

The Subcommittee on School Committee Policies met on Friday, February 14, 2025, in the Virtual Zoom Meeting. Present were Kathy Bent, Peter Goode, Sara Ahern, Kristen Harmon, and Jen Kruczek.

Ms. Bent called the meeting to order at 1:01PM.

Approval of Minutes

- Motion by Mr. Goode, seconded by Dr. Ahern, and the Committee voted, unanimously, to approve the meeting Minutes of January 7, 2025.

Revise Policy AC (Non-Discrimination including Harassment and Retaliation)

- Dr. Ahern stated there are Title IX changes due to federal court case returning back to 2020. Michael Joyce looked over the policy and made changes. The pregnancy related condition language should be removed from the policy. The Committee removed the language.

Revise Policy JICFB (Bullying Prevention)

- Dr. Ahern stated as part of the review Michael Joyce did, he looked at this policy and suggested a few changes to the first paragraph. The last sentence should state "...bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation." The Committee agreed to the changes.

Discuss Potential New Policy on Cell Phones

- The Committee reviewed the handbook where cell phones expectations are mentioned.
- Dr. Ahern stated she is not hearing anything about cell phones at BIS. Some teachers do use the Remind app for students in classes at BHS.
- Ms. Harmon stated students do have Google Classroom on their phones, but they have Chromebooks. There are some classes that use apps in the classroom.
- Ms. Bent asked about a cell phone policy at the elementary level. Dr. Ahern stated the handbook language is similar to BIS at the elementary level.
- Mr. Goode stated the staff wants a strong policy. He stated during class time, students and staff should not use their phones.
- Mr. Goode suggested language: BPS believes that cell phones and PCD devices shall not be accessed during school time. Ms. Bent suggested the policy should state the school's handbook will have the details, such as the consequences for use.
- Dr. Ahern stated a policy goal should be stated in the beginning as to the why of having a cell phone policy. She is looking at the AG's guidance. The Committee reviewed the AG's guidance and added the languages as appropriate. They named the policy: JICJ-A: Cell Phone and Personal Electronic Devices.
- Ms. Bent stated Dr. Ahern will send out the draft policy to Principals, the BTA, and the BAO for review and feedback.

Review Policy IKF (Graduation Requirements)

- Ms. Bent stated when the district increased the number of courses to 7 periods, more credits were needed for students to graduate.
- Dr. Ahern stated the schedule does have an impact on staffing. She asked to discuss this policy as it relates to competency determination. There are no references to the MassCore. She asked if MassCore should be added back into the policy.
- Ms. Bent suggested adding completion of Algebra II or an Integrated Math equivalent, lab-based science which may include technology/engineering, and adding foreign to the world language requirement to be in line with MassCore. She suggested changing the Class of 2025 to a graduating student. The Committee agreed.

Review Policy ADDA (Background Checks)

- Ms. Harmon stated employees are required to do CORIs and Fingerprinting. The staff in before and after care have to do an additional fingerprinting requirement. It would be better to use that additional fingerprinting for all staff as it accesses more databases. It is the same cost as the current fingerprinting.
- Dr. Ahern stated this would need to go out to the Union and additional consent through DCF. We did have someone who worked for us who had a claim in the additional fingerprinting and they could not work for us in the before after care, but did work for us during the school day.
- Ms. Bent stated it is good to protect the district and be more rigorous.

- Dr. Ahern gave the link to the Ashburnham/Westminster policy. If open to this, she will share with union leadership and come back at the next meeting.

Discuss Potential New Policy IKB (Homework)

- Ms. Bent does not know if there was ever a district-wide Homework Policy. There has been a decrease in the philosophy of structured homework. She was told homework was at the discretion of the teachers. SPED teachers never wanted to give homework because they felt the kids needed the rest after school. She listened to the student envoys' comments about the heavy homework load. Managing homework is a learned skill and she thought maybe they did not learn along the way. She would like to see a consistent policy use the handbook for each school to set expectations.
- Mr. Goode agreed that there should be a homework policy to reinforce the work and set expectations for the amount they will get for class.
- Ms. Bent stated the Committee can revisit this at the next meeting. Dr. Ahern can talk to the principals about this conversation and see what their feedback is.
- Dr. Ahern had a brief conversation at a principals meeting and the most raised points included: home environments that might not be conducive to homework and many students at BHS have to work to support families. She looked at some of the example homework policies provided. She like policies where homework is meant to be meaningful and purposeful. She can go into it in more depth with principals. The Somerville one has nice framework.
- Ms. Harmon stated the CKLA start unit has family communications and some family activities to reinforce the learning. Teachers in grade 4/5 are looking for some materials for families to be engaged with the students at home.
- Ms. Bent stated study halls went away because of discipline issues. If discipline is under control, then maybe they can have a study hall to do some of this additional work.
- Dr. Ahern stated there are after school supports for students to get their homework done with support. She thinks a homework policy will give a strong message.

Motion by Mr. Goode, seconded by Dr. Ahern, and the Committee voted, unanimously, to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 2:34PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jen Kruczek
Executive Assistant