

POLICY _____

PEQUANNOCK TOWNSHIP

BOARD OF EDUCATION

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8425 – STUDENT ELOPEMENT

It is the intent of the Board of Education to institute a policy regarding student elopement to serve two major and important functions. The most important purpose of this policy is to prevent the occurrence of wandering and elopements; the second is to establish a procedure to direct actions to be taken when an elopement does occur.

Elopement is defined as a student leaving an assigned area without permission from or knowledge of staff, often to escape and/or avoid a school-related situation or task. Wandering is defined as meandering which results in a student getting lost, leaving a safe environment or entering an inappropriate place, often due to the student's inattention or distractibility.

Pursuant to guidance from the State Education Department, procedures will be incorporated in each individual building's school safety plan, to reduce the risk of student elopement/wandering when the students are within the custody and care of the school district. Additionally, the District will ensure that staff training is conducted on awareness and signs of elopement, as well as the provision of instruction to staff to ensure that they understand their roles should an elopement occur. Further, building administration will review the procedures developed under this policy each school year with all staff. Administration will also provide training to any and all newly hired staff.

It is the duty of all staff to intercede when a student appears to be unsupervised to building administration and to take appropriate action so that the child is redirected to the supervised activity/location. Whenever school personnel learn of a concern about a child's elopement behavior that may impact his/her safety, this information should immediately be reported to supervisory staff and other staff working directly with the student. A building-wide communication and alert system, with emphasis on notification procedures for supervisory personnel, building principals, hall monitors, and staff will also be established. As a general rule, administration will ensure that staff members are strategically and specifically assigned to areas around the school buildings during arrival, dismissal, lunch, recess, and times of transition to minimize the chance of elopement. These plans will be developed to account for staff absences, illnesses, meetings, etc. If a student leaves the classroom, staff must ensure that adequate supervision is provided while the student transitions from one area to another and is accounted for upon return. The level of staff supervision will depend on the student's propensities, grade level and specific needs.

For particular students identified by the CST as prone to elope, wander or run away, staff members who regularly interact with such students must be informed of the extra supervisory needs of the student. The District will encourage the parents of these students to

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provide the child with identification information and encourage their child to have it on them at all times. A picture of the child and identification information will be readily available for school staff and law enforcement in each building's main office. Staff assigned to such students will carry a communication device (i.e. walkie-talkie, telephone, etc.) at all times, to be used in the event that the student elopes, wanders or runs away and assistance is needed.

When a behavioral concern is raised that was not previously considered by the CST, the teacher or other District-staff shall report this behavior to the Supervisor of Student Services or designee. The Supervisor of Student Services or designee must determine whether, based upon the reported behavior, a CST meeting is necessary. If it is determined that a CST meeting is necessary, the CST must convene to review and, if appropriate, revise the student's IEP and consider a functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention plan ("BIP") to address the behavioral concerns. If the student already has a BIP, and the student elopes or wanders, the CST shall determine whether the BIP needs to be revised and whether there are other steps which must be taken to preserve the student's safety, including, but not limited to, considerations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act's least restrictive environment requirement.

Communication protocols with local police will be established. Such protocols will mandate that in a situation when a child with special needs has eloped, wandered, run away or has been left in an unsafe location, staff will immediately notify law enforcement and contact the building's emergency line while they begin the initial check of the school. The student's parents and/or guardians will also be immediately notified.

Adopted: 18 May 2020