

# Washington Central Unified Union School District

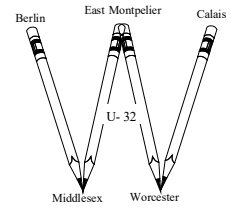
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*WCUUSD exists to nurture and inspire in all students the passion, creativity and power to contribute to their local and global communities.*

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Bryan Olkowski  
Superintendent



## WCUUSD Policy Committee Meeting Minutes Unapproved September 29, 2020

**Present:** Superintendent Olkowski, Jody Emerson, Aaron Boynton, Michelle Ksepka, Townes DeGroot, Chris McVeigh, Dorothy Naylor

1. **Call to Order:** Chris McVeigh called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m.
2. **Approve Minutes of 6.23.20:** Dorothy Naylor moved to approve the minutes of June 23, 2020. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried unanimously.

### 3. Review Existing Policies

#### 3.1 Section C – Students

**3.1.1 C7 – Student Attendance:** This policy had been approved in June 2020, but Chris McVeigh had indicated that he would like to look at this policy, through the lens of COVID19. Aaron Boynton shared that he has not had any issues related to student attendance. Jody Emerson stated that this policy indicates that we need to have procedures in our student handbooks, which we do. She stated that she thinks we might have to think about “Truancy” across the district, to be sure we are meeting the needs of families while also following the law. Dorothy Naylor asked how attendance is measured for students who are working remotely. Administrators indicated that students check in and complete the assignments to meet attendance requirements. They are not seeing problems with this.

Jody Emerson indicated that she would like the Leadership Team to be able to discuss this re: truancy and how the “Base Camp” app influences attendance. Bryan Olkowski stated that he would like to talk with building principals - he indicated that attendance has been around 97% during this back-to-school phase.

Chris McVeigh asked whether consideration should be given to changing the definition of excused versus unexcused absences, during this COVID19 period. Jody Emerson suggested that we check in with the State’s Attorney’s Office about the definition of excused versus unexcused. Some discussion followed around the requirement for a doctor’s note. Aaron Boynton will put this on the next Principal’s agenda and Jody Emerson will reach out to the State’s Attorney’s Office, and the committee will consider this at the next Policy Committee meeting.

Chris McVeigh asked Townes DeGroot what the student perspective is around attendance/ truancy/ excused versus unexcused. He stated that overall it seems that students are handling this issue very well.

### **3.2 Follow up from July 15 Board Meeting:**

**C20: Student Conduct and Discipline:** Jody Emerson had shared an update to the policy in Paragraph 4: adding other verbiage in addition to "LOFT." **Dorothy Naylor moved to include the new language into Policy C20, for the board to consider. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried.** Superintendent Olkowski thanked Jody Emerson for collaborating with the elementary principals, and to include "restorative practice" language in this policy.

Superintendent Olkowski shared that each elementary school has its own unique philosophy around discipline; for example, at least one of the elementary schools does not use PBIS.

Some discussion followed around the time period required to take action on policies. There is a ten-day requirement for a policy with substantive changes to be published before it can be approved. Chris McVeigh suggested that policies that have substantive changes be shared on their own rather than included in the board packet, in order to meet the ten-day requirement. Superintendent Olkowski will find out from his colleagues how other school boards handle these time requirements.

**C46: Interrogation or Searches of Students by Law Enforcement or Other Non-School Personnel:** Chris McVeigh recalled that legal advice was to not allow students to be interrogated by non-school authorities.

Some discussion followed around this issue, for example, in an emergency situation, when parents are not able to be reached. Superintendent Olkowski stated that under those circumstances, he would have himself or an administrator present with the student during questioning. Chris McVeigh reviewed some of the previous discussions around this policy; for example, the possibility of students being allowed to audio tape or video tape an interrogation. Superintendent Olkowski would like to include that the principal or their designee be present during questioning, under #5.

The committee agreed on the following language for #5: *Questioning by non-school personnel of a student may, however, take place without notification of parents if such questioning is required due to an emergency or urgent potential danger of life, or property, as determined by the Principal or Principal's designee, and reasonable efforts to notify the student's parents are unsuccessful. Under these circumstances, a student may only be questioned in the presence of the Principal or Principal's designee.*

**Dorothy Naylor moved to approve the changes as discussed, and recommend to the board. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried unanimously.**

**C49: Kindergarten Entrance Age:** The language in this policy is fine the way it is.

**D6: Class Size:** Dorothy Naylor stated that she remembers there being an unwritten agreement that early elementary school class size would be kept as close

as possible to the smaller size of 15 to 20. She does not think it is wise to actually put hard and fast numbers in the policy.

Aaron Boynton asked about #1: does it indicate that an actual number should be named? Committee members agreed that the verbiage “guidelines” does not indicate a hard and fast number.

Jody Emerson stated that class size sometimes comes into discussion during budget development when looking at class enrollment.

Chris McVeigh indicated that if the language is required by statute, then it must remain.

**Dorothy Naylor moved to change *supervisory union* to *district*, and to eliminate “minimum, maximum” in the policy, unless statute requires it, and to send this to the board for review. Chris McVeigh seconded; this motion carried.** Chris McVeigh will look into the issue around statute.

**E45: Role of Religion in the Schools:** Some discussion followed around allowing students to be absent to observe religious holidays. Discussion followed as to whether attendance should be addressed in this policy. Committee members agreed that the additional verbiage which was recommended: *“Students intending to miss school for religious holidays shall notify the school of their intention, at least one day in advance of their absence, and the absence shall be considered an excused absence.”* be included in C7: Attendance, as well as in E45.

**Dorothy Naylor moved to make the changes as discussed to E45, around attendance related to religious holidays. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried.**

**Dorothy Naylor moved to further amend C7 to include the language above regarding excused absence, as the last sentence in the policy section. Seconded by Chris McVeigh, this motion carried.**

### 3.3 School Closure

**3.4 School Choice:** Chris McVeigh had shared policies from other school districts. He asked the committee what type of framework we would like to see in our district? Are we in favor of allowing school choice in the elementary schools in our district? or is it broader than that? Michelle Ksepka suggested that the district consider grades K-6, and perhaps consider setting a limit on number of students that can participate. The topic of transportation was discussed. Chris McVeigh indicated that limiting transportation options creates an equity challenge. He would like to have transportation on the table for discussion. Michelle Ksepka explained the difficulty of considering providing transportation. The topic of selection was discussed - would it be by lottery or by weighted criteria or other factors?

Another topic of discussion: Creating guidance around numbers so that each school and each grade level has an appropriate number of students.

Superintendent Olkowski shared his experience in other schools. He shared that allowing siblings was critical, and he shared the idea of trying to balance socio-

economic needs. He noted issues such as creating deadlines and creating student number limits. He spoke briefly about the history of magnet schools.

Chris McVeigh invited input from Jody Emerson and Aaron Boynton. Aaron Boynton stated that he believes offering transportation would be a nightmare, logistically and financially. He also believes that a really flexible commitment from families could be difficult. He asked, what if there is an increase in the town's population, after having offered slots for school choice to other towns. He asked the question of privilege versus right. (e.g., around the topic of transportation). Dorothy Naylor stated that with the small schools, there is great variance from year to year in population and class size. She shared that she struggles with the transportation piece. She suggested, perhaps, hiring someone to provide transportation, or to consider helping families financially with transportation barriers.

Superintendent Olkowski spoke about the financial implications of adding to the bus fleet for transportation, as well as the impact on the environment.

The committee will continue this discussion at the next meeting.

**3.5 Title IX:** Superintendent Olkowski shared that there have been some changes in Title IX and he has shared the WCSU previous policy C10 with legal counsel. The new sexual harassment laws are not aligned with this C10 policy. He had shared a model policy for the committee to consider. He stated that Kelly Bushey and Carla Messier are attending a training later this week around this issue and the most recent changes. He suggests that the committee consider this at the next meeting, after this training has taken place. He would like to have Kelly Bushey and Carla Messier report on the training to inform the committee's work.

Superintendent Olkowski shared information he had discovered, regarding the earlier discussion around timeline re: policy adoption: First notice should advise public of intent to adopt policy at least ten days in the future, provide a summary, and/ or attach it and warn a meeting between the notice and the adoption of the policy, for discussion of the policy.

4. **Future Agenda Items:** Committee will meet monthly on Tuesday, 4:30 - 6:30

5. **Adjourn: The committee adjourned at 6:35 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa Stoudt, Committee Recording Secretary