



# Highline Public Schools Board Action Report

☒ Supports the Strategic Plan

DATE: October 30, 2019

FROM: Dr. Susan Enfield, Superintendent

LEAD STAFF: Dr. Steve Grubb, Chief Talent Officer

For Introduction: November 6, 2019 For Action: November 20, 2019

## **I. TITLE** Workplace Environment and Culture - Policy 5000

**II. WHY BOARD ACTION IS NECESSARY** Board action is necessary to approve this new policy to continue the work of our Equity Policy 0010 and strategic plan for our staff to thrive in equitable workplace environments and cultures to better impact equity and success for our students.

## **III. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

This policy stems from exit surveys and interviews where "workplace environment" was indicated as a leading reason, by staff, for exiting our district. A statement regarding what our district believes must be true of our workplace environment and culture (distinct from working conditions) so that staff can work to succeed in supporting and enacting our Equity Policy 0010 and strategic plan. Following conversations from the Board and Cabinet Retreat, the Highline Public Schools Leadership Forum engaged with the policy and shared great excitement, feedback, and a call to make a bold statement about our workplace environment and culture in connection to equity. This draft policy has undergone multiple revisions to stakeholders and a diverse steering committee. This policy will become a part of staff orientation.

## **IV. RECOMMENDED MOTION**

I move that the Highline School Board approve new policy 5000 Workplace Environment and Culture.

## **V. FISCAL IMPACT/REVENUE SOURCE**

Fiscal impact to this action will be (amount and source including fund Example - \$522,000 from general fund Title 1 revenue).

At this time there has been no newly identified fiscal impact to this policy. Additional funds may be needed as activities are started throughout the school year.

The revenue source for this motion is NA.

Expenditure: ☐ One-time ☐ Annual

## **VI. APPLICABLE POLICY(S)**

This action is in compliance with the following: Highline Public Schools Equity Policy (0010)

## **VII. ALTERNATIVES**

The alternative is to continue the current narrative of our workplace environment as a key reason for staff - particularly our staff of color - leaving Highline Public Schools.

## **VIII. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Community Engagement Required: ☐ Yes ☒ No

Various stakeholders provided feedback and input on the policy through its various iterations. Such groups included the Highline School Board, Cabinet, Leadership Forum, the 5000 Policy Revision Steering Committee (including school and central office personnel), as well as the Bilingual Paraeducators of Highline Public Schools. This policy is

focused on staff within Highline Public Schools.

#### **IX. POLICY MONITORING PLAN**

This ☒ new or ☐ revised policy will be monitored by the School Board:

☐ Quarterly   ☐ Semi-Annually   ☒ Annually   ☐ Not Applicable

The metrics that will be used to monitor this policy include: The metrics used to monitor this policy will be determined (including exit surveys and interviews) as we implement. This first year of implementation will highlight key areas of opportunity to apply targeted metrics as the policy continues to be reviewed and revised following approval.

#### **X. ATTACHMENTS**

Policy 5000 - Workplace Environment and Culture - For Approval



## **Policy 5000 – WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE**

Highline Public Schools is deeply engaged in work around equity, race and identity to better foster and support an environment in which our students, families, and staff grow, thrive, and succeed. This work, and the language used to describe it, is rapidly evolving. This policy will be reviewed at least annually to reflect current practices and language.

It is the belief of the Highline School Board that our workplace environment should be a place that embodies the beliefs in our Equity Policy (0010), is productive, and supports the free flow of ideas without fear, intimidation or retaliation. In order to fully execute that policy we are committed to ensuring workplaces that respect our staff as individuals, including a recognition of individual characteristics such as race and ethnicity; language abilities; physical abilities; socioeconomic status; country of origin; sexual orientation including gender expression or identity; age; gender; and military status.

“Workplace environment” is defined as the tangible and cultural conditions in which we find ourselves while at work. We use the term workplace environment, distinct from “working conditions,” to include times when you are in your work space or classroom, as well as in other work spaces, including any district facility or event.

We have a shared commitment to our students and their success, and bring with us individual beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, and cultures. Staff are expected to respect those differences. Our students observe us and model their behavior after ours. Staff therefore must serve as appropriate models for respectful problem-solving.

We believe a positive workplace environment leads to equitable, inclusive, supportive, and responsive learning environments for students and believe that student success is enhanced when the adults around them feel welcomed, valued, safe, and respected at work.

We acknowledge that terms such as “respect” and “safe” are deeply rooted in cultures and experiences and have different meanings for different cultures, which is why we must recognize, accept and address the impact of our actions. “Recognizing, accepting and addressing the impact of our actions” means that when made aware that our actions or words have harmed another person we will reflect and acknowledge, rather than become defensive or deny the impact. This does not imply that the action or words were *intended* to harm—simply that they did. There are specific behaviors which promote inequitable and discriminatory workplace environments and that limit the success of our students and colleagues. These behaviors may occur once or repeatedly, and can create a negative impact on individuals within

the workplace. Such behaviors can create inequitable, non-inclusive, and/or discriminatory workplace environments, and may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Microaggressions
- Implicit biases that impact interactions, decisions and judgments about the capability of a colleague or staff member
- Behavior that is perceived as bullying or harassing
- Actions that manipulate relationships and/or resources to unfairly position one over another as a form of coercion or manipulation for self or group advantage
- Repeated interruption of another individual who is speaking at an appropriate time
- Vulgar, obscene, triggering, or profane gestures, slurs, words, visuals, or displays that create an uncomfortable, discriminatory, and/or unwanted workplace environment
- The use of personal epithets
- Gesturing in a manner that elicits fear in another individual

All staff members are charged with recognizing and addressing instances where we are not aligned with our vision for being an equity-focused district. When our actions or statements are not aligned with this vision or focus, staff should engage in a direct, courageous, and crucial conversation with their colleague(s) who is(are) involved in not upholding this policy.

While there are multiple ways to engage in these conversations or identify inappropriate action and/or behavior, four common methods are:

- **Name the action you believe** was inequitable or discriminatory by naming the behavior in the moment and asking that it stop
- **Question the comment or action** by addressing the person who engaged in the offensive behavior
- **Explain why** you believe the action was inequitable or discriminatory
- **Echo and support** others when they speak out

Staff who want support in intervening or engaging in such conversations are encouraged to raise the matter with their supervisor. Staff can also request a neutral in-district mediator from their supervisor or the Human Resources department.

This workplace environment and culture policy supplements staff protections – including systemic investigations and remedies - afforded under the policies cross-referenced below.

The Superintendent or designee is authorized to develop procedures for implementing this policy and will review this policy annually.

**District Cross Reference:**

Equity Policy – Policy 0010

Nondiscrimination and Equitable Employment Practices – Policy 5010

Sexual Harassment of District Staff Prohibited – Policy 5011

Resolution of Staff Complaints – Policy 5270

**WSSDA Cross References:**

N/A

**Legal Reference:**

N/A

Highline School District 401

Adopted by the Board: 11.19

Classification: Discretionary