

**Oak Park and River Forest High School
201 North Scoville Avenue
Oak Park, IL 60302**

**POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
January 15, 008**

A Policy Committee meeting was held on Tuesday, January 15, 2008, in the Board Room of the Oak Park and River Forest High School. Dr. Lee called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m. Committee members present were John C. Allen IV, Jacques A. Conway, Valerie J. Fisher, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, and Sharon Patchak-Layman. Also present were Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Superintendent; Jason Edgecombe, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors included Kay Foran, Director of Community Relations and Communications; James Paul Hunter, F.S.E.C. Chair; Wyanetta Johnson and Burcy Hines (arrived at 9:27 a.m.)

Acceptance of Policy Committee Minutes of November 5, 2007

Dr. Lee noted his surprise at the Policy Committee's agenda as he had assumed it was to be the same as the one proposed for the December meeting, which had been canceled due to time limitations. He noted that this meeting's agenda had several items omitted. He asked to include in the day's discussion the issue of Board of Education protocols. He was informed that the Open Meetings Act restricted discussion of anything that was not posted on the agenda to the general public at least 48 hours before the meeting. He noted that he would like to have a discussion on agenda procedures.

Consideration of Policies for First Reading

Policy 5117, Tuition & Residency

Mr. Edgecombe reported that Policy 5117, Tuition and Residency, had been reviewed by the Superintendent and the Interim Principal and revised in an effort to decrease the number of enrollment steps and to be responsible to the citizenry of these two communities as it related to the enrollment of students. He continued that there was a major change to Item F in which the school is asking non resident students whose parents intend to live in the District to demonstrate that they will establish residency within thirty (30) calendar days versus sixty (60) days, as presently stated. Exceptions would be made on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked what problems had needed addressing. Dr. Weninger stated the following:

- 1) The policy did not flow well;
- 2) Some items were procedural rather than policy;
- 3) In reviewing the enrollment process, regarding principal residency and counseling, the school needed systematic way of approaching residency in order to attend the high school;

- 4) There were some procedures that had not conformed to the policy, e.g., the 60-day time period by which someone must prove residency versus the new proposed 30-day time period.

It was noted that the substance of this policy conforms strictly to state law and had been vetted by legal counsel and sent to the ISBE for approval. The timeline of thirty (30) days as mentioned earlier is necessary because the school believes that there are still a large number of students attending this school who are not residents. A discovery period of 60 days is much too long.

Ms. Patchak-Layman found the policy difficult to read and understand and felt it would be difficult for families to comprehend, as well. Her bigger concern was that the policy wording matched state law with regard to definitions regarding homelessness, immigration, etc. Ms. Patchak-Layman was informed that nothing in the old policy regarding homelessness had changed. She suggested adding under 3E State law. She felt that it should be designated "only as an exchange student." In terms of residency, Ms. Patchak-Layman felt there were issues of great concern for the local and general population. The wording in this policy should not suggest that the District would not discriminate against students from another country living here as immigrants. The procedures should fit the policy, not the opposite. Mr. Edgecombe was not certain that homelessness was not defined, as the definition fully conforms to The School Code of Illinois and from a procedural standpoint the change was made to reflect the District's non-questioning of someone who says he/she is homeless.

While Ms. Patchak-Layman felt that the definition on the ISBE's website should be listed for immigrant students, Mr. Edgecombe pointed out that the wording in Item E2 satisfied that definition. Ms. Patchak-Layman reiterated her thought that if there were common definitions that the state uses, they should be part of the policy. Dr. Weninger noted that the policy was reworded to be broader based. He stated that the policy did not have to incorporate the entire body of what is in the School Code.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked what the timeline was for certifying residency after an application was received. The response was that parents must provide residency documentation within thirty (30) days. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked about the timeframe and the processes and procedures of letting a family know that residency is being questioned after submitting their paperwork. Mr. Edgecombe stated that in the transition of feeder school, students going from the eighth to ninth grades, the majority of those students will provide appropriate documentation. Another set of parents are told at the time they submit their information what needs to be provided. Another set of parents receiving regular communication from the school have their residency questioned when mail is returned; if there is no forwarding address, it would trigger a question of residency. Communication is regularly sent to the parent at the address on file; if there is a problem, the parents have thirty (30) days to provide clarifying information.

Mr. Vogel explained that there will be two sets of enrollment packets in the future which have been reviewed by both the District's legal counsel and the ISBE for 1) incoming freshmen from associate districts (due May 1); and 2) incoming freshmen outside of the district (due within thirty (30) days). Both packets contain checklists of information to be provided. The school

tries to resolve the issue of residency within thirty (30) days. Procedures have been implemented to follow that course of action. Because a number of students are always late providing their information to the school, the District plans to hire two or three additional people prior to the beginning of school to assist in the registration process. Dr. Weninger reiterated that there would be no backlog. Mr. Edgecombe stated that it is to the school and to the families' advantage to get students enrolled as quickly as possible. While that is the objective, parents and guardians still have to demonstrate residency. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if a formal letter was sent to the parents requesting additional information when residency information is questioned. She also asked if the District would then begin the formal procedures if the student was already in school. Mr. Conway stated that he did residency for four years and reported that it was more than having a deadline; students have to take placement tests and meet with the counselors, etc. He was hopeful that the new process would help, but acknowledged that much work needs to occur to get these things done in a short period of time. Dr. Weninger stated that in order to prove residency, the parent/student must submit five pieces of information. If the parent gives a questionable piece of information, the school will not only send a letter, but it will call the parent and explain the situation. The school does home visits and that process will be expedited in the summer.

Dr. Lee, Ms. Patchak-Layman, and Mr. Edgecombe felt that a paragraph noting the District's good intentions to enroll students as quickly as possible could be added to the policy. Ms. Patchak-Layman also suggested a list of the formalized procedures be given to parents if there is a question about their residency before the student is enrolled in the school, i.e., timeline for residency, procedures in place, etc. Mr. Edgecombe responded that if a student is not in the building and they present questionable documentation, the parent is advised immediately by the registrar about what is needed to prove residency in person or by mail. The parents of students already enrolled receive information by mail when there are residency concerns. Such information outlines the procedures to be followed and their rights.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked whether the appeals process would be given to new students. She also asked if there were a delay in time where someone says this is a red flag and telling parents further information was required. Dr. Weninger stated that was not the school's issue; the school wants the information as soon as possible. The District believes that it has internally fixed the problems and it is now the parent's responsibility.

Dr. Weninger noted that some people claim homelessness because they can't provide necessary residency requirements. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that a state form must be completed so that there is some piece of information that triggers procedures for admittance; then the work to verify the residency is there.

Ms. Patchak-Layman did not feel the policy should go forward because

- 1) A general policy statement is needed that more carefully explains the Board of Education's intentions regarding the enrollment of students. The statement should indicate that the school district accepts the responsibility for processing the paperwork, doing an investigation and coming up with answers as quickly and reasonably as possible.

- 2) The residency forms to be used should be written into the policy. Dr. Lee disagreed.
- 3) Regarding immigrant students, Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that a family cannot be asked for information that only a citizen would be able to access. Dr. Weninger noted that immigrants were included in the reference to The State Code of Illinois in another part of the policy. Ms. Patchak-Layman felt that this should be specifically spelled out so that the staff understands the policy.

Dr. Lee noted that the current statement talks exclusively about the responsibility of the parent and student and he suggested adding a brief, general statement about the responsibilities of the District itself is willing to take on regarding the timeliness with which the District responds to problems. Dr. Weninger, Mr. Edgecombe, and Mr. Vogel will review *The School Code of Illinois* regarding immigrant students and a broader definition of homelessness and determine how much should be incorporated into the policy.

Ms. Fisher hoped that the Board of Education would not need to have an introduction and include the wording of *The School Code of Illinois* in every policy. The Board of Education's job is to insert policy that conforms to the law, but the logical extension of this is that the District would wholesale the state law and there is no reason to do it. She did not understand why the Board of Education should have introductory language in every policy set forth. It is the District's job to carry out policy.

Both Dr. Lee and Mr. Edgecombe felt the issue of residency was very sensitive and was the source of more friction or disagreement than most other policies. Mr. Edgecombe concurred with Ms. Fisher about having an introductory paragraph for every policy.

Mr. Allen stated that the entire burden of responsibility to prove residency is that of the parents. The parents have the responsibility to give the right information. At a certain point, the boundaries are enforced. Once the student is enrolled in school, the burden is on the school to remove the student. He believed the school needed to adhere to the letter of the law and it would be burdensome on the school to include a timeline.

Ms. Fisher stated that if the District does not follow its rules, it is another issue. She did not feel any policy should be handled differently. It should conform to *The School Code of Illinois* and there was no reason to treat any policy differently. She agreed that some things have more weight, but the Board of Education's job is to set policy as clearly as possible and in conformance with state law. She concurred with Mr. Allen that additional language was not needed. A policy cannot be generic; it must be clear. Ms. Fisher stated that it was the District's policy that families in Oak Park and River Forest attend this school.

Ms. Fisher and Mr. Allen were prepared to approve the policy for first reading, as presented. Mr. Conway supported including an introductory paragraph.

Policy 5115. Bus Conduct—Special Education

The purpose of introducing this new policy is to satisfy the requirement that the District must have a policy concerning bus conduct when video cameras have been installed on all buses.

Discussion ensued. It was the consensus of the majority of Policy Committee members to the Board of Education that it approves Policy 5115, for first reading and action at its regular January Board of Education meeting, contingent upon investigation of

if parents cannot provide transportation for a student who has his/her bus privileges removed, is it the parents' or school's duty to provide transportation to school?

during any appeal of a discipline situation for which a student's bus privileges were removed, is the student to continue riding the bus?

if the discipline issue is found to be part of a student's handicapping condition, do the parents or the school have the duty to provide transportation to school?

Adjournment

The Policy Committee adjourned at 10:35 a.m.