

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Policy Committee met in Special Session on Monday, November 25, 2019 at 3:00 PM at Central Office, Durham, Connecticut.

Committee members present: Mrs. Booth, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.

Committee members absent: Mrs. Caramanello and Mr. Roraback

Other Board members present: Mrs. Petrella

Administration present: Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Hicks called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Public Comment**

None.

### **Approval of Agenda**

*Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Booth, to approve the agenda, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.*

### **Approval of Minutes - August 8, 2018**

*Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Booth, to approve the minutes of August 8, 2018, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of August 8, 2018, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed, with two abstentions.*

### **Review of Various Policies**

**Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug-Free Workplace:** Expands definition of school property and includes e-cigarettes.

**Attendance and Truancy:** Adds a model form.

**Budget Procedures/Line Item Transfers:** No changes to Regional Board of Education Policy, changes only to Local Board of Education Policy.

**Bullying and Safe School Climate Plan:** Public Act 19-166, effective July 1, 2021. Act removes “repetitive” and redefines bullying as a direct or indirect act that is severe, persistent, or pervasive. Act removes requirement that both alleged perpetrator and alleged victim attend same school district. The notice required within 48 hours of the completion of the investigation to parents/guardians must include results of investigation and districts must notify parents/guardians verbally and via email that they may refer to rights/remedies of CGS § § 10-4a and 10-4b. By June 30, 2021, districts must publish above

named statutes. Effective July 1, 2019 districts are required to provide on the department's website training materials to school administrators re prevention and intervention of discrimination and harassment of students on the basis of protected classes.

**Child Abuse or Neglect Reporting:** Includes agency name changes for DCF, additional definitions of physical and emotional abuse.

**Employment and Student Teacher Background Checks:** Effective July 1, 2019 a state and national criminal records check completed for a substitute teacher within one year prior to employment satisfies the background check requirements. Cannot require a substitute teacher to submit to state and national criminal history record checks if the substitute is continuously employed provided the substitute submits to the checks every 5 years. Substitute teachers, within 60 days of beginning student teaching, must undergo same background checks as other employees.

**Food Allergies/Glycogen Storage Disease:** Have withheld pending review and suggestions by our school nurses.

**Homeless Students:** Effective July 1, 2019 "unaccompanied youth" defined by federal law as "a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian" are added to the list of parties entitled to appeal notices, a hearing, formal session transcripts upon request under the current law's appeal process. Expands the obligations of boards in cases where the board determines that a homeless child or youth is not entitled to accommodations. Board has burden of proof when there is a question of residency, and child or youth appealing a denial of school accommodations on the basis of residency be entitled to continue to attend school during the appeal timeline.

**Non-discrimination (community, personnel, students)**

**Notice of Sex Discrimination/Harassment in the Workplace:** adds information on required training and the posting of informational posters.

**Physical Activity and Student Discipline:** Effective July 1, 2019 clarifies the authority of the board to include additional time beyond 20 minutes for physical activity devoted to undirected play and by October 1, 2019 revise policy regarding school employees preventing students from participating in the entire time devoted to physical activity or undirected play as a form of discipline.

**Required Annual Notices for Handbooks:** includes updates that have been made to required policies including those made this year.

The committee reviewed the alcohol, tobacco and drug-free workplace policy and decided to add "not prescribed by a doctor." Moving to the next policy, the committee agreed to add a section to say that a parent may elect to not have their students attend school any longer once they reach the age of 17.

For budget procedures and line item transfers, Mr. Yamartino asked to discuss the specific line items and to have them broken down in even more detail. He gave an example of transferring teachers from one school to another with no board approval. Mr. Yamartino stated that, in either town, if a line item transfer of over \$20,000 or \$25,000 is made, it would have to go to a town meeting yet in the school district, it can be done without any oversight. Mrs. Booth felt that would be micromanaging, but Mr. Yamartino felt it was important from a transparency standpoint. Mr. Hicks felt that HR is the prerogative of the superintendent and Mr. Yamartino stated that the same thing happens with capital spending. Dr. Taylor felt that the public does not see the budget on an item by item, teacher by teacher level, so they are voting

on large categories. He did have an issue with shifting items from category to category, however. Dr. Veronesi explained that they cannot and do not do that.

Dr. Veronesi asked why Mr. Yamartino felt those types of issues should be in the purview of the community when no salaries are changing and he felt that redirecting the salaries is a change and both the board and the public should know about it. Mr. Moore stated that the board does receive a monthly report showing who the teachers are and where they are and anyone could ask about any changes then. Mrs. Petrella felt that some of this should be discussed by the HR committee and she would like to receive a more detailed report.

Mr. Yamartino gave another example of technology being bought without having been budgeted and without discussion by the board. Mr. Moore asked Mr. Yamartino to write down his thoughts on this policy and discussion will continue at another meeting.

The committee continued reviewing various other policies. Dr. Taylor cautioned them to be careful about how they interpret violence. Mr. Moore asked Dr. Veronesi if there have been issues of teen dating violence and she reported that there have been a couple of instances in the high school. Mrs. Booth asked if there was intervention and also commented that she did not believe that younger students get enough education about what bullying is.

Mrs. Booth verified how the process works and it was explained that the full board will get a first read of the policies and then a final vote. There was discussion about what would be cruel and excessive physical punishment. Mr. Yamartino asked if there was a separate policy for abuse and educational neglect of the students at MTA and Dr. Veronesi explained that they are covered under the same policy as they are students under the district's care. Educational neglect is defined as missing school for more than 10 unexcused days. The district would have to have reached out to the family and make any necessary provisions to get the child to school. If all fails, a referral is made. Dr. Veronesi noted that there are very few instances in the district, but it is very hard to address when it does happen. She described school anxiety, school phobia and school avoidance and how difficult it is to treat. She noted that anxiety is heightened throughout the whole population.

Dr. Veronesi confirmed that board members could receive the revised policies electronically and it was agreed to send multiple policies in one email.

Mr. Yamartino asked why background checks are not done on board members, but they are on all staff members and the board members have access to all of the schools. Mrs. Booth mentioned that she didn't think background checks were done on volunteers that go into the schools, but Mr. Hicks thought they had to go through some sort of training. Dr. Veronesi stated that they do not go through training. Mr. Yamartino felt that background checks should be extended to board members as well, but Mr. Hicks absolutely did not agree. Dr. Taylor felt that background checks wouldn't work because there is no entity to review them anyway, but he did feel that any volunteers should be checked. Dr. Veronesi will check to see what other districts do.

Dr. Veronesi stated that Mrs. Geraci has asked them to look at the food policies, in particular the use of food for classroom celebrations. Some schools don't allow that and Mrs. Geraci wanted the district to adopt that policy. She asked the committee to take a look at this at the meeting on December 9<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Taylor asked what the current policies are on lunchtime settings with regards to nuts and other things. Dr. Veronesi explained that there are peanut-free tables, but some parents still elect not to have their students sit there. Dr. Taylor would not want to see a policy enacted purely based on a few students feeling

impacted by it and felt it would be important to look at how this policy would be framed. Mrs. Booth felt it needed to be all or nothing throughout the district.

Dr. Veronesi explained that if a student is living in a motel or hotel, they are considered homeless and it would be the responsibility of the district to transport that student to and from school. If a student was evicted and lives in another city, they are also considered homeless and the district must provide transportation. Dr. Veronesi also noted that she always calls the family if she receives a tip that someone does not live in district. Mrs. Booth also stated that the district should have a tuition for someone who lives outside of the district. Mr. Hicks noted that the board could set a tuition rate, but in his history on the board they have never allowed a student in from out of the district. Mr. Yamartino thought there may be instances when paying tuition would be acceptable. The current policy allows students to stay in district once they are seniors without paying tuition. Mrs. Booth felt that if people owned property and were building a house, the student should be allowed to attend district schools.

Dr. Taylor asked if there have been any major gender identity issues with students and Dr. Veronesi reported that there have not. There is a gender-neutral bathroom and they work closely with students and families in these situations. Mr. Yamartino asked if the district had to allow someone to work here because of discrimination even if they are not allowed to work in this country. He felt that if people were not legally able to work in the country, they should not be hired and the district should not sponsor anyone. Dr. Veronesi stated that she will ask the lawyers about that. Mr. Moore noted that if they had a green card, then the district cannot discriminate against them.

Dr. Veronesi went on to review the policy about not withholding recess, but Mrs. Booth stated that she has been told that that happened last year. Dr. Veronesi asked to be notified about anything like that and will ask her principals to remind their staff. Mrs. Booth asked how the district defines an elementary student and Dr. Veronesi stated that that was just changed to be K-5, but she will check into this. Mr. Hicks stated that this issue was covered under Public Act 19-173.

Mr. Hicks asked if the board will vote on regulations as well as policies and Dr. Veronesi thought that they had not done that in the past. Mr. Hicks thought they had in the past, but it is not required and it would be Dr. Veronesi's decision.

Dr. Veronesi added that she didn't think there have been complaints based on a disability since she has been in the district, though there had been one against a football coach prior to that time. Dr. Veronesi added that any situation with bullying or discrimination is serious and it's important that it is handled correctly. Mr. Yamartino asked if the SRO is part of these investigations and Dr. Veronesi explained that it depends on the situation.

The committee got to policy 504 and decided to continue the review to the next meeting. Dr. Taylor asked about the cell phone policy and Mr. Hicks stated he was leaving the meeting.

#### **A. Cell phone policy**

Dr. Veronesi reported that both Strong and the high school have instituted the expectation that student cell phones cannot be out in classes during the school day. Dr. Taylor felt that the policy did not differentiate between the school environments and he had sent Wallingford's policy to the committee members which is slightly more stringent in the elementary and middle schools, but more lax in the high school environment. Kids cannot have phones during the school day in the elementary and middle schools, but can, in fact, use their phones during certain periods of the day in high school. Dr. Veronesi felt that what

Dr. Taylor was describing was already in practice in the district, but not in a policy. She will talk about this with the administrative team. Dr. Taylor felt that it should be clear in the district's policy that notification for emergencies is handled in such a way that is not cell phone-dependent. Mrs. Booth mentioned that kids want to be able to text their parents in times of emergency, such as if there was an active shooter.

Mrs. Petrella felt that there should be a policy that no cell phones should be out, except in times of emergency. Dr. Veronesi reminded everyone that a policy does not prevent things from happening; it just means that the schools are expected to enforce it via school rules. Dr. Taylor felt that the correct policy is the one that delivers the best educational experience for the kids and 99.9 percent of the time a phone would be a negative impact in the classroom.

### **Public Comment**

None.

### **Adjournment**

*Mrs. Booth made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to adjourn the meeting.*

*In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Booth, Mr. Moore, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.*

The meeting was adjourned at 5:21 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

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