The Subcommittee on School Committee Policies met on Thursday, July 17, 2025, in the Virtual Zoom Meeting. Present were Kathy Bent, Peter Goode, Sara Ahern, Kristen Harmon, Kari Andrade, Kim White, Carina Da Silva, and Jen Kruczek.

Ms. Bent called the meeting to order at 2:00PM.

Approval of Minutes

- Motion by Mr. Goode, seconded by Dr. Ahern, and the Committee voted, unanimously, to approve the meeting Minutes of July 1, 2025.

Discuss Homework Policy IKB

- Ms. Bent stated she and Mr. Goode looked at Wilmington's policy and their philosophy. They spoke about feedback they received from the staff. One comment was about homework around holidays, weekends, and vacations.
- The Committee spoke about removing the two paragraphs prior to the elementary grades breakdown.
- Dr. Ahern stated it is difficult for teachers at the high school to coordinate with what other teachers are doing. She thought the students can advocate for themselves for extensions given the amount of work.
- Ms. Bent stated the elementary schools should work together to have a collective idea.
- Ms. Bent stated the philosophy piece will not be in the policy.
- Ms. Da Silva had concerns at the secondary level. Most of the multilingual students need to work after work. Research is mentioned in the policy several times. It would be helpful if that research could be more updated and sited in the policy. She believes that at the elementary level, student should only be reading. She spoke about the lack of parental involvement. There is an equity issue for multilingual students. There is a low percentage of multilingual students in AP and Honors classes and this will only make that gap larger.
- Mr. Goode stated Barnstable is trying, as a School Committee, to have a rigorous education. We want a policy that says we value homework. We are an educational facility and we need to provide students an education.
- Ms. Da Silva stated if there is a policy, then the teachers will implement the policy. We need to think about the students and their needs. There needs to be flexibility. Mr. Goode stated a good teacher needs to provide that flexibility. Homework is an important part of learning.
- Ms. Bent stated homework should never stop a student from being successful. At the elementary level, teachers give homework at the beginning of the week that is due Friday. So, students have flexibility to do the work throughout the week. There needs to be a buildup through the grades. Students cannot get to the high school and that is the first time they have homework. She would like study halls or periods to come back to the high school. The SPED services are a team decision.
- Dr. Ahern suggested rather than highlighting students on IEPs, highlight that there will be flexibility among student's difference and programs. Parents are looking for work at home since Covid since parents had a look into their student's education.
- Ms. White spoke about an article that speaks about learning at home. Homework is an opportunity to look into what is happening at school.
- Ms. Da Silva asked where the times for each grade came from. Ms. Bent stated they looked at a number of policies to see what other districts were doing.
- Dr. Ahern stated some of the times have been in place for a long time. There has been a general rule of 10 minutes per grade level. AP classes have a lot of homework given the amount of content that needs to be covered.
- Mr. Goode stated the goal of AP classes is to pass the AP test. There is no way to complete the curriculum without a substantial amount of homework.
- Ms. Andrade stated Honors and AP classes are mentioned specifically, but Gateway classes also have more homework. She had kindergarten teachers that reached out to her given the new program has take home options. Instead of no homework, can we have occasional activities at the discretion of the teacher.
- Ms. White stated she did reach out to staff that have children. Parents of high school students felt that was a lot of homework given working, athletics, and extra-curricular activities.
- Ms. Da Silva thought two hours a night at the high school is still a lot of homework. She thinks teachers will give 30 minutes of homework since it is in the policy. She asked what is the outcome the School Committee is looking for.
- Mr. Goode stated better grades and better scores.
- Ms. Bent stated they are hearing from students that they are not prepared for homework once they hit high school.
- Dr. Ahern added from the research she spoke about earlier, achievement is achieved with 1.5-2.5 hours of homework a night in high school and 1-2 hours in middle school.

- Ms. Bent stated this policy is going to be introduced in July. There will be more feedback and it will be discussed.
- Dr. Ahern stated there are tutoring and homework labs at the high school with late buses available. There is also teacher support time, 25 minutes twice a week, as an opportunity for extra help.
- Ms. Bent would like to understand why study halls went away and if there is a way to bring them back for some students.

Discuss Cell Phones and Personal Electronics Policy JICJ-A

- Dr. Ahern stated she shared feedback with Ms. Bent, Mr. Goode, and Ms. Harmon. Developmentally, 8th grader and 12th graders are different. Dozens of students are doing internships. She attended a presentation by a Superintendent recently on Yondr pouches. It was compelling. There was a reduction of failures in the two subsequent years after having Yondr pouches. She knows they are expensive. There would be exceptions for medical concerns, use of apps for multilanguage learners, or IEPs. Culturally, students that have accommodations, are respectful of their peers. She spoke to Chris Dwelley about funding and the cost of $60,000 could be used from the School Choice revolving fund. The management is tricky for administrators and teachers.
- Mr. Goode agreed Yondr pouches are the way to go.
- Dr. Ahern stated there is a balance of $600,000 in School Choice. That does not require Town Council approval. Research is telling about brain development. One thought, juniors and seniors are able to use their cell phones in the Jr/Sr café.
- Ms. Bent stated she does not know how the other School Committee members will feel about this policy.

Next Steps

- The Subcommittee will meet again on Tuesday at 8:00AM on the cell phone policy.

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

Meeting adjourned at 3:04PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jen Kruczek
Executive Assistant