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Sent: Friday, June 11, 2021 5:49 PM

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Subject: Superintendent's Statement Regarding Mailer

This email is being sent to the entire school committee. Please do not reply to all.

Please see the statement that is being sent out on the listserv and will be posted.

Rob - can you please forward this to the Town Council?

Thank you,

Linda

Superintendent's Statement Regarding Mailer

Most people understand that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits the disclosure of certain student records. It is important to know, however, that FERPA's protection is not absolute, and it is the standard operating procedure for school departments throughout Rhode Island to have policies and practices concerning the disclosure of "directory information" for their students. In this regard, both the law itself and federal guidance from the United States Department of Education states that directory information includes information such as student name, address, and telephone listing. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/faq.html#q4>.

During the course of my 30 plus year career as a school administrator, both here in South Kingstown and when I served as an Assistant Superintendent in another district, I have received requests from various people and entities for such directory information. During my tenure as Superintendent, we have provided directory information to various people requesting that information. On April 8, I received a request on behalf of Friends of South Kingstown Schools for directory information. The request was not different in kind from requests I had received previously for directory information. Consistent with our prior practice and informed by SK policy, I provided directory information to Stacey Bodziony, the Friends of South Kingstown Schools contact. That ended my involvement with the disclosure of student information. I am aware that many in our community were incredibly upset by the fact that a mailer supporting the bond was sent to South Kingstown residents, and were even more upset that the mailer was addressed to children. I am very sorry that this occurred. Please know that neither I nor the school committee sent a mailer to SK residents and we had no idea that any person would be sending a mailer addressed to school children. In that regard, let me be very clear, neither I nor the school committee provided directory information to the AFL-CIO, but it does appear that the AFL-CIO may have received directory information from those who had made legitimate requests to the school department for directory information.

I am also deeply sorry that I delayed in telling the school committee and our greater school community that I had provided directory information to the Friends of South Kingstown Schools. In my mind, I had not connected the dots from the request to mailers that were sent to the community, but in retrospect, I should have made those connections. This was a mistake. I do wish that I had informed the school committee sooner about providing the directory information to the Friends of South Kingstown Schools, and for that, I apologize.

As a result of these events, I am aware that the school committee is revising its policies surrounding the disclosure of directory information. I absolutely agree with this so that the entire school community understands both what federal law prohibits and what it does not prohibit.



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