



POLICY/COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

July 15, 2026

Virtual Meeting - 3:30 p.m.

Committee Members: Ellen DePinto, Chair

Pamela Cassidy, Beth Fiore (absent), Linda Rad, David Rizza (alternate)

Administrative Staff: Dr. Jonathan Hart, Superintendent of Schools

Jason Bohm, SBA/Board Secretary

Minutes

1. **Virtual Remote Instruction Plan** - This is a standard agenda item for July. Since 2022 districts are required to have a plan in place in the event we are faced with a remote learning situation again. This plan is the same as last year's plan with minor changes to dates and enrollment information. This required board approval to be sent to the state for July 31, 2026.
2. **Transportation Waiver Policy** - we are required to provide transportation for students who live over 2 miles from the schools. The district offers courtesy transportation to students who live within 2 miles instead of requiring them to walk. This contributes to the length and number of routes. The goal of this waiver is to reduce the number of stops and number of aides and coverage to save the district money, while also providing more efficient transportation. Parents will need to fill out the waiver to opt out, however they can opt back in as long as they show a family or economic hardship and there will be a period of transition time. This policy outlines the waiver process and is needed in order to offer these waivers to parents. The committee briefly discussed possible ways to incentivize the waivers that may be considered at a later time.
3. **Policy Review** - Highest Priority from Strauss Audit: The following policies were flagged in the audit as needing an update.
 - a. The support staff **Policy 4324 - Right to Privacy, Policy 4340 - Grievance and Policy 4410 - Compensation** mirror the policies in the 3000 -Teaching staff members series that we just updated.
 - b. **Policy and regulation 5516 - Use of Electronic Communication Devices** will be tabled until August. The Governor signed a cell phone ban into law and mandated that the DOE come up with best practices and FAQs and that Strauss Esmay would come up with a model policy. There is a webinar next week to update everyone on this matter so we will hold off working on this policy and regulation until August so we can make sure our policy complies with the law.

c. Policy & regulation 6422- Budget Transfers and policy & regulation 6740 - Capital Reserves Accounts. Jason reviewed these and shared with the committee that these policies and regulations reference the current statutes and codes and will be brought up to date.

d. Policy & Regulation 7440 - School District Security will be updated to include critical incident mapping data for first responders which aligns with our practices.

e. Policy 7523 - School District Provided Technology Devices to Students - this is a new policy for us. This policy will govern how we give our students access to our hardware such as Chromebooks and iPads. It references the Network Use/iPad agreement we give to parents to sign off on and the technology use fee we have to cover minor losses. This mirrors our process and makes all the language consistent.

f. Policy 8335 - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act - this will be a new policy for us and will reaffirm our compliance and commitment to FERPA. It also directs parents to where to file a complaint if needed.

g. Policy 8820 - Opening Exercises/ceremonies - We have a current policy on this however this update expands it a bit to cover more students who may not wish to stand for the pledge. It also includes information about Commodore John Barry Day which is covered in statute and other federal holidays and how we include these in the curriculum.

f. Policy 9700 - Special Interest Groups - updating this policy will be helpful because Dr. Hart's office publishes the Community New Bulletin which sometimes contains information about local governmental agencies or community non-profit organizations. This will help Dr. Hart with having parameters in regards to what can be distributed via his office.

4. Policy Review - Highest Priority from Strauss Audit to Abolish

a. Policy & Regulation 7430 - School Safety will be abolished because it is replaced by 7440

b. Policy 9110 - Quality Assurance Annual Report will be abolished because these improvement goals are no longer required.

5. **Policy Review** - The following policies were flagged by the audit as needing to be updated. After reviewing our versions and comparing them to Strauss's version it was determined that no revisions were needed and they were most likely flagged due to an overlap in when the audit was conducted and when these policies were updated in our system.

a. Policy 6220 - Budget Preparation.

b. Policy 5200 - Attendance.

c. Policy 5330.04 - Administering an Opioid Antidote. This is only required for grades 9-12.

d. Policy 5337 - Service Animals. Note this was adopted by the Board 11/12/24 but needed to be placed into the online system. This error was corrected.

e. 5701 - Academic Integrity. Please note this was updated when we added AI.

f. 5756 - Transgender Students - This was updated in March of 2019. It is the most up-to-date version. The committee received an email from a board member asking why policy 5756 is on the agenda as updated on March 2019 and no changes needed; however the policy reads that it was edited in February of 26th. They asked for clarification of the discrepancy. Dr. Hart explained that the December Strauss Esmay audit flagged policy 5756 as needing an update. He reviewed this and several other policies flagged for update. When he reviewed 5756 he found that our policy mirrored the most up-to-date Strauss policy from 2019, but noted that the "revised" date did not appear in the policy manual (likely the reason Strauss flagged it). He tracked down the date the policy was approved, which was the March 26, 2019 meeting. He added that date to the policy manual so if we're ever audited again the most recent revised date appears. This is why it appears to have been revised. Committee members asked for this policy to be tabled and discussed further at a future committee meeting due to recent updates indicating this policy may go against parents' rights. A committee member asked if this should be referenced in our discrimination policy instead of a stand alone policy and not go against parents. Dr. Hart will speak with our attorney to get the most up to date information on the status of this policy and what we need to consider.

g. Policy 6111- Special Education Medicaid Initiative (SEMI) Program.

h. Policy 6471 - School District Travel.

i. Policy 8441 - Care of Injured and Ill Persons.

j. Policy 8507 - Breakfast Offer Versus Serve.

6. Strauss Esmay Alert 237 (con't)

Bylaw 0162 - Notice of Board Meetings - The Board's official internet website is to be accessible and available to the public free of charge, and a direct hyperlink to legal notices published on the Board's official internet website is to be conspicuously placed on the Board's internet homepage. Therefore, a Board no longer needs to provide legal notices to legal newspapers. Bylaw Guide 0162 has been revised to remove the requirement that legal notices be provided to newspapers and indicates all legal notices shall be provided in accordance with the new statutes.

Policy 0162.01 – Legal Notices (M) (New)new statutes, address the publishing or advertising of a legal notice. Now whenever a public entity (Board of Education), as defined in the statute is required by law or by order or rule of any court to publish or advertise a legal notice, the public entity is to publish or advertise the legal notice on the public entity's official internet website. This bylaw covers the provisions of the new statute.

Policy 1643 - Family Leave (M) (Revised)The revisions to NJFLA will have a considerable impact on districts as the "hours worked" and "time employment" eligibility requirements to take leave have been significantly reduced, which will lead to an increase in NJFLA leave eligible school staff. Previously, an employee had to be employed with their employer for twelve months prior to being able to request NJFLA leave. However, under the revised law, an employee only has to be employed by their employer for three months to qualify to utilize NJFLA. The

second significant revision to NJFLA impacts the number of hours an employee has to work during the immediately preceding twelve-month period, starting from the date their NJFLA leave is set to commence. Previously, the employee had to work 1,000 “base hours” during the immediately preceding twelve-month period. However, under the revised law, the employee only has to work 250 “base hours” during the immediately preceding twelve-month period.

Policy 2260 - Equity in School and Classroom Practices (M) (Revised) now includes the entire code section N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.7, which must be included in a Board-approved policy to satisfy the requirements of the Comprehensive Equity Plan (CEP). This is mandated and must be adopted by the Board in order to comply with the CEP.

Policy 5561 - Use of Physical Restraint and Seclusion Techniques for Students with Disabilities (M) (Revised) The revision mandates the Superintendent or designee report all incidents of restraint and seclusion through the Student Safety Data System (SSDS). Therefore, Policy Guide 5561 has been revised to incorporate this change. A Board of Education may choose to not allow the use of restraint and seclusion for students with disabilities as per the New Jersey Department of Education Office of Special Education’s “Implementation of Required Policies and Procedures for Eligibility Under IDEA Part B.” Policy Guide 5561 provides the district an option whether to allow for the use of restraint and seclusion. However, if the Board allows restraint and seclusion for students with disabilities, Policy and Regulation Guides 5561 are mandated. Policy and Regulation Guides 5561 are mandated pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:46-13.4. through 13.7. and to be in compliance with QSAC monitoring requirements.

Policy 6112 – Reimbursement of Federal and Other Grant Expenditures, Regulation 6115.01 – Federal Awards/Funds Internal Controls – Allowability of Costs, Policy 6115.02 – Federal Awards/Funds Internal Controls – Mandatory Disclosures, Policy 6311 – Contracts for Goods or Services Funded by Federal Grants all have minor revisions. Regulation Guide 6115.01 was completely rewritten to meet the monitoring requirements. Based on the OFAC audit, Policy Guides 6112; 6115.02; 6311; and Regulation Guide 6115.01 are mandated for districts that receive Federal funds and should be adopted by the Board.

Policy 8561 – Procurement Procedures for School Nutrition Programs - The New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) is conducting audits of districts to verify compliance with the Federal regulations regarding procurement procedures for United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) School Nutrition Programs. Policy 8561 is in compliance with the USDA and NJDA and their October 2025 model policy and is only mandated for a district that participates in any Federal School Nutrition Program, including, but not limited to, the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.

7. **Board Retreat - August 18** - The committee agreed to have the NJSBA facilitate our Board Retreat in August to guide us through creating board goals. Dr. Hart is presenting

this option to each committee to make sure we are all in agreement. There is one more committee to present this to and then it will be scheduled with NJSBA

8. **Policy 2535** - The committee chair brought revised language for policy and regulation 2535 to the meeting. Back in January she had proposed adding clarifying language to the regulation and instead it was decided to let the policy work in practice and the committee would review it again in September. Then, when the complaint was filed, the committee was under the impression that they couldn't work on it until there was a determination. During a recent meeting regarding the complaint, the attorney advised the committee chair that policy work may continue despite the active filing. The revised language defines sensitive topics and further clarifies the purpose of the review panel along with other minor changes. The proposed changes were well-received by the committee and Dr. Hart will bring it to the attorney for review. The committee will further discuss these proposed changes at their next meeting in August.

The committee received an email from a board member asking us to address the concern raised during the last public meeting regarding the Board of Education's past practice of reviewing books from 2018 through 2021 and clarification on when and why this practice ended. The member stated that there have been accusations that the Board does not trust our professional staff. However, what has not been acknowledged is that this review process was a common and accepted practice for several years. Understanding why that long standing practice changed, despite no apparent policy revision, is an important part of this discussion. Dr. Hart explained during the meeting that prior to his appointment in Readington, the previous superintendent had provided the administration with a directive that any "sensitive" books be reviewed in Ed/Tech and approved by the BOE prior to placing them in classroom libraries or the school library. In 2022, the Board asked that we review this protocol. This is captured in Ed/Tech and Policy Meeting Minutes. What was revealed was that this practice was incongruent with policy; meaning the Board was not supposed to review these books or approve the adoption per policy. This administrative directive violated the resource policy. The board asked the question whether or not they wanted to revise the policy and the Board opted not to. Rather, they adjusted the practice to be consistent with policy and asked that the review of books be discontinued.

9. **Policy Tracking Document** - tabled due to time constraints.

Agenda items: Remote instruction plan, transportation waiver policy, policy revisions from Strauss Audit, and final policies from alert 237

Next Meeting: Wednesday, Aug 12, 2026 @ 3:30PM

