

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Committee Meeting
June 13, 2013

Attending: Commissioner Cruz (Chair) and Commissioners Powell and Campos. Parent Representative: Ranika Brown absent. District staff: Ed Lopez-Soto, Chief Counsel; Bethany Centrone, Chief of Human Capital Initiatives. Board staff: Debra Flanagan.

Guest Speaker: Bill Benet

Commissioner Cruz convened the meeting at 6:21PM.

I. Review and Approve Minutes of May 21, 2013 Policy Committee Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Powell to approve the minutes of the May 21, 2013 Policy Committee meeting. **Adopted 3-0.**

II. Review and Discuss Proposed Staff Evaluation Policy

Bethany Centrone recommended revising the existing Evaluation of Teaching Staff policy (0330) to apply to all staff members, noting that separate policies for evaluation of teaching and non-teaching staff are not necessary.

Commissioner Powell explained that these staff evaluation policies were adopted with the entire Policy Manual in 1998, and a template was used for drafting policies which had not been in place. She suggested incorporating the different evaluation instruments as exhibits that could be posted along with the policy. Ms. Centrone responded that she would not recommend posting the evaluation tools because of the frequent changes in NYS requirements under APPR and in collective bargaining agreements.

Commissioner Powell asserted that the APPR plan should be referenced along with the Staff Evaluation policy, and suggested that this be included as an exhibit so that revisions would not require Board approval. Ms. Centrone replied that a link or web address can be included in the policy so that APPR information can easily be accessed. She stated that the actual APPR guidelines are too lengthy to include as an exhibit.

Commissioner Campos pointed out that the proposed Staff Evaluation policy should include employees who are not covered by a collective bargaining unit. She inquired whether the policy would establish specific dates or timeframes for conducting staff evaluations. Ed Lopez-Soto replied that there already is considerable incentive to evaluate administrative staff within specified deadlines because their collective bargaining agreement (ASAR) indicates that they will be granted tenure if the deadline is not met. Ms. Centrone added that the timeframes are incorporated in collective bargaining agreements, and offered to include a provision in the policy regarding the timeframe for evaluating staff who are not represented by a collective bargaining unit.

Action Item: Ms. Centrone will present a proposed revision in the July Policy Committee meeting of the existing Evaluation of Teaching Staff policy (0330) that applies to all staff, including those not covered by a collective bargaining unit.

III. Discuss Proposed Revision of Values Education Policy (4311.2)

Bill Benet discussed the proposed revision of the Values Education policy that he had drafted, noting that the revision is based on:

- The intent of the original committee that developed the policy
- Simplifying the policy, as the existing policy reflects an amalgamation of ideas from the original committee
- Use of a “polarities of democracy” framework to stimulate further debate and discussion about values, and which is conducive to the learning process

Commissioner Cruz inquired about the way in which the framework contained in the proposed policy could be integrated within the Core Curriculum. Mr. Lopez-Soto responded that the Core Curriculum is already aligned with the values contained in the proposed policy.

Commissioner Powell noted that the Core Curriculum primarily focuses on ELA and Math at this point, and is planned to encompass other subjects in the future. She requested a graphic depiction of the way in which the proposed “polarities of democracy” framework incorporates the values contained in the existing policy, so that concerns about revising the policy can be addressed.

Commissioner Campos questioned the way in which the proposed framework would address the expression/application of values in schools and be used to change school culture. Mr. Benet replied that these issues would be addressed through the process of discussing the polarities (e.g. freedom – authority, diversity – equality), rather than providing an explicit set of prescribed values in the policy itself. He noted that application of values under the revised policy would require more discussion, understanding, and in-depth learning.

Commissioner Campos contended that the values should be made more explicit to ensure that everyone is aware of expectations. She also expressed appreciation for the creative approach used in the polarities framework and in stimulating further thought and learning. Commissioner Campos voiced concern about whether staff will consider the proposed polarities in their daily activities. Mr. Lopez-Soto replied that the proposed policy addresses this concern by requiring an advisory committee to be established that is comprised of community members, staff, parents, and students to discuss these values and prepare an annual report regarding the efficacy of implementing this policy.

Commissioner Powell pointed out that the polarity model allows for weighing options and priorities, and balancing different or opposing values.

Commissioner Cruz suggested adding the proposed revision to Values Education policy to the agenda for the Board – Administration Retreat on June 25th. He stated that he envisions the

polarity model being used in the classroom, and assigning one polarity per month to fully explore and discuss for in-depth learning and understanding. Commissioner Cruz suggested that he would like to continue Bill Benet's involvement to help guide the Committee through this process.

Mr. Lopez-Soto recommended that Bill Benet suggest membership for the advisory committee, and serve as chair.

Action Item: Ms. Flanagan will ensure that the proposed revision of the Values Education policy (4311.2) is included on the agenda for the Board – Administration Retreat on June 25th.

IV. Review Remaining Policies (2265 through 4320) for Update of Policy Manual

Ms. Flanagan stated that her review of the following policies generated a number of questions for the Committee's consideration:

A. School-Based Planning Teams (2265)

Ms. Flanagan reported that information has been requested from the Office of School Innovation and the Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning to address the following questions regarding School-Based Planning Teams. Ms. Flanagan reported that guidelines are currently being developed for creating annual School Improvement Plans, which she will provide to Committee members as soon as these are ready.

- Who monitors the composition of School-Based Planning Teams (SBPT) to ensure that there is adequate representation of all constituencies?
- What incentives are there for an SBPT to “correct under-representation” of certain groups (e.g. parents)?
- What mechanisms are there to ensure that SBPTs are not simply carrying out the principal's wishes, particularly since he is the chair?
- What mechanisms are there for providing SBPTs with research on effective school models and best practices?
- Have agreements actually been negotiated between the District and the SBPTs at each of the schools, including resources and support to be provided - or is this more of a goal?
- How does the negotiated multi-year plan between the District and SBPTs fit in with NYS requirements regarding Comprehensive School Improvement Plans?
- Who reviews the SBPT School Improvement Plans to ensure compliance with mandates?

- Who is responsible for ensuring that support and resources are actually provided to enable the SBPT Plans to be implemented?
- How are SBPTs themselves held accountable?
 - ✓ For equitable distribution of resources
 - ✓ For adopting school policies that reflect professional knowledge
 - ✓ For responding to the concerns and ideas of parents, students, and staff
- How are schools held accountable for providing orientation and ongoing training, procedures, support and access to information to SBPTs?
- When, by what means, and to whom will the SBPTs' annual progress assessments be reported?
- What are the criteria for awarding the Classroom Resource Fund to teachers and other incentives to administrators among schools?
- Who determines the “agreed-upon achievement measures” for awarding the incentives from the Classroom Resource Fund?
- What requirements are there to show that these incentive funds have been used effectively?
- Who reviews a school's corrective action plan to ensure that it adequately addresses the problems?
- Who ensures that a corrective action plan is developed and implemented?
- Does the district-wide steering committee exist?
- If so, does it function to oversee the work of SBPTs and that they have the support and resources necessary to implement their plans?

Commissioner Powell questioned the extent to which this policy reflects current NYS requirements and options for exercising discretion to meet local needs and conditions.

Commissioner Cruz noted that revisions cannot be made to this policy without consulting with School-Based Planning Teams and/or their supervisors. Mr. Lopez-Soto reported that he submitted the existing policy and these questions to the Director of the Office of Parent Engagement and to the Chief of the Youth & Family Services Division to request their feedback and recommendations.

Action Item: Ms. Flanagan will review current NYS law and regulations regarding School-Based Planning Teams, and report to the Policy Committee in the July meeting.

B. Equivalence in Instructional Staff and Materials (4010)

Ms. Flanagan raised the following questions regarding the Equivalence in Instructional Staff and Materials (4010) policy:

- Is information regarding equivalence among schools in instructional materials and staff being reported to the Board, as required by this policy?
- Would it be useful to continue to have this reporting requirement?
- If so, would it be useful for the policy to also require that the Superintendent include in this report to the Board:
 - ✓ The way in which equivalence of staff and materials has been evaluated among schools
 - ✓ Plans for correcting inequities in the distribution of staff and/or materials among schools

Mr. Lopez-Soto questioned the need for this policy, since these issues are addressed through the budget review process.

Action Item: Mr. Lopez-Soto will examine mandates and directives underlying the Equivalence in Instructional Staff and Materials policy (4010) to determine its necessity, and report to the Policy Committee in the July meeting.

C. Possible Consolidation of Health Education (4315), AIDS Instruction (4315.1), Family Life (4312.1), Physical Education (4316), and Wellness (5405) policies

Ms. Flanagan discussed redundancies among these policies: the Wellness policy contains provisions related to health education and to physical education, and the Family Life Education policy pertains to teaching values and the importance of relationships in sex education, which is also covered in the AIDS Instruction policy. Ms. Flanagan suggested consolidating these related separate policies into one comprehensive policy to provide greater clarity and ease of access.

Action Item: Ms. Flanagan will draft a policy proposal which incorporates the provisions of the separate Health Education, Family Life Education, AIDS Instruction, Physical Education, and Wellness policies, and which will be presented in the July Policy Committee meeting.

D. Arts Education

Ms. Flanagan questioned whether several references in the existing Arts Education policy (4320) are current:

- Reference to “the district’s five Design Tasks: Standards and Assessment, Learning Environment, Community Services and Support, High Performance Organization and Public Engagement and Communications”
- Reference to the following NYS learning standards:
 - ✓ Creating, Performing and Participation in the Arts,
 - ✓ Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources,
 - ✓ Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art,
 - ✓ Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts

Action Item: Mr. Lopez-Soto will review current NYS standards for Art education and report back to the Committee in the July meeting.

V. Discussion of RCSD Teacher’s Books and the Code of Ethics

Mr. Lopez-Soto reported that an RCSD teacher has written several children’s books, and is concerned that the Code of Ethics will not allow the District to purchase them. He stated that this teacher is pursuing a grant which would enable her to provide the books to schools at no cost. Mr. Lopez-Soto noted that the Rochester Education Foundation sometimes purchases books to distribute at no cost to schools, and he will inquire about this possibility with regard to this teacher’s books. He stated that he has discussed these options with the teacher, but also cautioned her that the District cannot show favoritism in purchasing from an employee.

Commissioner Cruz concurred, emphasizing the need for caution in even appearing to allow an employee to market their personal work. He stated that providing free copies of the book is tantamount to marketing, but he also acknowledged the importance of recognizing the abilities of RCSD staff. He suggested taking time once a year at a Board Business meeting to recognize staff accomplishments.

Motion by Commissioner Powell to adjourn meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Campos.
Adopted 3-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:23PM.