

PURCHASING POLICY

1. The School Committee, via the Director of Administration and Finance, shall authorize all purchases within the approved budget or approved by transfer for the use of the schools and shall furnish the same for use and safe keeping as the School Committee may direct.
2. All purchases shall be made on the approved District purchase order form, authorized by the administrator making the request, signed by the Director of Administration and Finance and transmitted to the vendor via a written purchase order form or by electronic means. As an exception to the purchase order requirement, the District may maintain a credit card for these instances (e.g. purchase of airline tickets or when a vendor will not accept a purchase order). The Director of Administration will develop and issue a protocol for use of the credit card, which shall be kept in a secure location. Expenditures made using the card shall be audited annually.
3. Before finalizing any single item purchase exceeding \$250, available prices from the RI Division of Purchases Master Price Agreement shall be reviewed.
4. All purchases of an emergency nature will be in accordance with RIGL 45-55-8. A purchase order will be generated as soon as possible following the emergency. Emergency purchases may be made when there exists a threat to public health, welfare, or safety. Emergency situations include but are not limited to:
 - i. Failure of a school building facility or system such as the heating system, water supply, or technology support system,
 - ii. Loss of building integrity due to weather, fire damage or vermin infestation,
 - iii. Direction provided by an authority, i.e., fire marshal, building inspector, with an urgent timeline,
 - iv. Shortage of programmed instructional materials, textbooks, or personnel.Emergency purchases shall be made with as much competition as is practical under the circumstances. A written determination of the basis for the emergency and for the selection of the particular vendor shall be included in the purchasing files.
5. Purchases may be made through available state contracts and the RI Division of Purchases Master Price Agreement; through state, regional, or national cooperative purchasing plans; or in cooperation with other districts or educational agencies where the exact item has been bid. In these cases, competitive quoting and competitive bidding shall not be required.
6. The Director of Administration and Finance shall be empowered to authorize purchases of less than five thousand dollars (\$5,000) or less than ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for construction purchases, in accordance with RIGL 45-55-9, provided money for same is in the approved budget or approved by transfer.

7. Competitive Quote Process:

The School Committee requires competitive quotes for procuring supplies and services for any single item purchase or any multiple item purchase available from a single vendor, which exceeds \$3,500. Purchases of supplies and services between \$3,500 and \$5,000, or in the case of construction between \$3,500 and \$10,000, shall be made only after the solicitation of three quotations, in accordance with RIGL 45-55-9, that further requires that no purchasing transaction that is essentially a single unit may be subdivided to circumvent the requirement for competitive quoting. Competitive quotes are not required when purchases are made in accord with #5 above and may replace those made under #3 above when the total purchase amount exceeds \$3,500.

Whenever this process is used, the results shall be documented, with documentation retained in accordance with the Retention of Records Policy. After review by the Director of Administration and Finance, who will give consideration to the lowest responsible responder, the purchase(s) shall be made.

8. Competitive Bidding Process:

In accordance with RIGL 45-55-5 (with reference to 45-55-9), sealed bids shall be solicited for any purchase of supplies, materials, equipment or services performed that will exceed \$5,000, or in the case of construction as defined in state law, in excess of \$10,000. The School Committee may increase or decrease these amounts in accordance with RIGL 45-55-5 through 45-55-9.

The process for soliciting sealed bids shall be as follows:

- a. Public notice shall be posted on the District website and will be provided to a list of approved vendors, said list to be maintained by the Director of Administration and Finance. The School Committee may also require that the notice be placed in a newspaper of local and/or statewide circulation, in accordance with RIGL 45-55-5.
- b. The bid notice shall state the latest date that bids will be accepted and where bid packages, if any, may be picked up; and notify bidders that there shall be a public opening of bids between seven (7) and twenty-one (21) days from the date of the notice, and that the purchase shall be awarded on the basis of lowest bid price or lowest evaluated or responsive bid price. If lowest evaluated or responsive bid price is used, the objective measurable criteria to be utilized shall be set forth in the invitation to bid.
- c. All bidders who have submitted a bid shall be notified of the time and place of bid opening, which shall be held in public, in accordance with RIGL 45-55-5. The Director of Administration and Finance shall recommend to the Superintendent an award or that none of the bids are acceptable. The School Committee may approve or reject this recommendation. If an award is approved, the successful bidder shall be notified in writing.

9. **Competitive Negotiations:**

If the competitive bid process fails to yield a contract acceptable to the School Committee, an award may be negotiated in accordance with RIGL 45-55-6 and the process below:

 - a. Contracts may be competitively negotiated when the School Committee, with a recommendation from the Superintendent, determines that the bid prices received are:
 - i. Unreasonable as to all or part of the requirements,
 - ii. Not independently reached in open competition, or
 - iii. In excess of funds available to make the award to the lowest responsive bidder.
 - b. In the case of (i) or (ii), all bidders shall be afforded the opportunity to negotiate a contract. In the case of (iii), the lowest three bidders shall be afforded an opportunity. The negotiated price must be lower than the lowest rejected bid price from the sealed bid process of #7 above, and must be the lowest negotiated price. Any discussions regarding revisions to specifications must be held with all bidders eligible to negotiate.
 - c. All bidders shall be notified of the negotiations in the manner of #7 above and all other applicable provisions of RIGL 45-55-6 shall apply.
10. **Sole Source Procurement**
 - a. The School Committee may authorize a sole source procurement of supplies, services, or the award of a contract, when it is determined that the item is only available from a single vendor, in accordance with RIGL 45-55-8 (a).
 - b. Sole source procurement may be authorized following an internal formalized search by representative committee, for items including but limited to textbooks, software, and computer hardware. The results of the search shall be provided to the school committee.
11. Before bids are issued and purchases are made, existing warranties and guarantees should be reviewed and acted upon, if necessary.
12. The School Committee shall give consideration to the bid of the lowest responsible bidder (kind, quality and materials being equal), but shall have the right to reject any or all bids or select a single item from any bid.
13. Any member of the staff who does not follow processes described above may, as minimum disciplinary action, have a letter of reprimand placed in his/her personnel file. Under no circumstances shall an employee use a personal checking or credit card for District purchases.
14. Applicable RIGL Chapter 45-55 shall control in areas not covered by this policy.

Revised 11-10-97, 2-9-10, 9-27-11, Revised and effective 1-23-14, Revised and effective 3-11-14, Revised 9-27-16 and effective 11-1-16, Revised 7-23-19 and effective 9-1-19