

The New London Board of Education Policy Committee meeting was held on January 14, 2025 via Zoom teleconferencing.

1. Call to Order

Nathan Caron, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

Present for the Committee: Nathan Caron – Committee Chair
Bianca Alexis-Sylvain – Committee Member
Elaine Maynard-Adams – Committee Member
Betsy Perkins – Community Representative

Absent for the Committee: Colleen Delaporta-Wells – NLEA Representative

Present for the Administration: Kristea A. Francolino – Manager of Executive Support Services
Cynthia Ritchie – Superintendent of Schools

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Approval of the Minutes

Motion by Ms. Perkins, seconded by Mr. Caron, to approve the minutes of the November 19, 2024 Policy Committee Meeting.

Motion carried, 2-0-2
Abstaining: Mr. Garbini
Ms. Maynard-Adams

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

- Motion by Mr. Caron, seconded by Mr. Garbini that the following items, as set forth on the Consent Agenda for the Policy Committee meeting of January 14, 2025, be approved unless removed by a committee member or the Superintendent of Schools:

1. Adopt Policy 5142.1 – Relations with Noncustodial Parents/Guardians
2. Approve Policy 1112.6 – Videotaping of Staff/Students
3. Reaffirm Policy 1321 – Student Performances

Motion carried, 4-0

5. Discussion and Possible Approval of Policy 5145.2 – Freedom of Speech/Expression

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams, seconded by Mr. Garbini, to discuss and approve Policy 5145.2 – Freedom of Speech/Expression.

Mr. Caron explained that this policy had been sent back to the committee from the Board's level for further discussion. The portion that the Board requested more discussion around was on page 1, in the newly added language regarding conduct.

Ms. Maynard-Adams expressed that this seems to be legal language that the district provides the space to post information, but do not own the content, so any responsibility regarding reactions to such content would not be the District's responsibility. Ms. Perkins and Mr. Caron agreed. Ms. Maynard-Adams suggested that we ask CAFE for clarification of the language in that paragraph.

Ms. Maynard-Adams withdrew her earlier Motion and Mr. Garbini withdrew his earlier second.

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams, seconded by Mr. Garbini, to table this policy until further clarification is received from CAFE.

Motion carried, 4-0

6. Discussion of Policy 5131.81 – Use of Private Technology Devices by Students

Mr. Caron said that this is a continued discussion from the previous meeting. Ms. Maynard-Adams shared that it was her understanding that the teachers' union was going to discuss this as they had concerns that this policy would also expand to the adults in the room. Dr. Hills-Papetti confirmed that the Union would be meeting and that this is on the agenda to be discussed.

Mr. Caron continued that there seems to be three different directions that the committee could go in regarding cell phones: 1) no change to the policy, 2) strengthen the policy with additional language and clarification, 3) implement a total ban of cell phones.

Mr. Garbini expressed that his concern with a total ban would be in the case of an emergency. He thinks that it would be more important to teach cell phone etiquette and appropriate use, and that it is possible that parents might push back on a total ban of cell phones.

Ms. Maynard-Adams stated that in the case of any family emergency, the schools have phones that the students could utilize, and parents also have the ability to call the schools. It seems that we have all gotten used to the convenience of having a phone, but most communications are not urgent. She continued that cell phones are distracting to the learning environment and suggested that there can possibly also have the shoe holders in the classroom where phones can be placed so that they are nearby, but not on the desk or with students.

Mr. Caron was glad that Ms. Maynard-Adams mentioned the expectations in the classrooms, and it seemed through the survey data that many teachers have an effective classroom policy regarding devices in their spaces. Mr. Garbini agreed and also shared that there should be consistency across the classrooms for student expectations, as well as for staff. He continued that

it is important that students learn to self-regulate when it comes to cellular devices. Banning phones does not teach them how to use them appropriately.

Ms. Perkins stated that she thinks it is important to listen to anyone who would be affected by this policy, though it seems like most are on the same page. Once it becomes a consistent practice, then it becomes the culture.

Mr. Caron suggested that at the next meeting there be discussion regarding possible amendments to the policy including students not having the phone on their person, classroom expectation examples, as well as additional technology devices that may fall under this policy. It is also important that language surrounding technology in 504s and IEPs be respected and included as a part of the policy.

7. Committee Member Comments

Mr. Garbini thanked Mr. Caron for his work leading the committee.

Ms. Perkins expressed that this committee is a great team and is happy to be a part of this group.

Ms. Francolino shared that there are policy updates that need to occur regarding Sexual Harassment and Title IX, but that things continue to change regularly and unexpectedly at the Federal level. These policies will come forward again in the future for re-approval based on the current requirements of the Federal Government.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Garbini, seconded by Ms. Maynard-Adams, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried, 4-0

The meeting was adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristea A. Francolino
Manager of Executive Support Services