

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Committee Meeting
October 20, 2011
5:30PM

Attending: Commissioner Cruz (Chair); Commissioner Campos. Commissioner Powell absent. Parent Representative: Victoria Robertson (arrived at 5:35PM). District staff: Charles Johnson, General Counsel; Bethany Centrone, Associate Counsel; Jackie Polito, Acting Director of Human Capital Initiatives; Gladys Pedraza Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family Services; Vern Connors, Chief Financial Officer. Board staff: Debra Flanagan.

Commissioner Cruz convened the meeting at 5:32PM.

I. Review and Approve Minutes of September 15, 2011 Policy Committee Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Campos to approve the minutes of the September 15, 2011 Policy Committee meeting. **Adopted 2-0, with concurrence of parent representative.**

II. Review of Parent Involvement Policy and Regulation

Gladys Pedraza Burgos noted that a request was made in the September Policy Committee meeting for specific outcome measures to evaluate the effectiveness of parent involvement in the District. She presented an Assessment Guide from the national PTA, which is aligned with the standards in the revised Parent Involvement policy. Ms. Pedraza Burgos reported contacting a number of individuals at the state level to find other school districts who have performed these assessments on the basis of the PTA standards. She stated that she has been unable to find any districts who have implemented evaluations on this basis because the national PTA standards are so new.

Ms. Pedraza Burgos indicated that the next step will be to implement these assessments throughout the District. In terms of methodology, she described conducting an online survey of parents earlier this year, but the results were not statistically valid because of the low response rate (601 parents). She stated that the response rate had to be a minimum of 3% of the total parent population (i.e. an additional 200 parents) to be statistically valid.

Vicki Robertson suggested initiating the assessment of parent involvement on a pilot basis before attempting to implement district-wide. She also noted that the Assessment Guide only contains outcome measures at the school level, and she emphasized the need for measures at the district level.

Commissioner Cruz pointed out that a great deal of time and opportunity has been provided for parents to review and comment on the proposed policy.

Motion by Commissioner Campos to approve the proposed revision to the Parent & Family Engagement policy. **Adopted 2-0, with concurrence of the parent representative.**

III. Input from the Parent Forum regarding a Proposed Condom Availability Program

Ms. Pedraza Burgos described the opportunities provided thus far for the public to present their views on a proposed Condom Availability Program (CAP): RCSD students in December 2010; an open community forum in March 2011; Youth Forum in September 2011; and Parent Forum in October 2011. She stated that while the Parent Forum was publicized to target parents of high school students in the District, the majority of attendees (40 out of 62) were not parents or even residents of the District. Ms. Pedraza Burgos noted that these attendees have had opportunities to present their views already, and were given instructions to attend a separate group discussion. She reported that these attendees did not follow the instructions and participated in the other small group discussions intended for parents, attempting to influence the outcome.

Ms. Pedraza Burgos asserted that in light of the efforts made to obtain input from stakeholders and the severity of this public health issue for our students, it is recommended that the proposed revision to the AIDS Instruction policy be advanced to the Board.

Motion by Commissioner Campos to approve the proposed revision to the AIDS Instruction policy. **Adopted 2-0, with concurrence of parent representative.**

IV. Comments from Kim Urbach, Health Care Provider at East High School

Ms. Urbach emphasized that regardless of adults' attitudes and viewpoints, the majority of high school students in the District are having sex and also woefully ignorant about pregnancy, sexually-transmitted diseases, and HIV infection. She discussed some of the common misconceptions about providing more comprehensive sex education and making birth control available to high school students:

- Enhanced awareness/education of the consequences of sexual activity leads adolescents to postpone sexual activity
- Providing education and birth control/condoms is not "condoning" or giving permission to adolescents to have sex----they are already having sex
- Sex education programs have to be responsible by discussing sex in the context of values, relationships, and the consequences of choices

Ms. Urbach offered to provide additional research on this topic to the members of the Policy Committee, and commended them for their courage in acting on this critical public health issue.

V. Proposed Employee Residency Policy

Commissioner Cruz announced that this policy proposal will be considered in the December meeting, as Commissioner Elliott was unable to attend this evening to discuss it with the members of the Committee.

Ms. Flanagan reported that the proposed Employee Residency policy was drafted by Shanai Lee, Special Assistant to the Board of Education, and is based on a similar policy in the Chicago school district.

VI. Proposed Amendment to Transportation Policy

Commissioner Cruz announced that a special Policy Committee Meeting of the Whole will be conducted on November 15th to discuss this proposed amendment and transportation options.

VII. Overview of the Teacher Tenure Process and Consideration of Information provided in these Resolutions

Bethany Centrone referred to the memo describing the teacher tenure process, and asked if Committee members had any questions.

Commissioner Campos pointed out that the only information provided to the Board in these types of resolutions is that the teacher's tenure is recommended. She contended that additional information is needed about the teacher to make an informed decision. Jackie Polito replied that the principal's final evaluation determines whether a teacher is recommended for tenure. The evaluation is included in the teacher's personnel file, and the Division of Human Capital Initiatives (HCI) advances the resolution for approval by the Board on the basis of the principal's recommendation.

Commissioner Campos emphasized the need for more information about the tenure candidate (e.g. strengths and opportunities for improvement), particularly in light of the extreme difficulty in removing a teacher after tenure has been granted. Ms. Polito offered to consider ways that additional information can be provided in these resolutions, such as criteria that the teacher has met. She also noted that Marie Costanza could meet with Committee members to provide an overview of the standards that must be met and the level of rigor involved in meeting tenure requirements.

Commissioner Campos underscored the importance of having information about each teacher being considered for tenure, rather than an overall review of the process. She stated that the Board is responsible for approving a teacher's tenure and therefore must have information about that individual.

Ms. Robertson concurred, stating that additional information about the individual teacher is necessary to ensure that the Board is not just "rubber stamping" principals' recommendations.

Commissioner Cruz highlighted the need for a balance between providing information to allow accountability without micromanaging and reviewing each teacher's personnel file. He noted that the main problem arises when the individual teacher's performance is marginal, and further information is needed of the actions taken to assist their professional development and their response to these actions.

Action Item: Ms. Polito will present suggestions in the November Policy Committee meeting regarding additional information that can be provided in teacher tenure resolutions, particularly in light of employee privacy protections.

VIII. Review of the Code of Conduct

Chuck Johnson informed the members of the Policy Committee that NYS law requires review of the Code of Conduct each year, but formal ratification is not necessary. He reported that the Code of Conduct will have to be modified in the near future to incorporate provisions of the Dignity for All Students Act, which becomes effective on July 1, 2012. Mr. Johnson stated that the Commissioner of Education has not yet issued regulations to implement this law, but the major requirements of the law itself are:

- Establishing weight as a protected category, along with race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, ethnicity, or disability
- Requiring a minimum of one staff member in each school be trained to address situations involving bullying or harassment
- Requiring an annual report to the NYS Commissioner of Education of the procedures the District has established to address bullying/harassment

Commissioner Campos recalled a recent news article about bullying in which the school psychologist intervened effectively, and suggested that school psychologists be identified as the staff members responsible for addressing these situations in the schools. She expressed concern about the pervasive nature of technology and difficulty in monitoring use, particularly with students' private accounts.

IX. Information regarding new Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities Regulation

Mr. Johnson informed the members of the Policy Committee of a new Superintendent regulation establishing specific criteria for students to be eligible to participate in athletics and other extracurricular activities. He noted that the general eligibility requirements under the regulation are that students must maintain a minimum 2.0 grade point average (GPA) in all subjects, 90% attendance in all classes, and adherence to the Code of Conduct. If a student has at least a cumulative 2.0 GPA and is failing one class, they will be put on probation and allowed to participate in extracurricular activities as long as they attend tutoring in the failing subject 100% of the time. If a student is failing two classes, they become temporarily ineligible to participate in these activities.

X. Professional Services Contracting Policy

Mr. Johnson stated that a concern was raised recently about the impact of the Professional Services Contracting policy (6741) on competitive grants. Mr. Connors explained that competitive grant applications frequently require the District to specify a community partner in implementing the project for which funding is being sought. The Professional Services Contracting policy requires the District to issue a Request for Information (RFI) or a Request for Proposal (RFP) to ensure that a wide pool of candidates has had the opportunity to respond and be considered in awarding contracts. Mr. Connors noted the difficulty in issuing an RFI or RFP under the short timeframe typically afforded for submitting competitive grant applications (i.e. 6-8 weeks), and expressed concern that these policy requirements might impede the District's ability to obtain these types of grants.

Commissioner Cruz inquired about the extent to which the policy has led to these problems, noting that data is necessary to determine the impact of these requirements and the specific way in which the policy should be modified. Mr. Johnson replied that the Professional Services Contracting policy has only been in effect since September 15th, but staff were trying to be proactive in addressing these concerns.

Commissioner Cruz pointed out that more time and experience are needed to ascertain the extent to which the policy requirements are actually creating a problem in obtaining competitive grant awards. He cautioned against revising a policy that just went into effect and which was developed with a great deal of time and thought.

Mr. Connors asked about possible exceptions to the Professional Services Contracting policy under specific circumstances. He discussed a grant awarded by the NYS Education Department which was split into two different time periods and also imposed new requirements that the District utilize a vendor authorized by the Department. Mr. Connors stated that the District did not receive these new guidelines until September 24th, and the first portion of the grant application was due on September 30th. He asked how these types of exceptions should be brought to the Board's attention.

Commissioner Cruz stated that in this particular instance, the Superintendent should determine the vendor with whom the District is to collaborate and this information should then be provided to the Board.

XI. Other Business

Ms. Robertson raised a question about Arts Education policy (4320), and the fact that there currently are no Superintendent regulations to implement this policy.

Mr. Johnson offered to discuss this matter with Beth Mascitti-Miller, Chief of Teaching & Learning.

Commissioner Cruz directed this issue to be included in the agenda for the November Policy Committee meeting.

Motion by Commissioner Campos to adjourn. **Adopted 2-0, with concurrence of parent representative.**

Meeting adjourned at 6:42PM.

Next Policy Committee meeting: November 10th at 5:30PM
November 15th at 6:00PM (Policy Committee Meeting
of the Whole)