

MINUTES

Policy Committee Meeting
Wednesday, December 22, 2021; 5:00 p.m.
Via Zoom

Committee Members Present:

Tikva Rose, Chair
Jim Crocker
George Bauer
David Butkus

Absent:

N/A

Also Present:

Wayne McAllister, Acting Superintendent
Tina Tanguay, Director of Finance and Operations
Mark Sommaruga, Attorney for the Board

Patricia Paige, Board Clerk
Pat DiSarro, Communications Specialist (Zoom)

I. Call to order

Ms. Rose called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

II. Policy 5145.53 Transgender and Non-Conforming Youth

Committee member Dave Butkus requested that the item be included on the agenda as a means of being proactive. He suggested the possibility of rewording some of the content in order to provide a better understanding for parents and community members. He cited several examples from the policy that may need further explanation that included language such as case-by-case basis and amending wording from “should” to “shall”. Added concerns he expressed related to locker room privacy and Transgender training specifics for students, staff and parents. The overall goal of his request was to provide clarity.

Mr. Bauer suggested that Mr. McAllister ask for examples from administrators in terms of the facilities that are available with the forethought that the information could assist the board in identifying potential needs.

Mr. McAllister explained that the original policy was adopted in April 2018 and since that time there have been enhancements for respectful and equal treatment, especially with social and emotional learning.

He plans to meet with Ms. Marcinek, the Director of Student Services, and Attorney Mark Sommaruga to work on updating the policy after which, he will bring back to the committee for further review.

III. Covid 19 Policy/Screen and Stay

It was communicated to the board that a number of community members have inquired as to whether or not the district participates in Screen and Stay, an initiative that addresses quarantine procedures offered to districts as a means to keep students in school. Region 14 did not “opt in”, but rather remains flexible in order to take advantage of the measures afforded by Screen and Stay. To lessen or avoid confusion with regards to the district’s participation position, Mr. Bauer suggested a status update on the Covid landing page of the school’s website.

On December 10, the Pomperaug Health District issued their Covid 19 recommendations for schools, which was to pause Screen and Stay based on the increase in the positivity rates. This information was validated by data that Mr. McAllister had assembled and offered to the board.

Attorney Mark Sommaruga mentioned that the CDC may soon be announcing new guidance on quarantines, which may or may not simplify the process and lessen some of the burdens placed on nurses, who are feeling overwhelmed.

V. School Visitors

Mr. McAllister shared the board’s desire to allow visitors back in the buildings, but at a time that the positivity rate decreases, which currently stands at nearly 9%. There is a desire to give people a sense of normalcy.

Mr. McAllister will bring the topic to the Admin Council meeting on Wednesday, January 5th where he will survey each grade level administrator on what their vision for visitors might look like and then present his findings back to the committee; discussions on thresholds can also be had. It was noted that not all staff share the same perspective on allowing visitors back into the classroom; there are some that have expressed concerns; how might those fears be taken into consideration.

VI. CIAC Policy

Guidance was issued by the Department of Public Health and then by the CIAC having a different set of protocols for students who are vaccinated, versus students who are not vaccinated. The most controversial aspect allows districts the option for vaccinated students to participate in certain sports without a mask, while participating in that sport. The Ellington School District was in opposition stating that this was discriminatory and would disclose the vaccination status of the players. The DPH and CSDE disagreed, that it wasn’t a violation of public privacy law, but rather parent choice.

The plan for Region 14 was to adhere to CIAC guidelines, which requires all participating athletes to wear masks, but are now taking into consideration this new regulation. A recent survey to Berkshire League schools, sent by Athletic Director and Dean of Students, Declan Curtin, noted that 7 of the 9 are allowing vaccinated athletes to play unmasked (one school district did not respond and one is waiting until after the break). He is also ensuring that all students understand the guidelines.

Item will be revisited.

VII. Privilege of the Floor

Stephanie Chapman

Spoke in support of parent visitors

VIII. Adjourn

A motion was made by Tikva Rose and seconded by George Bauer to adjourn the meeting at 6:10 p.m.; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Board Clerk

Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval by: Patricia Paige, Board Clerk