

MINUTES

Policy Committee Meeting

Monday, August 23, 2021; 7:00 p.m.

Via Zoom

Committee Members Present:

Tikva Rose, Chair

George Bauer

Jim Crocker

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 7:02 p.m.

Attorney Sommaruga provided a draft policy which focused on the Operations of Schools while addressing Covid-19. There were a number of edits and suggested comments that were offered due to the recent executive orders of the Governor. Some of tonight's agenda topics were covered.

II. Covid-19 Policy/Reopening Plan Review

A. Visitors/Volunteers in the buildings

Currently, there are no state guidelines regarding visitors in the schools with the exception that masks are required, rather the decision is at the discretion of school district administration. Acting Superintendent Wayne McAllister provided the recent Covid statistics and with the undesirable data, underscoring the 9.3% positivity rate in the Bethlehem community, thought it best to wait until school opens to make a final decision. Outside conditions will be the determining factor on whether or not to allow visitors back in the buildings. The policy notes that depending on prevailing conditions, the district controls the right to control access to facilities by external visitors and is at the discretion of

the Superintendent. Mr. McAllister plans to send a district-wide letter this week to address some of the Covid 19 challenges and preventive protocols planned for the start of school.

Also discussed was the authority of the Superintendent to make day-to-day decisions with Covid related matters. It was the consensus of the committee, that the Superintendent has the authorization to modify protocols in an emergency. These decisions will remain active until the policy committee/board of education meet next and review/modify/ approve the decisions.

B. Illness/exposure policy (in-school and out)/Quarantine and close contact policy

Attorney Sommaruga suggested the minimal amount of days as per the CDC guidelines as it is ever changing and would be based upon the guidance of the CDC at that particular moment. Specific language relating to quarantine measures was discussed and is included in the policy.

C. Social distancing in the building

Social distancing guidelines have changed from 6' to 3' wherever possible. If the 3' distance is not feasible, other mitigating measures can be put into place.

D. Cohorting

There is no requirement by the state that districts cohort, students cannot choose to learn from home. The district will provide a form of instruction for students who are in quarantine, but it will not be via live stream.

E. Masks in the buildings

Attorney Sommaruga suggested adding to the policy, explicit guidance on recess and physical education. Under the state direction, the general rule is that students and staff do not need to wear masks when they are engaged in activities outdoors.

The policy notes indoor mask breaks are permissible for a period of 15 minutes; specific language is outlined in the policy. Additionally, according to Attorney Sommaruga, special education related exemptions are guaranteed by the state (unlike medical exemptions).

Attorney Sommaruga had concerns regarding guidance on non-medical exemption communications disseminated from the state. He asked that the board table the discussion until next week when the state has had a chance to address those concerns.

Bullying and harassment issues for mask or vaccination status was also discussed. A suggestion was made to provide teacher training on how to respond to privacy issues regarding medical exemptions.

III. Privilege of the Floor

Russell Zinn

Mr. Zinn thanked Ms. Rose for her advocacy on mask reform for students; she has a large support group.

Amy Belval

Ms. Belval indicated that she liked the idea of mask breaks in the classroom; she wondered, however, if that would cause additional problems.

Steph Chapman

Ms. Chapman addressed the revised spacing guidelines (6' to 3') and the impact it may have on contact tracing; students may not always wear their masks and there may be parents who wish to voluntarily quarantine should a Covid case be identified.

IV. Adjournment

A motion was made by David Butkus and seconded by George Bauer to adjourn the meeting at 8:34 p.m.; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Patricia Paige
Board Clerk

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