Appendix F: Policy Development & Style Guide

Fairfax County Public Schools policies are directives that govern the operation of the division, ensuring compliance with state law and the Standards of Quality (SOQ). Policies are determined by the School Board and serve as the framework for regulations, which are set by the Division Superintendent and operationalize the policy throughout the school division.

Policies are directives determined and approved by the School Board. Policies are to be reviewed every five years, per Virginia code.

The School Board is the entity responsible for policy review, amendment, and adoption. Any policy may be reviewed, amended, adopted, or rescinded by the Board at any time.

The School Board shall make all revised policies available for public review at least one meeting prior to the meeting at which action is expected to be taken, except when an emergency necessitates earlier action.

See the current version of Policy 1102, Development of Directives, for further information.

Applicability

School Board Members as well as the Division Superintendent may bring forward new policies for consideration, recommend revisions to current policies, or recommend periodic policy reviews in accordance with Virginia Code § 22.1-253.13:7 and FCPS Policy P1102. This policy style guide applies to all such actions.

For information and instructions on the policy development and review process, please see FCPS P1102 and the School Board Governance Manual.

Policy Development

New Policy Development

Periodically, the development of new policies may be necessary. New ideas originating with a Board Member are traditionally first brought to the School Board through a forum topic to gauge the interest of the entire Board on the work. New policies developed by the Division Superintendent are traditionally brought first to the Governance Committee for review.

New policies may require additional work sessions or Governance Committee Member engagement with individual Board Members to reach Board adoption.

Reviewing Policies

The School Board understands its legal requirement to review its policies every five years or sooner. The review process can take several different paths to reach final approval.

1. If a member wishes to initiate policy action, the member may notify the Chair and then the entire Board of the intended recommendation.
2. The School Board office will ensure policies are reviewed by appropriate staff members at least every five years, and revised as needed, in compliance with the Code of Virginia.
3. All policies brought to the School Board for action shall be accompanied by a cover memo that follows the format and template provided in the Fairfax County School Board Policy Style Guide, including those brought with no changes proposed.
4. As necessary, the School Board Chair will work with the Governance Chair and Superintendent will be scheduled for a work session discussion.
5. All review of policies shall go through Division Counsel and the department responsible for the policy in order to ensure alignment, legal compliance, and adherence to best practices.
6. All policies will be scheduled for new business and action at a regular meeting.
7. Once approved by the Board, the updated policies will be published on the website.

Governance Committee Role in Policy Development and Review

Currently, policies are reviewed by the Governance Committee before being sent to the full Board for consideration. Once approved by the full Board, the policy is uploaded into BoardDocs with the effective date being the date of approval.

The policy process begins with the Clerk's office working to determine which policies are up for review, according to the five-year review timeline. Once the queue of policies has been determined, the queue will be shared with the Division Superintendent. The Division Superintendent will work to direct staff to review policies for legal compliance, best practices, whether there are resources/can be operationalized, and division alignment.

The Division Superintendent, Clerk's Office, and Governance Chair will work together to determine the agenda for the Governance Committee meetings and which policies will be reviewed. Once a set of policies has been determined, the Clerk's office will create the agenda and upload the documents to BoardDocs. The Division Superintendent will provide a memo, redlined policy and a clean copy of the policy.

During Governance Committee meetings, the Clerk's Office will be responsible for any track changes to the document in real time. Upon Governance Committee approval to move the policy forward for consideration before the full Board, the Clerk's Office will be responsible for adding the policies to the agenda under New Business with the updated redline and clean copy. The policies will be added to the Consent agenda for the subsequent meeting.

Roles

Governance Chair: The Governance Chair is responsible for working to set the agenda for each Governance Committee meeting. They are also responsible for updating the Board about actions taken at the most recent meetings of the Governance Committee at regular meetings or as needed.

Clerk's Office: Collating and organizing the queue of policies that need to be updated according to the five-year cycle. The Clerk's Office also supports the Governance Committee to set the agenda and upload documents from the Division Superintendent to meeting management software (ie. BoardDocs). During meetings, the Clerk's Office supports the Board's work with track changes and ensures formatting compliance for all policies reviewed.

Division Superintendent: The Division Superintendent is responsible for directing staff to review policies for legal compliance, best practices, whether there are resources/can be operationalized, and division alignment. The staff supporting policy updates will also provide the Governance Committee with memos, and copies of the clean and redlined policy documents.

Policy Review Timeline

January: The Clerk's Office collates a list of policies due the following calendar year. The list is given to the Governance Chair, Office of the Division Superintendent, and Office of Division Counsel.

May: The Clerk's Office, in conjunction with the Office of Division Counsel, attends any meetings offered by the Virginia School Board Association (VSBA) about changes to laws related to School Board policy. (Also on-going)

January - August: The Clerk's Office works with the Office of the Division Superintendent to create placeholders and deliver requested Word Documents to facilitate updating the policies for the next Governance Committee. The Office of the Division Superintendent will work to create memos, department coordination sheets, and redline/clean versions of the updated policies.

August: The Clerk's Office and Governance Chair work to organize and plan for Governance Committee meetings for the year with a list of policies (reviewed and edited [as needed] by the Office of the Division Superintendent and Office of Division Counsel).

August - May (following calendar year): Governance Committee meets to review policy drafts and approve them, which will be considered before the full Board.

No Change

If the policy requires no changes, the Governance Committee votes to update the date review and send it to the Board for approval (nothing major to change).

Substantive Changes Necessary

If the Governance Committee determines that substantive changes are necessary, those changes are redlined, and the committee votes to do one of two things:

- Send to a Work Session for full board discussion
- Send to the full board for posting to New Business and then Action.

Closed Meeting Procedure for Governance Committee Review

- On the motion language to go into Closed, the policy number is not included.
- The policy is reviewed in Closed.
- The Committee votes in Closed to send the policy, as amended, to the full Board for Action.
- Red line goes to a full-Board Closed meeting, and the Board discusses. No action is taken.
- Final draft (adopted red-lined) is posted for New Business, then Consent/Action.

Policy Retention

The School Board Office will also create an archive for each policy and supporting documents for use by School Board Members and their staff.

Required Documents, Templates, and Formatting Guidelines

1. Cover Memo (template at Appendix B)
2. Policy Template (template at Appendix C)

Cover Memo Guidance

A cover memo is required to accompany any policy being put forward for new consideration, revision, or review, regardless of the initial audience or review process being followed. The cover memo may contain, and is not limited to, the following information:

- Overview of any suggested changes and rationale for why the changes are proposed. i.e., to reflect state code, to use better language as per VSBA sample (i.e. P2115, 3/18/25), formatting, and updating any other legal requirements.
- Justification of a “No Change” recommendation.
- Analysis of whether other policies - in the series or not - are related to or contradictory to the policy being reviewed, and recommended action to the School Board if needed to rectify discrepancies or redundancies. This includes identifying any out-of-date practices and content contradictory to current legal FCPS guidance.
- Statement that all applicable VA codes have been reviewed, and the policy, with any recommendations, is in compliance with such codes.
- Acknowledgement of any sample policy that may accompany the cover memo.
- A list of all related FCPS regulations and notices.

Policy Guidance

Font and Margins

Directives are single-spaced using an Arial 11 font with one-inch margins and a justified alignment.

Identification Block

The directive identification block appears in the upper right corner of the first page, and contains:

Policies	a. Line 1— the directive type and number in bold print. b. Line 2—School Board. (Policies carry the designation of School Board as the department of primary responsibility.)
Subsequent page identification blocks are printed in the upper right corner and contain	a. Line 1—the type of directive and number in bold print. b. Line 2—the word “Page” and the sequential page number. c. Line 3 (notices only)—the effective date, assigned by the School Board Office, on all pages.
Attachment identification blocks are printed in the upper right corner of each attachment page and contain	a. Line 1—in bold, the word “Attachment” followed by a sequential alphabetical indicator (A, B, C, etc.) if there is more than one attachment. b. Line 2—the type of directive and directive number in bold print. c. Line 3—the word “Page” and the sequential page number beginning on the second page. d. Line 4 (notices only)—the effective date, assigned by the School Board Office, on all pages.

Title Block

The title block is placed two spaces below the directive identification block at the left margin on the first page. The title consists of three lines, using 1.5 line spacing and bold print: the series, the category, and the specific title assigned by the originating office.

An example of a first page identification and title block, as well as its page placement, is below:



Opening Sentence

The opening sentence follows two-line spaces below the title and indicates a new directive or the superseding of a previous version of the directive.

Policy Sections Titles

The language below shows the language for a policy's section titles and their order. Sections titles and order should not be altered without specific Governance Committee determination.

The first five that follow are usually to be found in each policy. Note that not all policies may need all sections, and as such, unnecessary sections are to be omitted. All previous policy titles before the date of publication of this guide should be phased out as policies are reviewed.

I. PURPOSE

II. SUMMARY OF CHANGES

III. DEFINITIONS

IV. PHILOSOPHY

V. POLICY/RESPONSIBILITIES

Reference Line(s)

Federal and state laws that are directly related to a directive are legal references. Legal references are cited first at the left margin on the last page of the directive. Cross references to other related Fairfax County Public School (FCPS) directives are printed at the left margin under the legal references using the notation "See also the current version(s) of:". The originating office is responsible for verifying the accuracy of the references. References to the Code of Virginia can be checked at https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode. Format examples of cited references are at the end of this regulation.

Attachment Notation

The attachment notation appears at the left margin under the cross references.

Authority Identifier

The authority identifier appears at the right margin under the attachment's notation. "Fairfax County School Board" is the authority for policies; "Fairfax County Public Schools" is the authority for regulations and notices. An example of the authority line notation is at the end of this regulation.

Consistent Use of Language

Purpose Section

The purpose of each policy should be a one-sentence statement outlining why a policy exists and the direction it provides.

Summary of Changes Section

Changes made to a policy from a previous version must be indicated in the Summary of Changes section in a bulleted list with a clear explanation of the change made. No other markings throughout the document should be utilized to indicate changes. When most of a policy is changed, consider making a blanket statement that "This policy has changed in its entirety."

Philosophy Section

The Philosophy section is intended to express a value that the School Board wants to communicate to the Division Superintendent and the public. The philosophy section should not merely direct to a regulation, nor should it be an affirmation of beliefs.

Following are the preferred phrases to use:

- "The Fairfax County School Board shall adhere.." [i.e., to VA code].
- "The Fairfax County School Board shall…" [i.e. be neutral in matters of personnel]. "The Fairfax County School Board recognizes that [ ]

Not: "The School Board affirms its belief that…"

Requested Nomenclature

- Use **"Division Superintendent."** Do not use just "Superintendent," nor reference to "their/his/her designee." The Division Superintendent is generally the only staff member named in policy. Therefore, it is unnecessary to include specific Leadership titles in policy.
- **Consideration for using "may"** or **"shall."** "May" means that it is optional. "Shall" means that it must happen. Use these words intentionally.
- **"Educational" or "Instructional" program.** Determine which to use and ensure consistency.
- Use **"parents and guardians."** This is the preferred term to be inclusive of the adults in students' lives. Avoid "caregivers" or "families."
- Use "**business day**," rather than "**workday**." Note that "calendar day" is something different.

- **References to gender.** Avoid individual pronouns and use plural pronouns.
- "**School Board employees**" means the employees in FCPS, which the School Board authorizes the Superintendent to manage. "**School Board *Office* employees**" means employees who work in the School Board office and report directly to the School Board.
- Define acronyms at first reference (i.e., Free and Appropriate Education [FAPE]).

Documenting Policy Versions

Recording Previous Version

A list of dates of previous versions is maintained at the end of each policy to indicate the dates of School Board action on each policy. These dates should be consistent in format and left justified, as seen in the example below.

Adopted: July 1, 1986
Revised: September 11, 1997
Revised: January 24, 2003
Reviewed: December 5, 2008
Reviewed: January 7, 2016

The terms "revised" and "reviewed" are used to indicate a history of what type of action was taken on the date provided. These terms should be used as outlined below:

- "Revised" means changes were made to the policy from the previous version when adopted.
- "Reviewed" indicates that after a thorough review, there were no changes made to the previous version of the policy.

** Please note that consistency in this terminology will be adopted upon adoption of this guide and may not indicate past practice.*

Archive of Previous Policy Versions

Previous versions of policies are memorialized in the publicly available document retention platformed used by the School Board. These documents are available on the date when the action was taken by the Board.

Hyperlink Referrals and Forms

The originating office is responsible for checking all hyperlinks. Hyperlinks "www.fcps.edu." Forms within a directive are to be referenced using a hyperlink.

Attachment A: Numbering System for Directives with Pertinent Topics

Series titles and their categories, along with pertinent topics, are listed below.

SERIES	PERTINENT TOPICS
1000s **ORGANIZATION, PHILOSOPHY, AND GOALS**	▪ Advisory Committees and School Community Groups ▪ Local School Organization and Administration ▪ Organizational Charts and Office Functions ▪ Philosophy and Goals ▪ Policies, Bylaws, and Regulations ▪ School Board Bylaws
2000s **SPECIAL SERVICES**	▪ Admissions, Residency, and Attendance ▪ Counseling Services ▪ Health and Welfare ▪ Promotion, Retention, Grading, and Graduation Requirements ▪ Psychological Services for Students ▪ Sociocultural Assessments and Procedures ▪ Special Education ▪ Student Records ▪ Student Rights and Responsibilities
3000s **INSTRUCTION**	▪ Adult and Community Education ▪ Career and Technical Education ▪ English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) ▪ Fine Arts ▪ Instructional Materials and Equipment ▪ Instructional Technology ▪ Special Programs ▪ Standard Instructional Program ▪ Student Activities and Honors ▪ Student Employment and Internships
4000s **HUMAN RESOURCES**	▪ Duties, Responsibilities, and Rights of Employees ▪ Employee Benefits–Including ERFC ▪ Employee Organizations ▪ Employment Actions and Records ▪ Equity and Compliance ▪ Leave and Leaves of Absence ▪ Professional Development ▪ Recruitment, Selection, and Appointment ▪ Salary Schedules and Guidelines ▪ Terms and Conditions of Employment–Temporary Personnel

5000s **FINANCE**	▪ Accounting ▪ Accounts Payable ▪ Auditing ▪ Budgeting ▪ Food Services ▪ General Policies and Procedures ▪ Grants ▪ Inventory ▪ Payroll ▪ Purchasing and Supply ▪ Revenue, Tuition, and Fees ▪ Risk Management ▪ School Activity Funds
6000s **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**	▪ Enterprise Applications and Data Management ▪ Records and Reporting Requirements ▪ Student Information Accounting and Management ▪ Technology Infrastructure ▪ Technology Planning ▪ Technology Support Services
7000s **COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH**	▪ Business and Community Partnership ▪ Digital Media Services ▪ Family and School Partnerships ▪ Media and Crisis Communications ▪ Web Services
8000s **FACILITIES**	▪ Facilities Design and Construction ▪ Facilities Management ▪ Facilities Planning ▪ Leasing and Community Use of Facilities ▪ Security, Safety, and Emergency Procedures ▪ Site and Building Acquisition and Disposal ▪ Transportation
9000s **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY**	▪ Leadership Development ▪ Professional Practice and Educational Planning ▪ Research and Program Evaluation ▪ Student Testing

Attachment B: Cover Memo Template

Attachment C: Policy Template