

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Policy Committee met in Regular Session on Wednesday, January 18, 2023 at 4:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Committee members present: Mrs. Dahlheimer (arrived late), Mr. Moore and Mr. Roraback

Committee members absent: Mr. Mennone and Mr. Stone

Board members present: Mrs. Petrella

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Moore called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Roraback made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mr. Moore and Mr. Roraback. Motion passed.

Approval of Minutes - October 19, 2022

Mr. Roraback made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the minutes of October 19, 2022, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of October 19, 2022, as presented: Mr. Mennone and Mr. Moore. Motion passed.

General Policy Language/Nomenclature Discussion

Dr. Schuch stated that the policy binder has been divided into sections and assigned numbers, but they are not listed in numerical order. Instead, they are alphabetized with each section. He felt that they should either stick with the alphabetical model and drop the numbers or list the policies by number.

Mrs. Petrella liked that the numbers keep the topics together. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that the policies should be in numerical order because that's how they receive them from Shipman.

Dr. Schuch thought that alphabetical made it easy for the public to find a particular policy, but they would need to know which section it's in to begin with. The regulations are right behind each policy. Mr. Moore thought that it would make it hard for anyone to find a policy if they were just listed numerically. Mrs. Petrella felt that they could be numerical as long as there was a heading listed for each section. Dr. Schuch hoped the public would be able to search once the website is updated.

Dr. Schuch also mentioned that people typically call or email them if they can't find a particular policy. Mr. Moore would like to have it numerically, but provide another way to find a policy other than knowing the number. He felt that if the system allowed people to search by topic, listing them numerically would be fine. Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that you are able to do a Google search.

Dr. Schuch added that he felt that the word "learner" should either be used everywhere or nowhere in the policies. Mr. Moore wasn't sure the district was ready to do that and Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that more conversation is needed. Mr. Moore felt that the students wouldn't really care, but parents may. Dr. Schuch noted that it would be easier to leave it as "student" so that they don't have to make changes. He felt it was a sign of respect that everyone is learning vs. the student-teacher thing. Mrs. Petrella felt that the word "learner" is a little confusing, but realizes that everyone is a learner and suggested using "student learner." It was agreed to leave it as "student" throughout the policies.

Social Media Policy/Regulation

Dr. Schuch reviewed that there had been a few questions from concerned community members surrounding Veterans Day. A staff member took a picture at a Veterans Day assembly and posted it on their personal social media page. Others were being posted on school social media sites. The leadership team felt that the regulation puts some restrictions around closed groups that aren't very practical and added that previous superintendents and administrators had encouraged the use of social media, taking care to not post anyone's picture whose family has indicated that they would not want that. He wondered if there was a difference of a picture being on the district's website vs. on a district-sponsored Facebook or Instagram. The consensus of the administrative team was no and the child's picture should not appear anywhere.

Dr. Schuch wanted to get a consensus from the committee before he cleaned up the regulation. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that parents sign many things at the same time and aren't used to it being digital. She felt that the concern is the amount of nasty things on the internet and pictures of children can be posted in real time. Dr. Schuch also noted that the team does not feel that staff should be posting anything on their personal sites. He added that the first parent that complained wasn't bothered that their child's picture was posted, just the fact that it was done on someone's personal site. He did feel it would be difficult to differentiate where pictures appear and felt that social media should be added to the form. Mrs. Dahlheimer added that once a parent signs the form, they cannot go back and read it. Mrs. Petrella stated that the regulation says that before anything is put on social media, permission needs to be obtained. Dr. Schuch explained that permission is the form.

Dr. Schuch noted that it is usually only a handful of people that refuse to allow their child's picture to be posted. He added if they take this policy too far, some teachers will not post anything because they'll feel it's not worth it. He felt the answer would be to revise the regulation and the form. Dr. Schuch felt that social media has been pushed to promote good things that are happening. Mrs. Petrella suggested setting up closed websites for each of the schools that the teachers can post to. Mrs. Dahlheimer didn't feel that would work, but Instagram accounts are not uniformly named.

Dr. Schuch explained that the leadership team strongly felt that closed groups would not work because people won't post and it defeats the purpose of getting the good news out. He added that an account for each school would require an administrator to monitor it. The appeal of social media is that everything

happens in almost real time. He reminded everyone that the learners all have their own social media as well.

Dr. Schuch noted that Mr. Ford had mentioned that there were probably 50 to 100 parents at Lyman on Veterans Day and they were all taking pictures of all the kids and posting them. Any restrictions that the district puts on social media really won't provide protection for the children. He reiterated that he would like to revise the regulation and the form to help clean things up a little bit. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked that the form be posted somewhere after parents sign it and Dr. Schuch thought it could be posted with the regulation.

Monthly Policy Review: 1000 Series Policies and Equity Policy

Dr. Schuch reviewed that the district receives recommendations from Shipman and CABE and the committee decided to go with recommendations from Shipman only. He provided Shipman updates to the committee along with local recommendations. Some are changes or deletions and some are just reorganizing. Most of the policies that they have recommended eliminating is because they don't view them as policies, but more as philosophies or belief statements. He asked the committee to let him know if they do not want him to continue with that.

The plan is to review a batch of policies each month and then bring the batch to the full board the following month for a first read. That would mean that board agendas will be heavy with policies for about a year, with both first and second reads each month. Dr. Schuch added that anything that was recently adopted was not re-reviewed.

Dr. Schuch explained that they recommended moving the Equity policy to the learning section (which was formerly the instruction section). Mrs. Dahlheimer asked why Equity wouldn't be in with the Nondiscrimination policies and Dr. Schuch noted that those policies are all in different sections as well. They settled on the Learning section because the policy provides for equal opportunities of learning. Dr. Schuch felt that it was hard enough to get the policy approved in the first place, he wouldn't want to have a big discussion about where it belongs at a full board meeting. Mrs. Petrella liked it in the Learning section, but Mrs. Dahlheimer wanted it under the 5000 series because it relates to students, not staff. Dr. Schuch added that he is not in favor of duplicating policies in multiple sections as that would be difficult to update.

Dr. Schuch went on to review individual policies. He recommended deleting 1000, which was last updated in 2009, because it is more of a belief statement. Mrs. Petrella hated to lose the language and would like it to be included somewhere else. Dr. Schuch explained that they can leave philosophical things in the policies if the committee wants. He added that a lot of the philosophical policies actually came from CABE.

Mrs. Dahlheimer had no issues with the changes proposed to the 1000 series and stated that she, as a parent, liked how easy they are to read. She wished that they were seeing these after the retreat on Saturday where they will talk about goals.

Moving to 1140, they added wording to update it to the current times. Mrs. Petrella wanted to add that approved candidates should represent both political parties running for office under 1326, Election Activities. Dr. Schuch felt that they should run that by the attorneys as campaigning in the schools is not

allowed and Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that exposure itself is campaigning. The committee reviewed that this should apply to pre-election activities, not visits by elected officials. Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that she heard a lot of comments about John-Michael Parker's visit and his opponent should have been present. Dr. Schuch will ask the attorneys for guidance.

Dr. Schuch explained that the idea of learning vs. instruction is that the priority is learning, not about what the teachers are doing. Moving on to 1411, Law Enforcement Agencies, which was last updated in 2011. He recommended deleting this policy as he felt that it was written before the district had a School Resource Officer. Dr. Schuch clarified that it was not uncommon for vendors and others to take groups of boards out to dinner or sponsor a conference. He wanted to make sure that no one gets in trouble with policy 1313, Gifts to Employee and Board Members, if they attend something like that. This issue is included in the Code of Ethics, 9271, but that applies just to board members, not employees. Everyone agreed that the policy is fine, as written.

Dr. Schuch explained that there are two existing policies that relate to fund-raising, 1324 and 1325. Shipman has a much more modernized fund-raising policy and he recommended that the committee adopt that policy in place of both 1324 and 1325. He suggested that the policy go into the 5000 series because it really has to do with the learners doing fund-raising. Dr. Schuch felt that the policy around crowd-sourcing is very important for the district to get right. Some districts are okay with that while others are not. It is currently prohibited as a practice in the district. Mr. Moore stated that, about five years ago, it became apparent that they couldn't control what the teachers would be asking for.

Mr. Moore explained that his daughter teaches in Middletown and uses this a lot. Every year, she gets \$500 or \$600 to buy new equipment for her library. Dr. Schuch would also want to get Mrs. Neubig's guidance on this as well. He wondered if the district would want them to virtually pass the hat with the per pupil cost what it is, but they would also not want to turn donations away. Mrs. Petrella felt that the difference is that a donation comes to you; you don't go out looking for it. The committee agreed to get guidance from Mrs. Neubig before moving anything forward to the full board.

Dr. Schuch suggested deleting policy 1500, Community Relations, as it really isn't a policy, but Mrs. Dahlheimer didn't understand why they would delete it. Dr. Schuch noted that membership in CAFE is not free and this policy states that the district should belong. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if they would still be able to budget funds for memberships if this policy is deleted and Dr. Schuch felt that that wouldn't affect that. Mr. Roraback mentioned that both Rebecca Adams and Merrill Adams are not big on CAFE anymore and he will try to find out why. The committee agreed to delete this policy.

Dr. Schuch also recommended deleting policy 1210, School Community Associations, for the same reason as it seems to be a philosophy statement. Mrs. Dahlheimer would like it to be reworded into a policy as she feels that the PTAs and PTOs don't have an integral role. Dr. Schuch explained that they are independent nonprofits and the board would have no authority over them. Mr. Moore suggested wording it that the Board of Education authorizes such groups. This policy was also last updated in 2009. Mrs. Petrella did not want to delete it and it was agreed to keep the policy. There was then discussion about authorizing vs. considering vs. acknowledging.

Mr. Moore asked why Dr. Schuch took out the third paragraph of policy 1120. He explained that he felt it belonged more in board by-laws and not in policy. Dr. Schuch felt that the committee may want to consider 2 and 3 regarding public comment, but it was explained that public comment is restricted to

what's on the agenda, by time and occasionally on inappropriate words. They did agree to not allow public comments during the meeting outside of the public comment sections. Dr. Schuch explained that they took language out regarding public comment only about the educational program of the district, to allow them to talk about other issues that pertain to the district.

Dr. Schuch added that board members and superintendents are called out all the time during public comment and if the board doesn't want that to happen, they shouldn't allow public comment at all. He felt that talking about board members' professions and other things are fair game under public comment. Mrs. Dahlheimer wants the policy to be clear that the public can only speak during public comment sections of the agenda.

Dr. Schuch felt that policy 1250, Visits to the Schools, is more of a belief statement than a policy. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that deleting this policy would not look good. Dr. Schuch felt it was out of touch with the current reality and he will recommend deleting it, but with a full explanation.

Mrs. Dahlheimer suggested creating a small write-up for each policy change rather than a summary. Mr. Moore will write a small explanation for each deletion.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Mr. Roraback made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to adjourn the meeting.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore and Mr. Roraback. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:47 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

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