



## SOUTH KINGSTOWN SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

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Robert A. Hicks, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

May 22, 2009

David Abbott, Deputy Commissioner  
Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
255 Westminster Street  
Providence, RI 02822

Dear Deputy Commissioner Abbott:

I write to follow up on a conversation held with Director of High School Reform Roy Seitsinger, which I believe he carried forward to you. It concerns the recently adopted regulations on the Learning Environment in Middle and High Schools, common planning time in the middle school, and specifically language indicating that current common planning time may not be reduced (L-6-4.5).

In response to declining enrollment and to become more efficient and maintain programs for students, South Kingstown will reorganize its middle schools effective September, 2009. Instead of two middle schools, each containing grades 6, 7, and 8, Curtis Corner Middle School will house grades 7 and 8 and Broad Rock Middle School will house grade 6. This allows us to save approximately three-quarters of a million dollars while maintaining programs for students.

The grade 7 and 8 school will replicate the current middle school schedule in place in both schools up until the close of this year. However, in creating a schedule and program for the newly organized, and much smaller, grade 6 school we are unable to replicate the existing schedule, including common planning time. Still, our grade 6 school will be a middle school and will exceed the 2012 standard in the regulations of 30 minutes of common planning time four days a week.

My understanding of RIDE's interpretation of the regulations is that the prohibition on reductions in common planning time refers to time that exceeds the current standard but does not meet the 2012 standard, indicating that we may reduce common planning time as long as the 2012 standard is maintained. As such, the reorganized Broad Rock Middle School would be in compliance with the regulatory standard. I would be appreciative of a reply confirming my understanding.

Sincerely,  
  
Robert Hicks



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
Shepard Building  
255 Westminster Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Peter McWalters  
Commissioner

June 17, 2009

Robert A. Hicks, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
South Kingstown School Department  
307 Curtis Corner Road  
Wakefield, RI 02879-2106

Dear Superintendent Hicks:

Thank you for your letter of May 22, 2009, in which you request clarification regarding common planning time as specified in the recently adopted regulations, ***K-12 Literacy, Restructuring of the Learning Environment at the Middle and High School Levels, and Proficiency Based Graduation Requirements (PBGR) at High Schools***. It is my understanding after having read your letter, and in conferring with Roy Seitsinger, Director of Middle and High School Reform, that in the district's efforts to reorganize the middle schools, scheduling for common planning time has been altered. As you state in your letter, L-6-4.5 of the above regulations specifically states that common planning time cannot be reduced:

Effective immediately, all Rhode Island middle level schools and high schools shall require weekly common planning time of a minimum of 30 minutes per session. However, local educational agencies shall not reduce the number of sessions or amount of time allotted to common planning time currently practiced. By the year 2012, common planning time must increase to at least two weekly (30 minute) sessions at the high school level and at least four weekly (30 minute) sessions at the middle level.

The goal of these regulations is for middle and high schools to meet the stated common planning time standards by the year 2012. Although you have reduced common planning time in order to devise a workable schedule at the middle level; you have not reduced common planning time below the 2012 standard of four 30 minute common planning time sessions per week. As such, you are in compliance with the regulations cited above as long as common planning time is maintained at this level.

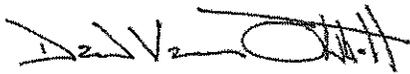
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Robert A. Hicks, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
June 17, 2009  
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Should this common planning time be reduced so as to go below the 2012 standard, please inform RIDE immediately. Thank you for your efforts to abide by the spirit of the regulations and I wish you luck with your reorganization efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David V. Abbott". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "D" and "V", followed by "A", "B", "B", "O", "T", and "T".

David V. Abbott  
Deputy Commissioner

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