



PUBLIC POLICY/COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

August 12, 2026

Virtual Meeting - 3:30 p.m.

Committee Members: Ellen DePinto, Chair
Pamela Cassidy, Beth Fiore, Linda Rad

Administrative Staff: Dr. Jonathan Hart, Superintendent of Schools
Jason Bohm, SBA/Board Secretary

Minutes

1. Alert 238 - Cell Phones in Schools, DOE Guidance
 - a. Policy and Regulation 5516 - Use of Electronic Communication Devices - The committee reviewed the new Strauss Esmay policy and regulation 5516. This policy was written to comply with the new legislation signed into law in January 2026. Functionally, this new policy doesn't vary much from our current cell phone policy. The law targets all personal, internet-enabled devices and prohibits their use for the entire school day including lunch periods and passing time between classes. This policy needs to be in place before September 1st. The board is facing a logistical issue regarding this policy. The board follows a two reading requirement for its policy adoption. This does not leave enough time for the board to adopt this policy in time for September 1st. The DOE explicitly recommends that school boards temporarily suspend the two reading policy requirement. This allows us to introduce, vote on and fully adopt the mandated cell phone policy in one meeting. A committee member expressed concerns about the temporary suspension of the two readings requirement and how it doesn't allow for stakeholder input. The committee discussed the suspension and asked Dr. Hart if he could notify the school community to provide transparency for the policy and the timeline requirements of the new law. The committee also discussed maintaining the standard two-reading process, noting that the current cell phone policy already covers most of the new requirements. Dr. Hart mentioned that he has included notice of this new policy in his Newsletter that will go out on Monday August 17th. In his newsletter he explains the definition of "Bell-to-Bell", what devices are involved, circumstances that will allow for use of personal internet-enabled devices, storage requirements and that the board is in the process of adopting this new policy in time for the start of the new school year. He also encourages parents to contact school administration with any questions or concerns. After further consideration, the committee chair realized that our current cell phone policy doesn't include the required emergency protocol and reviewed the explicit recommendation from the DOE. She reached out to the

committee and Dr. Hart and recommended the board move forward with Dr. Hart's original recommendation to temporarily suspend the two reading requirement and adopt this policy in one meeting to ensure we are compliant with the state law. The recommended language for the agenda will be to move the Board to suspend Bylaw 0131 that requires two readings and adopt Policy and Regulation 5516 with one reading to have the Policy and Regulation in place for September 2026; the action suspending Bylaw 0131 shall only be in effect for the adoption of Policy and Regulation 5516.

- b. Policy 2363 - Student Use of Privately Owned Technology will be abolished due to adopting policy and regulation 5516 and students no longer being able to use privately owned internet-abled devices. Also, Policy 5516.01, our current cell phone policy, shall be abolished due to having new policy and regulation 5516.
- 2. Policy & Regulation 2535 - Library Materials - Revised Language. The committee continued their discussion to further define and clarify the policy and regulation. Dr. Hart brought feedback from the attorney on the proposed language from the last policy meeting. Committee members commented that listing the specific examples of mature themes is intended to be limiting to avoid it being too broad. One committee member stated she doesn't agree with using sexually explicit as part of the language because she feels it is a legal term and our library does not contain sexually explicit content according to the legal definition. One committee member recommended replacing "sexually explicit" with "sexual content" rather than removing it entirely, noting that the library carries books for readers aged 16 and older and there needs to be extra concern and standards when considering these mature books. A committee member proposed that instead of listing specific mature themes, the guidelines should reference the "16 and up" age group and align with R-rated movie standards. We started drafting language to include these points but ran out of time. The committee intends to finalize the revision at its next meeting.
- 3. Alert 238 - Tabled due to time constraints.
 - a. Policy 8660 - Transportation by Private Vehicles – To and From School-Related Activities (rev.)
 - b. Policy 8662 - Transportation by Private or District-Owned Vehicles – To and From School (new)
- 4. Draft Strategic Action Plans - Tabled due to time constraints
- 5. Policy Tracking Document - Tabled due to time constraints

Agenda Items: temporary suspension of bylaw 0131, policy and regulation 5516, abolish 2363 and 5516.01

Next Meeting: September 15th @ 3:30PM

