Student Activities Policy IGDA Review

Presented to the ACPS School Board
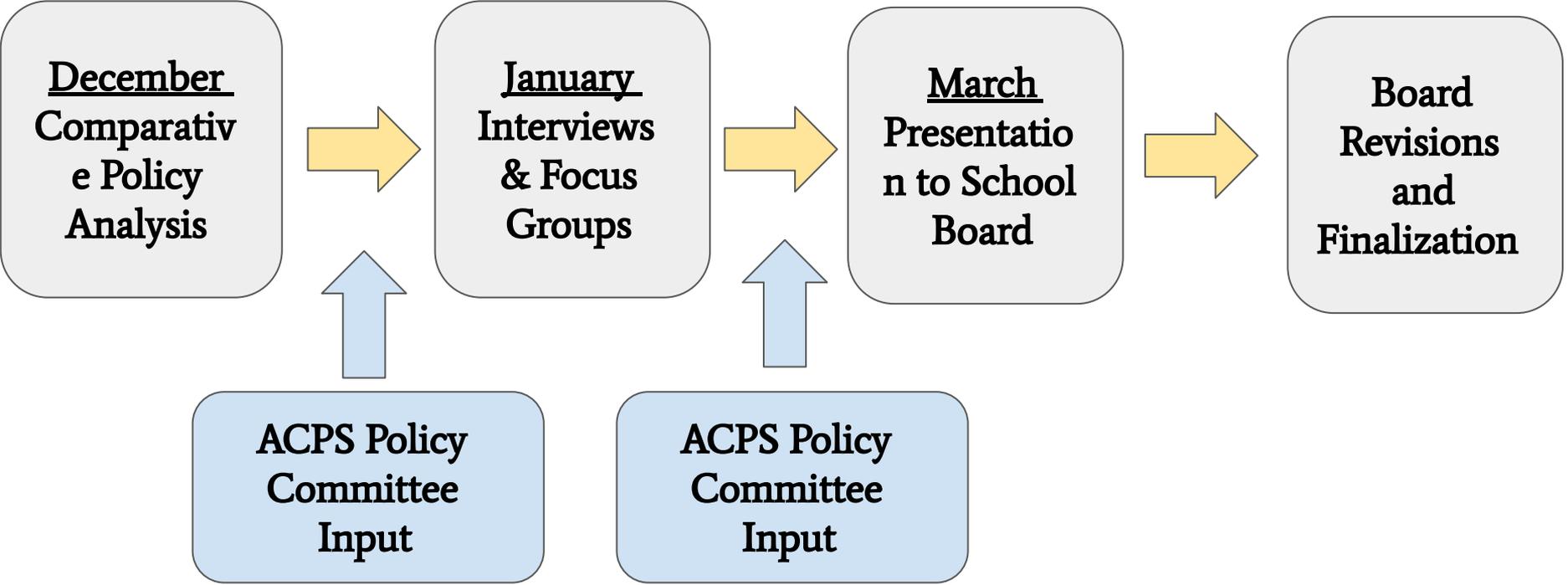### March 5th, 2026

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Agenda

- Process Overview
- Comparative Analysis Findings
- Interview & Focus Group Findings
- Suggested Revisions

Policy Revision Overview

December
Comparative Policy Analysis

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January
Interviews & Focus Groups

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March
Presentation to School Board

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Board Revisions and Finalization

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ACPS Policy Committee Input

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ACPS Policy Committee Input

Questions for Analysis:

- How does ACPS's policy on student activities **compare to peer divisions across Virginia** in clarity of guidance on secondary school student organization **creation**, **facility use**, **safety, viewpoint neutrality,** and **guest speakers**?
- What are **areas of convergence and divergence** across divisions' policies, and where does ACPS's policy fall within these?
- Based on a comparative analysis using the above questions and **feedback** from **students/faculty/caregivers**, what are **recommendations for ACPS to revise its policy** to improve clarity of guidance on these themes?

Method: Comparative Policy Analysis

- **Searched policy databases** for the following school districts, using keywords "club(s)", "extracurricular," and "student activities."
- Performed one round of **open-coding** on 12 district policies, CCPS and Fluvanna did not have identifiable policies using this methodology. MA used only for comparison.

Arlington	Fluvanna*
Augusta	Harrisonburg
Charlottesville City*	Henrico
Chesterfield	Stafford
Loudoun	Virginia Beach
Fairfax	York
Roanoke City	
Cambridge, MA	Boston, MA

Method: Comparative Policy Analysis

- Analyzed open codes in relation to School Board review criteria*.
- Added **codes on definitions, funding,** and **supervision.**
- Performed an additional round of **thematic coding**, using school board themes and those added through open coding.

School Board Themes

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Analytic Themes for Research

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Open Coding
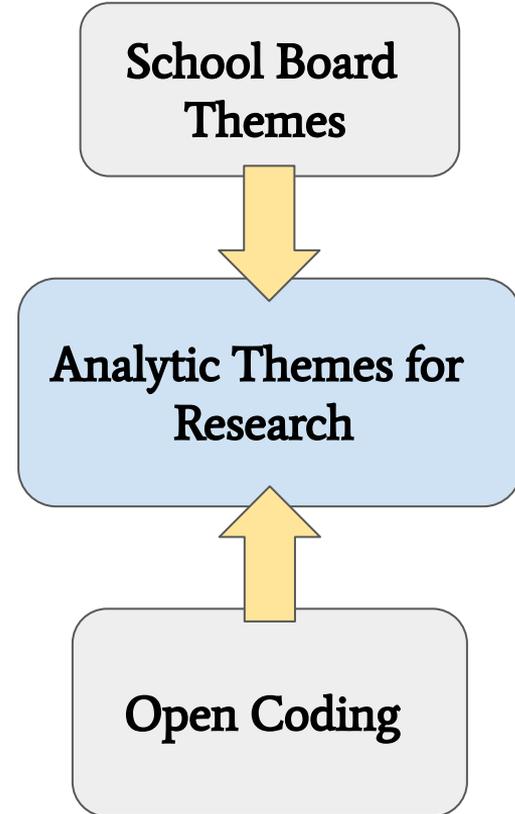
Interviews & Focus Groups

- Conducted semi-structured **interviews** and **focus groups** with **12 staff, students,** and **caregivers** representing AHS, MOHS, and WAHS as well as co- and non-curricular student organizations.
- Transcribed interviews and conducted **one round of open coding**, then triangulated with findings from comparative policy analysis.

The Value of Student Activities

"Clubs give you **a sense of place**. In [my club] our community is very tight knit and we're very passionate about keeping it alive. It's dear to our hearts, and **it makes us want to come to school**. It speaks to school beyond academics, and I think it's very important that [non-curricular] clubs don't get undermined, because they speak volumes to our school community" (Student).

"Clubs enabled [my student] to **meet new people** and explore a new side of herself. They **expanded** her **worldview** and **skillset**" (Family).

"I think that clubs and activities play an important role in developing our students and giving them **a full, well-rounded education**" (Staff).

Interview Themes:

- Benefits of a **chartering process**.
- Distinction between **co and non curricular activities**.
- Protect ability to **associate with outside groups**, but clarify role.
- Ensure establishment of groups that promote the **general welfare** of the student body - **promote understanding** among groups.
- **Clarify funding** for student activities.

Key Findings

- <u>Ambiguity in Chartering Process</u>
  How do student organizations form? What record is there of active organizations?
- <u>Lack of Financial Governance</u>
  How do student organizations manage funds? What is required for a fundraiser? What is the role of external funders to student organizations?
- <u>Little Guidance on External Involvement</u>
  What role(s), if any, can outside organizations play in student organizations?

Key Revision: Safety

Student organizations shall not engage in any activity which is contrary to law, School Board policy, or school rules; which disrupts or clearly threatens to disrupt the orderly operation of the school; which materially and substantially disrupt the school's learning environment; which hinder the school administration's maintenance of order and discipline on school premises; or which would adversely affect the health, safety, or welfare of any students or staff members. Student organizations that promote or endorse violence, harassment, or hatred toward an identifiable person or group based on race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, ancestry, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability; or are affiliated with any organizations that do so, shall not be permitted.

Base language derives from Chesterfield.

Language from the Student Code of Conduct Policy JFC

Key Revision: Definition of Co vs. Non Curricular

Section B: Co-curricular Student Organizations

… Examples of co-curricular organizations are academic honor societies, language clubs, student government, academic course related clubs, career and technical education organizations, yearbook, performance groups related to the fine arts and other similar activities. The activities of these organizations must meet one of the following criteria:

1. the club's subject matter must be taught in a regularly offered course or relate directly to the overall academic curriculum;
2. participation in the club must be required as part of a course; or
3. participation in the club results in course credit.

Several divisions provide examples for clarity. Language from Henrico.

Federal Equal Access Act specifies any *one* of these

Key Revision: Definition of Co vs. Non Curricular

Section C: Non-curricular Student Organizations

Students are also permitted to organize and conduct meetings of non-curricular student organizations to pursue activities outside of the school curriculum, subject to the provisions of this policy and in accordance with state and federal law. Non-curricular student organizations are initiated by students with recreational, community, religious, political, or other interests that are not part of the school curriculum. Such organizations must meet all of the following guidelines:

1. Students must voluntarily attend club meetings;
2. Clubs must be student-initiated, student-led, and be open to all students;
3. Clubs must *not* be ~~sponsored~~ funded or led by the school, teachers, or other faculty;
4. Clubs cannot have an unlawful purpose.

Examples provided for clarity. Base language from Chesterfield.

Required by Federal law. Specified in procedures; moved to policy.

Board Priority: Facility Use

Section C, 1:

All non-curricular student organizations must have access to school facilities and <u>physical</u> resources equal to the access of co-curricular student organizations, such as equal access to meeting spaces, public address systems, school periodicals, bulletin board space, and fundraising ~~on school grounds~~ <u>activities</u>.

Existing policy was sufficient in outlining facility use.

Key Revision: Role of Staff in Non-curricular

Non-curricular student organizations shall not have a faculty sponsor; however, a member of the school's professional staff shall attend every meeting or activity of such organizations as a monitor for purposes of general supervision, organizational support, and compliance with the student conduct policy…. School employees present at any meeting of a non-curricular student organization which includes political activity, religious worship, prayer or practice; or is identified as having a political or religious purpose shall attend in a non-participatory capacity only.

Added broader definition of examples from Fairfax policy.

Board Priority: Guest Speakers

Section D, 2:

In-person guest speakers during the school day shall be invited only by co-curricular student organizations and must present content related to the curriculum. In-person guest speakers shall not be permitted for non-curricular activities during the school day. A request for approval for all guest speakers shall be submitted to the principal or designee for review and include the purpose, content, and duration of the speech.

Existing policy strictly limits the role of non-enrolled students in non-curricular organizations. Per family and student feedback, adds a limit on guest speakers during the school day for non-curricular activities.

Board Priority: Viewpoint Neutrality

Section D, 2:

No student organization shall be denied equal access to school facilities during designated meeting times on the basis of the religious, political, philosophical or other content of the speech at the meetings of such organization. No public funding or support shall be extended to any <u>non-curricular</u> student organization other than the opportunity to meet on school premises on an equal basis as other student organizations.

Existing policy ensures viewpoint neutrality in establishment of student organizations and prohibition of public funding for non-curricular activities.

Key Revision: Messaging in Schools

Section D, 2:

The principal of each school shall develop guidelines and rules concerning the procedure for scheduling meetings of student organizations and setting the times and facilities which are available for such meetings. Meeting times shall be limited to non-instructional time before or after regular classroom hours or during established activities periods. These guidelines and rules shall be made available to all students. Student organizations may hand out flyers and post announcements and other materials only with prior approval of the principal or designee to ensure compliance with school board policies and school regulations. Student organizations wishing to conduct meetings under this policy must make application to the principal for permission in accordance with School Division procedures.

Added per recommendation of families and sponsors for clarification of when student orgs can post material and hand out flyers.

Key Revision: Fundraising

Section D, 3:

All fundraising by student organizations, both inside and outside of the school, requires prior principal or designee approval per School Board policies KJA, KJB, and JL. All monies raised or collected by student organizations or clubs shall be school activity funds, and shall be deposited promptly with the school. Fundraising by and for student organizations outside of the school shall comply with School Board Policies KJA, KJB, and JL and all monies raised in this manner shall be expended only for the purpose approved by the principal or designee. If a student organization is dissolved, the student activity funds continue to belong to the school.

Added per recommendation of School Board and ACPS counsel.

Clarified funds raised as student activity funds, with Virginia Beach & Chesterfield as models.

Clarified out-of-school fundraising to be consistent with policies KJA, KJB, and JL.

Board Priority: Creation of Student Groups

Procedures A, 3:

All new student organizations must submit to the principal or designee an application for approval that includes a constitution describing the purpose, type (co or non-curricular), activities, membership or fee requirements (if any), outside group affiliations (if any), and staff sponsor or monitor of the group. Approval will be based on criteria applied equally to all proposed organizations, including compliance with all school board policies, and may include a minimum number of students interested. The school will maintain and update approved student organization constitutions for as long as the group operates within the school. Non-curricular student organizations approved in this way will be sponsored only through equal access to use of facilities and will receive no public funding. The purpose and content of meetings for non-curricular groups will not be considered as endorsed by the school.

Added language specifying a group charter to include a purpose statement and activities. Language modeled on Chesterfield County, Virginia Beach, and York County.

Key Revision: List of Student Groups

Procedures A, 4:

The total program of activities in the school should be comprehensive and well-balanced, providing many and varied opportunities for all students. The updated program will be shared by the beginning of the second quarter via an annual message to families and posting on the school's website and also shared with the Assistant Superintendent of School Community engagement. This communication will include a brief description of each student organization based on the group's approved constitution.

Per family and student suggestion, requires updating list of student activities annually and distributing the list to the community and school division, with Fairfax as a model.

Opportunities to Improve ACPS Policy

- **Expand definition of co-curricular** to include student leadership and honor societies.
- **Add an application process** to charter student organizations, and communicate existing organizations annually to the division, school board, and community.
- **Clarify funding regulations** for student organizations: fundraising, donations, use of student activity funds and cooperation with ACPS finance.

Opportunities to Improve ACPS Policy

- **Update** and **strengthen safety language** to include relevant policy.
- **Clarify association of student organizations with outside groups**
- **Clarify guest speaker regulations** - use language similar to Fairfax and ensure all in-person speakers align with curriculum.
- **Ensure student voice** - build professional learning around procedures for this policy that ensure student voice and agency is centered in the creation and implementation of student activities.