

GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ADMISSIONS POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES  
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM  
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA  
AUGUST 27, 2024

In attendance: Paul Jennings of Westport, Ryan Pacheco of Fall River and Jeffrey Begin of Swansea

Also in attendance were: Brian Bentley, Superintendent/Director, Linda Griffin, Director of Guidance and Admissions, Gregory Brillhante, Legal Counsel, and Helena Neves, Executive Secretary

The meeting began with a roll call at 4:30 p.m.

It was moved by Mr. Begin, seconded by Mr. Jennings, and voted to dispense with the reading of the June 7, 2023 minutes and approved them, as recorded. Mr. Pacheco abstained.

Mr. Jennings called for a discussion on the current admissions policy.

Mr. Bentley introduced Mrs. Linda Griffin, Director of Guidance and Admissions.

Mr. Bentley stated that Ms. Griffin has reviewed the Admissions Policy. The current policy meets the requirements by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). A couple of things that were noticed is that the application and the acceptance form are not able to be translated into the native language of some of our students due to the program currently used. Mr. Begin stated that in today's technological world there must be an application that would allow the document to be translated into any language. Ms. Griffin stated that at her prior district the application was also in English. However, there were staff members that spoke Portuguese and Spanish that were able to assist. They also offered phone in interpreter services for other languages. The Guidance Department will work with the IT Department on getting the application translated and any other documents needed to meet the needs of students and parents.

Mr. Bentley stated that the current Admissions Policy File:JF has some conflicting language. Section III. Eligibility reads "Any rising or current 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade student". The word rising was challenged by a parent that interpreted it as "her son is a current 7<sup>th</sup> grade, rising 8<sup>th</sup> grader", therefore should be able to apply. The word *rising* will be removed from the policy.

Mr. Bentley stated that there has been a discussion on transfer students and how best to handle the vocational component. Mr. Bentley further stated the needs of an 11<sup>th</sup> grade transfer student without vocational experience needs to be carefully evaluated. If the student does not have vocational experience he or she may be placed in 11<sup>th</sup> grade for academics but be placed in a 10<sup>th</sup> grade vocational program to gain the skills needed. Mr. Begin stated that a lot of students who are participating in cooperative education start their co-op employment as juniors allowing for availability for transfer students to be placed in those vocational programs. Mr. Begin further stated that students that transfer as 10<sup>th</sup> graders could possibly qualify for co-op in 12<sup>th</sup> grade but students that are transferring in 11<sup>th</sup> grade do not have the co-op option. Mr. Bentley stated that a transfer student needs a good two years of vocational experience to qualify for co-op.

Mr. Bentley stated that Section VI. Application Process as a deadline date of December 15<sup>th</sup> for applications to be received and considered for first round of acceptances. However, the District currently does not have an "application start date". Mr. Jennings stated that a start date is a good idea. *A start date for applications to be submitted will be determined.*

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Mr. Bentley stated that he will work with Mrs. Griffin to fine tune the application, acceptance and follow up process. At times, applicants accept admission to multiple schools which makes it harder to fill those seats at the last minute.

Mr. Begin asked Mrs. Griffin what her thoughts on the policy are and would she recommend any changes. Mrs. Griffin stated that the current policy mirrors what DESE requires. The point system allows for more accountability especially in the areas of grades, attendance, and conduct. Mr. Bentley stated that the lottery for admissions is still very much being pushed. Mrs. Griffin stated that the current policy provides a wide range of points giving applicant students an opportunity to score more points. Mrs. Griffin stated that she specifically likes the current attendance point increments. This gives students the potential to score higher and allows for more deviation in total application points.

Mr. Jennings stated that the sending school's recommendation carries a lot of weight on the application. The common concern heard from parents is "my child has not met with the guidance counselor and how do they know if he or she would be a good fit for a vocational school." Mrs. Griffin stated she would be very interested in meeting with the counselors and looking at previous recommendations. It would be interesting to gather data on sending schools recommendations and to also see if certain districts or even certain guidance counselors are giving higher recommendations than others. Mrs. Griffin stated that a recommendation is very objective and can play a big role in a student's acceptance. Mr. Begin stated that the intent of the recommendation was to open opportunities for more students to apply but will now have to look to see if the weight of the recommendation closing the door to some students. Mrs. Griffin stated that it is possible that some sending school guidance counselors don't even know their students. Some students slip through the cracks because they don't seek out the guidance office services.

Mrs. Griffin requested time to look at applications, look at scores for recommendations and breakdown the data by district and by school to see the difference. Mr. Bentley stated that Mrs. Griffin has some work to do and bring back to the committee. The data will help to make a better decision on what, if anything needs to be changed, what practice needs to be altered, and what procedures need to be in place.

Attorney Brilhante left the meeting at 4:58 pm.

Mr. Bentley provided a brief summary of the issues discussed – translation of documents, language edits, the weight of the sending school recommendation and a start date for new applications.

Attorney Brilhante returned to the meeting at 5:00 PM

Mr. Jennings stated that he is very much interested in seeing the data on the recommendation. The purpose was to give a student, who may have been struggling in a particular area, a better chance at being accepted. Mrs. Griffin stated that some vocational schools hold student interviews. The guidance counselor would meet with the student and complete an interview rubric.

Mr. Jennings asked the Mr. Bentley and Mrs. Griffin work together to gather the data and suggest a date for another meeting. Mr. Bentley stated that he will meet with Mr. Griffin and staff to get more information and report back.

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Mrs. Griffin stated that one area that may require a change is the shop selection as an applicant. It can be a daunting task for a student to decide on a shop. An option could be to ask the student something to the effect of “on a scale from one to 10 with 10 being the most, what is your interest in working with your hands.” This will put it on the student instead of leaving it up to an adult to decipher what the student’s interests are.

Mr. Bentley stated that a review of the policy is a good starting point. A meeting will be scheduled to discuss the data and any recommendations.

It was moved by Mr. Begin, seconded by Mr. Pacheco, and voted unanimously to adjourn the Sub-Committee meeting at 5:07 p.m.

**Materials Included:**  
June 7, 2024 Minutes  
Admissions Policy

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Helena Neves*  
Helena Neves, Executive Secretary