

BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
Via Video Conference – Google Meet
December 21, 2020 – 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Giuliano Cecchinelli, Chair - (BC)
J. Guy Isabelle, Vice-Chair - (At-Large)
Emel Cambel (BC)
Andrew McMichael (BC Community Member)
Jon Valsangiacomo – (BT Community Member) – departed the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF PRESENT:

David Wells, Superintendent
Mary Ellen Simmons, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
Luke Aither, SHS Assistant Principal
Scott Griggs, CVCC Assistant Director
Pierre Laflamme, BCEMS Assistant Principal

GUESTS:

Jameson Davis Arielle King

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mr. Cecchinelli, called the Monday, December 21, 2020, meeting to order at 5:30 p.m., which was held via video conference.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add 5.3.10 Racial Equity Policy. This item will be the first item for discussion at tonight's meeting.

Brief discussion was held regarding the Title IX Policy. Due to time constraints, the Board tabled the First Reading of the policy, but did not refer the policy back to the Policy Committee.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 Approval of Minutes – November 16, 2020 Policy Committee Meeting

The Committee agreed by consensus to approve the Minutes of the November 16, 2020 Policy Committee Meeting.

5. New Business

5.1 Review of BSU Policy Manual Index

A copy of the BUUSD Policy Manual Index (dated 12/10/20) was distributed.

Mr. Wells advised that all of the highlighted policies are on this evening's agenda. No additional discussion was held.

5.2 VSBA Model Policies

A document titled VSBA Current Policies Work – 12/13/20 was distributed.

A copy of the VSBA Policy Index was distributed.

Mr. Wells advised there was no new information to report. No additional discussion was held.

5.3 Policies to Discuss

Copies of policies referenced in Agenda Items 6.3.1 through 5.3.9 were distributed.

5.3.1 Substitute Teachers Policy (B1) – Required Policy / VSBA updated 10/11/19

This policy was adopted by the Board on 06/13/19. Mr. Aither proposes removing section 5 (Administrative Responsibilities), as he believes those responsibilities are procedures. The VSBA and BUUSD policies advised that wages are to be paid per diem. The

BUUSD pays hourly. Mrs. Poulin queried the removal of this section as it advises regarding matters that she perceives to be part of policy, not procedure, e.g. the policy requirement to conduct annual substitute orientation sessions, required training, pay determination by the Superintendent, payment methods, etc. If these items are procedural, they can no longer be required as they are no longer part of the policy and become optional. Clarification was requested as to why VSBA believes substitutes should be paid per diem, but the BUUSD has opted to pay hourly. It was noted that the VSBA policy was last reviewed 2 years after the BUUSD adopted its current policy, and VSBA did keep the per diem portion in the model policy. The BUUSD policy does state that wages are paid per diem, though wages are being paid hourly. It was noted that Mrs. Marold is not in attendance at tonight's meeting, which is primarily for the discussion of HR policies. It was clarified that the substitute orientations referred to in the policy are not for 'new substitutes', they are for all substitutes, and differ from new employee orientation meetings. Mrs. Poulin believes these are important meetings. Mr. Wells suggested that this policy be discussed at the next meeting with Mrs. Marold in attendance.

The Committee agreed to table discussion until the January meeting.

5.3.2 B20 – Personnel Recruitment, Selection, Appointment, and Background Checks Policy (B20)

Recommended Policy – VSBA updated 03/03/20

Mr. Aither suggests removing the Recruitment, Selection, and Appointment sections, as he believes them to be procedures.

The Committee agreed by consensus to remove the sections indicated and to present a First Reading of policy B20 to the Board.

5.3.3 Complaints About Personnel & Instructional Materials Policy (B22)

Recommended Policy – VSBA updated 03/03/20

Brief discussion was held regarding sections of the VSBA policy that should be removed, and one 'typo' was identified. Mr. Aither would like sections of the policy removed. Mr. Wells believes some of these items are important and should be kept in the policy. Mr. Wells will work with Mr. Aither to revise the policy.

This policy will be added to the January Policy Committee Agenda.

5.3.4 Staffing and Job Descriptions Policy (B30)

Policy to be considered – VSBA updated 03/29/09

After brief discussion, the Committee agreed that they do not wish to have the Board adopt this policy. Concern was voiced that the Board should be aware of policies that are not being presented to them for adoption. It was suggested that the policy be added to the BUUSD Policy Index with a notation that the policy was reviewed by the Committee and the Committee opted not to present the policy for adoption.

The Committee agreed by consensus that the policy be placed on the January Board Agenda, with a notation that Policy B30 has been reviewed by the Committee, and the Committee recommends that the policy not be adopted.

5.3.5 Educator Supervision & Evaluation: Probationary Teachers Policy (B31)

Policy to be considered – VSBA updated 03/29/09

Mr. Aither advised that the items listed in the policy are covered under sections 4.6 and 4.7 of the Master Agreement. The Committee agreed not to present this policy for adoption by the BUUSD.

The Committee agreed by consensus that the policy be placed on the January Board Agenda, with a notation that Policy B31 has been reviewed by the Committee, and the Committee recommends that the policy not be adopted.

5.3.6 Personnel Files Policy (B32)

Policy to be considered - VSBA updated 03/29/09

Mr. Aither/Mr. Wells advised that information contained in this policy is covered under the Master Agreement (Article 20.3). It was noted that not all employees impacted by this policy are covered under the Master Agreement. Mr. Isabelle queried regarding HR's opinion on whether or not this policy and other HR related policies should be adopted.

Mr. Wells will consult with Mrs. Marold regarding HR's opinion and this policy will be placed on the January Agenda.

5.3.7 Resignations Policy (B33)

Policy to be considered – VSBA updated 03/29/09

Mr. Wells advised that legal counsel has advised that there is not much the BUUSD can do if a teacher decides to resign. There is statute in place that if a teacher resigns from a teaching contract during the academic year, they are now allowed to teach within Vermont for a year. Mr. Wells advised that legal counsel has also advised that the Board does not need to approve resignations. Additionally, Mr. Wells advised that other than during this year, which is much different because of COVID, it is rare that a teacher resigns during the academic year.

The Committee agreed by consensus that the policy be placed on the January Board Agenda, with a notation that Policy B33 has been reviewed by the Committee, and the Committee recommends that the policy not be adopted.

5.3.8 Firearms Policy (C5)

Required Policy– amended policy

Mr. Aither advised that under the Implementation section, the words “of Social and Rehabilitative Services” and the word “Commissioner” be removed. Mr. Aither would prefer to remove the Implementation section in its entirety. If only two words are being struck from the policy, it would be considered a non-substantive change and does not require Board approval. If the Implementation section is to be removed, it will require Board approval. Discussion was held regarding removal of Implementation sections, and the impact it has for parents. Parents will need to find both policies and associated procedures when they need to find information. Discussion was held regarding changing on-line access so that links to procedures are linked to policies for ease of access by community members. Discussion of linking policies and procedures will be added to next month’s agenda. Mr. Isabelle voiced concern that by removing some portions of implementation sections, procedures may not be written and there is no individual who is named as being responsible for seeing that procedures are written. If a policy names who is responsible, there is accountability.

The Committee agreed by consensus to remove the Implementation section of the policy and to present a First Reading of policy C5 to the Board.

5.3.9 Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students Policy (C28)

Recommended Policy.

Mr. Isabelle voiced concern regarding how this policy may tie into the Field Trips policy. Mr. Aither reported that there is a Committee of students, staff, and administrators who are working on developing procedures related to overnight requests, rooming requests, etc. Mr. Wells believes rooming for transgender and gender non-conforming students is important and there should be a policy in place. Discussion also included procedures related to student records, including name preferences, and procedures would apply to all students, not just for transgender and gender nonconforming students. Ms. Cambel queried regarding implementation of this policy without procedures first being in place.

The Committee agreed by consensus to present a First Reading of policy C28 to the Board.

5.3.10 Racial Equity Policy

A document titled ‘VLS Students Draft Anti-Racism Policy’ was distributed. Ms. Simmons introduced Arielle King. It was noted that Jameson Davis will be joining the meeting later. Ms. King provided an overview of her background, advising that she is a third year student at Vermont Law School, and is half owner of Righting Wrongs, LLC. This organization is a consulting group that provides school districts and organizations with Anti-Racism Policies. The consulting group started last summer and included creation of a Teacher’s Guide. A policy is necessary to help assure that there are protections in place for students. The process for creating a policy for the District involves meeting with the Board, holding discussions with faculty members, alumni, and others, in order to determine the current climate within the district. A questionnaire has been developed for the purposes of gathering information. After discussions and review of the questionnaires, a first draft of a policy would be written. The draft policy would be updated based on feedback from the Committee and the Board. In response to a query, Ms. King advised that Righting Wrongs is not working on a model policy for the VSBA. This option was explored, but it was deemed that it would be more beneficial to write policies for districts based on their specific needs. The proposed policy would provide a process by which issues can be resolved. Mr. Wells advised that in discussions with VSBA, it was noted that an anti-racism policy should come from the School Board, as that sends the strongest message. Mr. Wells believes that starting with the Policy Committee is the first step in creation of an anti-racism policy. Mr. Wells believes this policy should be in place prior to starting on other initiatives, e.g. an equity audit, review of library collections, and review of curriculum. Ms. King advised that the timeframe to create a policy would be determined based on the needs of the Board, but that generally, a policy is written within two weeks of receiving input from all areas (including questionnaires). Policies also address accountability and enforcement. Policies for other districts included required posting of anti-racism statements and generation of annual reports. If the District wishes to move forward, Ms. King would like the BUUSD to offer up some dates when they would like to have some district/community conversations regarding race/racism within the district. Additionally, Ms. King advised that they also ask that school districts consider and start working towards diversifying curriculum to be reflective of the Ethnic Studies Bill (which goes into effect in 2023). Ms. King clarified that the business created by she and Mr. Davis is not affiliated with Vermont Law School and will continue after they graduate. In response to a query, Ms. King advised that there is a fee associated with creation of a policy. The fee includes all work and meetings involved in creating the policy. The fee is \$900. In response to a query regarding an example of a policy that has been written, Ms. King advised that she believes the policy written for the Town of Hartford School District is available for viewing on the school district’s web site. Ms. Cambel advised that she supports this initiative and queried regarding any necessary steps to moving forward, including whether or not it requires Board approval. Mr. Cecchinelli advised that the Committee does not have authority to approve projects. The Committee makes recommendations to the Board. Mr. Cecchinelli queried regarding the role of the Policy Committee with development of this policy. Ms. Simmons advised regarding a similar project she was involved in with the White River Valley district. It is Ms. Simmons understanding that she would be coordinating this project for the BUUSD in her capacity as Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, and that the policy would be drafted after community group discussions and input, and would then be presented to the Policy Committee for review and

adjustments prior to presentation to the Board. Mr. Davis joined the meeting and provided an overview of his education and experience. In response to a query, it was noted that a policy adopted by a municipality, would not apply to a school. School districts require their own policies. It would be possible to collaborate with a municipality on creation of a policy. It was suggested that utilization of a consultant for creation of an anti-racism policy be presented to the Board and that Ms. King and or Mr. Davis be present at the meeting. Mr. Valsangiacomo queried regarding the general process of policy development, and consequences relating to groups approaching the Policy Committee regarding creation of other policies. Mr. Valsangiacomo suggested having a conversation relating to this topic at a future meeting. It was noted the BUUSD contacted the consultants regarding this project (vs. the consultants approaching the BUUSD). Ms. Simmons advised that as part of her being hired for the position of Assistant Superintendent of Instructions, she was asked to follow through on the 'equity work', and approaching Ms. King and Mr. Davis was the first step on that project. Mr. Isabelle queried regarding the norm of working with VSBA in policy creation. Mr. Davis advised that it is important to follow the standard procedures/protocols relating to approval of policies, including the number of readings required by a district. Mr. Aither stressed that once a policy is developed, work be performed to assure that the policy is followed through on and includes professional development for staff to assure that all staff are continually educated regarding creating and maintaining a racially equitable culture. This training will be necessary to assure that the anti-racism policy is successful. Ms. Simmons advised that creation of the policy is the first step, and that creation of procedures and professional development are critical, and that sometimes grant monies are available to assist with these portions of the initiative. Mr. Wells agrees with having a multi-faceted approach, and would like to present this project to the Board. Mr. Valsangiacomo queried regarding whether or not the BUUSD's legal counsel has been contacted regarding their involvement in development of an anti-racism policy. Mr. Wells advised that he has not been in contact with legal counsel. Mr. Aither suggested that prior to moving forward, additional discussion be held and that other district's policies be reviewed as part of that process. Mr. Aither believes much needs to be invested in the follow-through of administering a new policy. Ms. Cambel supports the creation of a policy, but believes that due to budget constraints, more research and discussion is necessary prior to making a decision on how to proceed. This item is critical to work on, but as it was not on this evening's agenda, it was suggested that it be added to the January agenda so that additional time and thought can be put into preparing for discussion. It was clarified that BUUSD committees make recommendations to the Board, but do not, as Committees, authorize actions. It was also noted that the cost (\$900) for utilizing consultants falls well below the cost of items that need/require Board approval. The cost for use of consultants would most likely fall within the Superintendent's operating budget. Mr. Wells suggested that after the Committee has concluded discussion relating to how to move forward, the topic could be discussed with the Board. Ms. Simmons advised that a large part of the Vision, Mission, and Strategic Planning initiative pertains to equity, and she believes the lack of a policy relating to racial justice would slow that process down. Ms. Cambel believes this is a crucial item and would like for the Board to be aware of this policy development prior to it being started. It was agreed that all are in favor of moving forward with development of a policy, but are concerned that this policy requires payment to an entity not previously utilized by the BUUSD for policy development. The BUUSD normally works with BUUSD counsel or VSBA.

The Committee agreed by consensus to bring this topic to the BUUSD Board at its next Regular meeting (01/14/2021).

Ms. King and Mr. Davis were thanked for attending the meeting and departed the meeting at 6:46 p.m.

6. Old Business

6.1 English Learners Policy (C4)

Required – changed by VSBA – A copy of the policy was distributed.

This policy was amended by VSBA.

The Committee agreed by consensus to present a First Reading of policy C4 to the Board.

7. Other Business

Mrs. Poulin has completed research on policies B6 and D2 and reported the following:

B6 – Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act Compliance

This policy was deleted in October 2019. The VSBA reasoning for deletion of the policy is that the policy is covered under statute.

D2 – Grade Advancement, Promotion, Acceleration, and Retention of Students

This policy was also deleted in October 2019. This policy, which used to be required by statute, is no longer applicable because of Proficiency Based Grading/Graduation Requirements.

8. Future Agenda Items

- BUUSD Policy Index Review
- VSBA Policy Index Review
- Policy C29 - District Equity Policy (Recommended Policy) (January 2021)
- Policy F22 - Electronic Communications Use and Retention Policy (Recommended – not previously adopted by BUUSD (January – with Mr. Ajanma in attendance)
- Policy B1- Substitute Teachers Policy – Required Policy / VSBA updated 10/11/19
- Policy B22 - Complaints About Personnel & Instructional Materials Policy -Recommended Policy – VSBA updated 03/03/20

- Policy B32 - Personnel Files Policy - Policy to be considered - VSBA updated 03/29/09
- Discussion of Updates to the Web Site to Link Policies and Procedures

- Field Trips (D30) – Spring 2021 – TBD

9. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is Monday, January 18, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via video conference.
Mr. Wells will invite Mr. Ajanma and Mrs. Marold to attend.

10. Adjournment

The Committee agreed by consensus to adjourn at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin