant life events, and how the scores are used to support students; Mr. Podraza noted that learner scores are reported quarterly alongside academic grades and serve as formative feedback rather than a graduation requirement. Further discussion regarding the ‘Honorary Diploma’ language, which currently references specific wars (WWII, Korea, Vietnam), and whether this language should be updated to include more recent conflicts.

MSV(3) - Motion made to move Policy #8435 to the full School Committee for review, given the changes proposed by Mr. Podraza.

Motion made by: Michelle Manning

Motion seconded by: Dan Seger

Motion approved: 6-0

5. New Policies

a. None Pending

No discussion as there are no pending new policies.

6. Upcoming Policies, Meetings, and Tasks

a. Administrative Requests

Mr. Restivo asked for requests. Mr. Seger asked that the subcommittee revisit the Residency policy language related to McKinney-Vento in order to address recommendations from RIDE that were part of a corrective action plan. RIDE specifically asked to follow up on those RIDE recommendations and update the Residency/McKinney-Vento section accordingly. Mr. Seger offered to share the RIDE recommendations with Mr. Restivo. Mr. Restivo will place this item on the next agenda.

b. Proposed Agenda Items

c. Review Action Items

d. Proposed Spring Meetings: 4/13/26, 5/4/26, 6/1/26

7. Community Comment

Discussion ensued with updates given to each of the following policy items:

Bullying, Harassment, and Anti-Racism Reporting

- Mr. Podraza reviewed how bullying/harassment and anti-racism concerns are reported through online forms on the district website.
- These forms automatically notify the central office, are entered into a tracking spreadsheet, and trigger a defined workflow and required follow-up steps for administrators.
- The system is being used, particularly when families complete the forms or are directed to them after contacting administrators.

Cell Phone Policy

- Mr. Podraza reported that the cell phone policy appears to be working well across schools.
- During school visits (including passing times), he observed virtually no student cell phone use, aside from a few earbuds.
- Initial parent concerns (especially related to emergencies and school safety) have largely subsided, and law enforcement/first responders generally support limiting student phone use during crises.

Transgender Student Protections and Facilities

- Mr. Podraza reiterated that the district's policy protecting transgender students has been updated and reviewed by legal counsel.
- The new high school design will include single-stall, gender-neutral restrooms on each floor with a shared sink area, intended to:
 - Increase privacy for all students,
 - Improve visibility and supervision in common areas, and
 - Reduce opportunities for bullying or misconduct in large, unsupervised restrooms.

Equity, Curriculum, and Recognition of Diverse Identities

- Expressed concerns that Black History Month, Women's History Month, and diverse religious/cultural observances (e.g., Lunar New Year, Ramadan, Jewish holidays) are not consistently or visibly recognized, especially at the elementary level.
- Examples included:
 - Difficulty getting equity-focused bulletin boards approved,
 - Holiday events (e.g., sing-alongs, decorations) that appear to center primarily on Christian/Christmas traditions,
 - Worries that the curriculum and displays do not fully reflect the diversity of students and families.
- Mr. Podraza noted that:
 - There has been no directive from the district to avoid such content, and
 - The equity audit highlighted that inclusion is often treated as an "add-on" rather than embedded in the core curriculum, and this still needs to be addressed.
- Discussion ensued whether policy or clearer district-level guidance could help ensure more consistent, inclusive practice and support staff who want to incorporate diverse perspectives and materials, while also navigating concerns about "divisiveness" and opt-out pressures.

8. Adjourn

MSV(4) - Motion made to adjourn

Motion made by: Dan Seger

Motion seconded by: Kateri Collins

Motion approved: 6-0

Meeting is adjourned at 6:38 PM.