

GREATER FALL RIVER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
ADMISSIONS POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES
DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM
251 STONEHAVEN ROAD, FALL RIVER, MA
SEPTEMBER 9, 2025

In attendance: Paul Jennings of Westport, Richard Manuels Jr. of Fall River and Jeffrey Begin of Swansea

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

Remote attendance: Leslie Weckesser, Assistant Superintendent-Principal

The meeting began with a roll call at 4:04 p.m.

It was moved by Mr. Begin, seconded by Mr. Manuels, and voted to dispense with the reading of the August 14, 2025 minutes and approved them, as recorded.

Mr. Bentley began the discussion on the revised Admissions Policy. The policy was revised to meet the requirements of the mandated lottery system. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's guidelines provide the option of choosing a weighted lottery or an open lottery. The open lottery would allow for all applicants to receive one "bingo ball" which would be used in the lottery. The weighted lottery system allows applicants to receive additional "bingo balls" if they meet certain criteria. The criteria for the weighted lottery allows for a maximum of four "bingo balls" to be earned by the applicant. The criteria is a completed application, attendance, discipline, and interest.

Ms. Griffin further explained that in order for an application to be considered complete, applicants need to submit the application, attend either an open house, an in person tour of the school, a virtual tour or a virtual admissions meeting. The tour of the school will take place during middle school hours in December and transportation from the sending middle school will be provided at the expense of Diman. Mr. Bentley stated that the weighted system allows the District to have some criteria in place that gives applicants the opportunity to receive additional "bingo balls" towards the lottery.

Ms. Griffin stated that it is up to the District to confirm attendance at the events and verify with the applicants. A checklist is available to applicants when they fill out the application. There are check boxes that they can confirm if they attended open house or any of the virtual events. Ms. Griffin stated that the applicant must also include a personal essay or a letter of recommendation from a non-family member or a counselor expressing their interest in Diman. The essay/letter will not be graded.

Mr. Begin asked how will attendance at virtual events be monitored. Applicants should have to attend the event in its entirety in order to be considered present. Ms. Griffin stated that language can be added to the application that states if an applicant attends a virtual event, they must stay for more than half of the event.

Mr. Begin stated that he disagrees with the lottery system in its entirety but feels that the weighted lottery is the best option for the District.

Mr. Manuels asked if applicants receive extra "bingo balls" if they attend all the events. Ms. Griffin stated that they do not.

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Mr. Begin asked how the lottery will be handled for applicants that have the additional “bingo balls” if one of the balls gets picked. Ms. Griffin stated that the lottery will be held in the auditorium and livestreamed. There will be four separate lotteries held, one for each of the sending communities. The admissions software program Go2CTE will remove the additional “balls” when an applicant is selected.

Mr. Begin asked for clarification if the 27 unexcused absences are a combination of 7th and 8th grade or just 8th grade. Mr. Bentley stated that DESE is wrapping it around the time that the application portal is opened through January 1st.

Attorney Brillhante asked if applications will be accepted after January 1st. Ms. Griffin stated that applications received after January 1st will be entered into the late pool for each respective sending community.

Mr. Bentley stated that DESE has not provided guidelines on the appeal process.

Mr. Manuels asked if DESE has issued guidelines for preference admission of siblings. Mr. Bentley stated that they have not.

Mrs. Weckesser stated that there are districts that have implemented the lottery system in previous years in preparation for the mandate. Parents are upset because of the lottery and lawsuits are more prevalent. Mr. Bentley stated that the districts that have implemented the lottery system have seen a drop in their diverse populations.

Mrs. Weckesser stated that Mr. Silva, Freshman Coordinator is working with the History Department to develop a mandatory elective for Freshman. The class will hold the rigor on what Diman’s core values are, and it will wrap that around the vision of the graduate. The elective will ensure that we remain consistent and strong on our expectations of students. Mr. Begin stated that Diman’s no cell phone policy will play a role in which students will stay. Ms. Griffin stated that student turnover will be more prevalent in the first three months of the school year.

Attorney Brillhante asked if a new lottery needs to take place each time a student withdraws. Ms. Griffin stated that students will be admitted from the wait list which will be published on the website.

Mr. Manuels asked if a notice is sent to applicants asking if they want to remain on the wait list. Ms. Griffin stated that no, those applicants will remain on the list.

Ms. Griffin stated that it's up to the middle schools to come up with a plan on how they're going to promote vocational education and how they're going to implement that plan. The sending middle schools have to publish, post, and send to us their plan on how they will advertise vocational education. Ms. Griffin stated that she is hosting a breakfast for the sending schools guidance counselors to go over the lottery guidelines. A representative from Go2CTE will also be present to educate them on the new platform.

Mr. Jennings asked for clarification on the 27 unexcused absences. Ms. Griffin stated that the language in the guidelines states that it can’t be more than 240 days prior to the deadline of the application. Mrs. Weckesser

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stated that 27 days is higher than the 18 unexcused absences currently counted as chronically absent for the accountability rating.

Mr. Jennings asked for a motion to approve the Admissions Policy as written, which is a weighted lottery system for the class of 2030 and to bring it forward to the School Committee at the September 11, 2025 meeting.

It was moved by Mr. Begin, seconded by Manuels, and voted unanimously to approve the Admissions Policy as written.

It was moved by Mr. Manuels, seconded by Mr. Begin, and voted unanimously to adjourn the Admissions Sub-Committee meeting at 4:39 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Helena Neves

Helena Neves, Executive Secretary

Materials Included:

August 15, 2025 Minutes
Admissions Policy