

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Committee Meeting
July 19, 2012

Attending: Commissioner Cruz (Chair); Commissioners Powell and Campos. District staff: Charles Johnson, General Counsel. Board staff: Debra Flanagan.

Commissioner Cruz convened the meeting at 6:32PM.

I. Review and Approve Minutes of June 14, 2012 Policy Committee Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Campos to approve the minutes of the June 14th Policy Committee meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. **Adopted 3-0.**

II. Discussion of Options for Phasing In Reinforced Zone Boundaries

Debra Flanagan stated that she met last week with Vicky Ramos, Director of Student Placement, to discuss the different factors contributing to cross-zone transportation: family mobility, sibling preference, child care, number and distribution of students attending school outside of their zone. In terms of family mobility, Ms. Flanagan noted that information has been presented in previous Policy Committee meetings indicating that the majority of District families move within a 10-block radius. She pointed out that this could involve crossing zone boundaries, and stated that she has contacted the Transportation Director to request a map of the cross-zone bus routes and the number of students being transported from different locations. Ms. Flanagan explained that the number of buses is determined not only by the number of students attending school outside of their zone, but also by the distribution of these students and the distance/time involved. She stated that longer distances involve more time and therefore allow fewer students to be picked up, accounting for a greater number of under-filled buses.

Ms. Flanagan also discussed the Parent Preference/Managed Choice policy (5153) offering preference in placing siblings in the same school. She stated that when a sibling is attending a school outside of their zone, all of the other children in the family are able to receive priority for placement in that school. This practice exacerbates the problem of cross-zone transportation by significantly increasing the number of students attending school outside their zone and by guaranteeing their placement in that school until completion of the final grade. Ms. Flanagan reported that data has been requested from the Transportation Department as to the extent of cross-zone busing due to sibling preference. She stated that the Transportation Department does not have this information, as they are not provided with the rationale for the student's transportation route.

Ms. Flanagan reported that data is available regarding the number of students obtaining cross-zone transportation to child care providers, but some analysis is required to derive this specific information. She explained that current District practice is to provide transportation to a student if their child care provider is more than 1 ½ miles from their school, although the Parent Preference/Managed Choice policy only offers transportation to child care providers if the student is *otherwise* eligible (i.e. lives more than 1 ½ miles from school). She discussed the

possibility of parents choosing child care closer to their place of employment or obtaining child care from a member of their extended family who happens to live in a different zone within the District. She pointed out that the option of obtaining child care through a family member is important in offering greater assurance of safety and affordability for District families.

Ms. Flanagan stated that analysis of the requested data will identify the impact of these different factors on cross-zone transportation, so that effective policy and regulatory recommendations can be proposed to address these ongoing costs without undue disruption to District families.

Commissioner Cruz stated that he would like Ms. Ramos to attend the next Policy Committee meeting, at which he would like recommended policy/regulation changes to be presented.

Action Item: Ms. Flanagan will collaborate with Ms. Ramos to prepare policy/regulation recommendations regarding cross-zone transportation at the next Policy Committee meeting.

Commissioner Powell noted that the availability and accessibility of different programs (e.g. Special Education) is another factor potentially affecting cross-zone busing. She stated that the distribution of these programs across the zones affects transportation patterns, particularly with the relatively high percentage of RCSD students in Special Education. Ms. Flanagan replied that she had inquired about the availability of Special Education and ELL programs in each of the zones to ensure that families are able to have placement choices within their zone boundaries. She reported that Ms. Ramos had informed her that these programs are in each of the zones, except for highly specialized services for students with the most severe types of disabilities.

Commissioner Powell pointed out that while the program capacity may exist in each of the zones, the critical factor is the extent to which students are actually placed in these programs within their zone.

III. Review Resolution to Submit to New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) regarding Transportation and Child Safety

Ms. Flanagan discussed NYS Education Law Article 73, Part 3, §3635-b authorizing school districts to create “child safety zones” when hazards are present that jeopardize student safety in walking to school. She explained that this law allows transportation to be provided to students in child safety zones, regardless of the distance between their residence and school. She noted that school districts are eligible to obtain reimbursement for these additional transportation costs, but the law specifically excludes large city school districts and only recognizes a narrow set of potential hazards to child safety (i.e. road and traffic conditions). In last month’s meeting, Ms. Flanagan stated that the Policy Committee had instructed her to draft a resolution to submit to NYSSBA to request that a change in this law be included in their legislative agenda. She stated that she had submitted the draft resolution to the Director of Legislative Affairs at NYSSBA to request feedback, and his response was that no changes were needed.

Commissioner Powell pointed out that timing is important because the deadline for submitting resolutions to NYSSBA is August 1st. She explained that approval of the proposed resolution by

NYSSBA would incorporate the requested change in NYS Education Law Article 73, Part 3, §3635-b into their legislative agenda, where it could remain for up to five years. Commissioner Powell noted that there is no guarantee that NYSSBA will take action on this item, particularly to the extent that other items take precedence.

Motion by Commissioner Campos to approve proposed resolution to advance to the full Board in the July 26th Business meeting for authorization to submit to NYSSBA. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. **Adopted 3-0.**

IV. Review Next Set of Priorities for Updating the Policy Manual

Ms. Flanagan noted that the next set of priorities involves policies requiring the Board's review on a specific schedule (e.g. "The Board shall review this policy annually"). In the last Policy Committee meeting, she stated that Committee members requested her to check for any legal mandates requiring that the Board review each of these policies. Ms. Flanagan reported that she did not find any legal requirement for the Board to review four of these five policies: Media Relations (1130), Policy Review and Evaluation (2460), Day Care (4324.1), and District/Community Collaborative Presentations, Programs and Services (4830.1). With regard to School-Based Planning policy (2265), she stated that technically the Board is required to review the Plan developed by the District every two years for participation of teachers and parents in school-based planning and shared decision-making.

Commissioner Powell pointed out that removing the provision regarding Board review would have a negligible impact for three of these policies, and could be addressed without further consideration by the Policy Committee.

Motion by Commissioner Powell to revise the following policies to remove the provision requiring Board review and to advance the revised policies to the Board in the July 26th Business meeting: Media Relations (1130), Policy Review and Evaluation (2460), and District/Community Collaborative Presentations, Programs and Services (4830.1). Seconded by Commissioner Campos. **Adopted 3-0.**

Commissioner Cruz recommended that the following items be included in the agenda for the next Policy Committee meeting:

- Review next set of priorities for updating the Policy Manual
- Develop goals for the Policy Committee for FY2012-13

Chuck Johnson reported that the NYS Education Department recently clarified the policy regarding the use of cell phones and electronic devices in schools, prohibiting their use during NYS assessments and emphasizing the need for school districts to address safety concerns. He noted that the current Code of Conduct contains a small reference to the use of cell phones with imaging capability, which is now present on every cell phone. Mr. Johnson also discussed concerns arising from each school determining their own practices regarding accessibility and confiscation of electronic devices.

Commissioner Cruz requested that this also be included in the agenda for the next Policy Committee, specifically with regard to the impact of cell phones in the classroom and school, safety and security implications, and information as to the way in which other districts manage the use of cell phones and other electronic devices.

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:10PM.