Webster
School District
Policy Manual

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Massachusetts Association of School Committees

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to provide a quality education and a safe learning environment for all students and to empower them to succeed as responsible, productive citizens in an ever-changing global society.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE POLICY MANUAL

WEBSTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WEBSTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01570

This manual contains the official policies of the Webster School Committee (reproduced on white paper); the major regulations intended to implement policy (yellow paper); and certain reference or "exhibit" documents that relate to policies and/or regulations (green paper).

Policy development in a modem, forward-looking school system is a dynamic, ongoing process. New problems, issues, and needs give rise to the continuing need to develop new policies or to revise existing ones. This is why the Committee employs the loose-leaf format for this manual. It is easy to keep up to date.

Each person holding a copy of this manual should make a diligent effort to keep it up to date as new policies, regulations, and exhibits are distributed by the central office.

How to Use this Manual

The school department operates according to policies established by the School Committee. The Committee then appraises the effects of its policies and makes revisions as necessary.

In the interests of harmony, efficiency, uniformity of interpretation, coordination of effort, and in fairness to all concerned, the Committee makes this manual available to all who are affected by its policies.

Please Note: All copies of this manual are the property of the Webster School Committee.

How the Manual is Organized

The manual is organized in accordance with the classification system developed by the National School Boards Association. This system provides an efficient means of coding, filing, and finding policies and other documents. There are 12 major classifications, each assigned an alphabetical code:

A -- FOUNDATIONS AND BASIC COMMITMENTS
B -- SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS
C -- GENERAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION
D -- FISCAL MANAGEMENT
E SUPPORT SERVICES
F -- FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT
G -- PERSONNEL
H NEGOTIATIONS
1 NSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM
J STUDENTS
K SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS
L EDUCATION AGENCY RELATIONS

Subclassification under each heading is based on logical sequence and alphabetical subcoding. For an example of the subcoding system, examine the white pages immediately following the tab for Section AD--Foundations and Basic Commitments.

The white pages that follow the tab for each major section present the classification system, section by section, and serve as the tables of contents for each section or "chapter" of this manual.

How to Find a Policy

There are two ways to find a policy (or regulation) in this policy manual:

1. Consider where the policy statement (or regulation) would be filed among the 12 major classifications. Turn to the Table of Contents for that section and glance down the listing until you find the term that most closely fits the topic you are seeking. Use the code letters given for that term to locate the policy you need. The pages are arranged in alphabetical order by code within the section. All pages are coded in their upper right hand corner.

2. Turn to the Code Finder Index at the end of the manual. The code finder is an alphabetical index of all terms used in education. Look up your topic as in any index, find the code, and use the code to locate the correct page in the manual.

What if you can't find the term you are seeking? The code finder index lists more than 1,800 terms, but no index of useful size could include every possibility. If the term you are seeking is not included, look up a synonym or a more general or specific term appropriate to the topic.

What if you can find the term and code, but there is no policy or regulation? This probably means that the school system has no written policy or important regulations in that particular area.

All terms used in the classification system appear in the sectional tables of contents and Code Finder Index to accommodate the coding, insertion, and finding of policies or regulation that may be issued later, but there is one other possibility. A brief statement related to the policy you are seeking may be incorporated in a "superior" policy which covers the area generally. This "superior" policy will be coded under a more general term. To find it, read up the classification system. For example, a policy statement which relates to meetings of the School Committee might be filed under "School Board Meetings" (BD) rather than "Regular Board Meetings" (BDA). (Please note: In the classification system and Code Finder Index, read "School Committee" for "School Board".)

Using the Signs and Symbols

Various signs and symbols are used in connection with the classification system. They are for your use in locating and/or in examining policies. Included are the following:

Also: Certain policies bear two codes in the upper right-hand corner. The second is in parentheses and is preceded by 'Also'. This means that the identical policy (or regulation) is filed under both codes.

-R This symbol following a code indicates that the statement is a regulation, not a Committee policy. The statement appears on a yellow, rather than a white, sheet.

-E Exhibit. This symbol following a code indicates that the statement is a reference document such as a calendar, application form, etc., rather than a policy. Such statements are printed on green paper.

DATES:	Where possible, the original date of adoption/issuance appears immediately following each policy or regulation. I n o their instances, an approximate adoption or re-approval date is used.
LEGAL REF.:	Pertinent legal references are given to inform the reader where in state law s/he may find the statutes which relate to a specific policy. Unless otherwise noted, all references direct the reader to the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (cited as M.G.L., Chapter and section).
CONTRACT REF:	Agreements reached through negotiations with recognized staff organizations have the full force of Committee policy. References to negotiated agreements are provided, as appropriate, to direct the reader to statements in these agreements.
CROSS REF.:	Certain policies and regulations relate to others. Cross references are provided following many statements to help the reader find all of the related information s/he needs.

About Policies and Regulations

Generally, the role of a School Committee is to set policy and the role of the administration is to implement it through regulations. Written policies are the chief means by which a school committee governs the schools, and regulations are one of the means by which the Committee's policies are implemented. The following definitions provide a distinction between these two types of statements:

POLICIES are principles adopted by the School Committee to chart a course of action. They are broad enough to indicate a line of action to be taken by the administration in meeting a number of day to day problems while being narrow enough to give the administration clear guidance.

REGULATIONS are detailed directions usually developed by the administration to put policy into practice.

These definitions are serviceable some of the time. They reflect sound theory of governance and administration. But policies and regulations are obviously closely related. They can and do merge, making it difficult to ascertain where one begins and the other ends. For example:

* State and federal governments require school committees to make or officially approve detailed regulations, and procedures in certain areas.

* A School Committee signs contracts and agreements which may contain and interweave policies, regulations, and procedural detail.

* The public, staff, or School Committee members may demand that the School Committee itself, not the administration, establish specific regulations and procedures in certain sensitive areas.

It is the intermingling of policy and regulation in law, in contracts, and in adopted statements of the School Committee that can cause confusion. Sometimes they are not easily separated. Therefore, the separation of policies and regulations in this manual follows several "rules of thumb" in addition to basic theory:

1. When the school system's practice in a particular area is established by law, any informational statement covering the practice is presented as "policy" and is printed on a white page. (A law may, of course, be quoted or referred to in a regulation.)

2. When a school system's practice in a particular area has been established through a negotiated agreement, any statement pertaining to that practice is presented as "policy".

3. Where the School Committee has interwoven regulations with policy and where separation would interfere with their meaning, the entire statement is presented as a policy.

4. Where the School Committee has adopted rules and by-laws concerning its own organizational and operating procedures, these statements appear as policy. As long as the administration operates within the guidelines of policy adopted by the Committee, it may issue regulations without prior Committee approval, unless Committee action is required by law, or unless the Committee has specifically asked that certain types of regulations be submitted for Committee approval. The School Committee is to be informed of all school system regulations issued by the administration. All such regulations are subject to Committee review.

Is the Manual Complete?

No. The manual contains all of the current written policies of the School Committee to date. But, the need for putting additional policies in writing, for adopting new or revising existing ones, becomes apparent.

Additionally, state laws; and regulations change. No matter how well conceived and welldeveloped, a policy manual can never be 100% complete and 100% up-to-date. Policy development is a continuing process. From time to time, new policies, regulations, and reference documents will be developed, coded under the classification system, and issued for insertion in the manual.

Should the need arise, supplemental subcodes may be added to the classification system to accommodate topics not covered by existing codes. For example, IGA is the code for BAS IC NSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM. The code Finder Index lists various programs from IGAA, CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION to IGAJ, DRIVER EDUCATION.

Order of Precedence

School Committee policies and regulations, as well as negotiated agreements with staff bargaining units, must be read and interpreted in the light of the Massachusetts General Laws and State regulations. Wherever inconsistencies of interpretation arise, the law and state regulations prevail. A conflict between a local policy or regulation and a negotiated agreement must be interpreted in line with the contract for members of the particular bargaining unit.

Terminology

The masculine, feminine and neuter genders as used in this manual import one another, and the singular shall include the plural whenever applicable.
It is the hope of the Webster School Committee that this collection of policies and regulations will make greater harmony and efficiency possible in all areas of school operations. This will enable the Committee to devote more time to its primary duty--the development of long-range policies and planning for the future of the school system.

Webster School Committee
DATE: January 14, 2003