

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Policy Committee met in Regular Session on Wednesday, August 9, 2023 at 4:00 PM in the library at Cuginchaug Regional High School.

Committee members present: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore and Mr. Roraback

Committee members absent: None

Board members present: Mrs. Petrella

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Brough, Human Resources Specialist, Mrs. Keane, Director of Student Services and Special Education, Mrs. Stone, Principal of Cuginchaug Regional High School, and Mr. Ford, Principal of John Lyman School

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

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore and Mr. Roraback.

Approval of Minutes - June 7, 2023

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to approve the minutes of June 7, 2023, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of June 7, 2023, as presented: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore and Mr. Roraback. Motion passed.

Discussion of 2000 Series - one remaining policy in series

Mr. Moore explained that there is only one policy remaining in the 2000 series and asked if the committee wants to keep it as is or move it. The remaining policy relates to the superintendent being able to do what is necessary in case of an emergency without board action. Dr. Schuch felt that it could go to the 9000 series under Board By-Laws and the committee agreed.

Review of 4000 series policies

Mr. Moore noted that there are about a dozen left in the 4000 series for review. Policies 4160 and 4260 were recommended to be replaced by the current Shipman policy regarding bloodborne pathogens. Policy 4148 and 4248 regarding employee protections were recommended for deletion, but Mr. Moore

felt they should be kept intact. Mr. Brough stated that there was existing language in the teachers' and administrators' contracts, but nothing in the support staff contract.

A new Shipman policy has been added regarding hiring non-certified staff. Policy 4212.8, nepotism, has been recommended to be replaced with the Shipman policy. Mr. Brough added that the Shipman policy was updated in 2020. Mr. Brough also noted that the district presently has members of the same family working in the same position. Mr. Moore clarified that nepotism refers to the hiring process.

Policies 4118 and 4218, nondiscrimination, have been recommended to be replaced by the Shipman policy which is more current. Mrs. Keane added that terminology from the state has shifted a bit which is included in the Shipman policy.

Policies 4138 and 4238 are in regard to certified and non-certified non-school employment and Mr. Mennone asked if teachers have to get permission for secondary employment. Dr. Schuch stated that they do not. Dr. Darcy wondered whether this policy is even needed and Dr. Schuch questioned whether the district can have this policy with the bargaining agreement. Mr. Brough felt that if they had a staff member engaged in a job that is controversial or immoral, the district would have the responsibility to address that. Dr. Darcy mentioned that teachers have a Code of Professional Ethics and Mrs. Keane added that, if she was a school psychologist, she would be able to take on a private case of a child in the district without this policy in place though she felt that she ethically could not. Mr. Moore felt that this policy protected the district from employees using their facilities, but Dr. Darcy felt that would be covered under the building use policy. Dr. Schuch noted that he has seen that teachers can't get paid to tutor students in the subject they teach, but they could tutor other kids from school or from other schools privately. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if district teachers can tutor district kids during the summer and Mr. Brough noted that there are very specific guidelines for that. It was agreed to leave the policy in place.

Staff has recommended that policies 4112.6 and 4212.6 on personnel records remain in place. Dr. Darcy stated that every employee has the right to request a copy of their personnel record every year by law, but felt that the policy states that they can look at it. Mr. Brough felt that the point of the policy was to have an administrator present. Dr. Darcy just felt that most people would not know they have a right to request a copy and felt that the policy should include language stating that.

No changes have been recommended to policy 4134, tutoring. Mrs. Dahlheimer wondered if they had received anything from Shipman on this since this policy hasn't been updated since 2012. Policies 4161 and 4261, prohibition of psychotropic drugs, have been recommended to be replaced with the Shipman policy.

Policy 4142 has been recommended to be replaced with the Shipman model. No change has been recommended to policies 4118 and 4218.11. It has been recommended to add a policy regarding sudden cardiac arrest awareness from Shipman which will require each coach to be trained. Mrs. Dahlheimer read the policy for the committee and felt that it was straightforward.

Discussion on Student Wellness 5135 and Food Allergies, GSD and Diabetes 5140

Mrs. Dahlheimer had forwarded an email from Nicole Ercolani regarding this agenda item. She noted that many parents have expressed interest in allowing students to bring in food/snacks for classroom celebrations and asked that the committee consider reinstating this option. This is a longstanding

tradition that was enjoyed by many and would not extend teachers' or nurses' workloads. Ms. Ercolani offered to help with suggestions to help make this work.

Dr. Schuch wasn't sure why this would come back to the Policy Committee, but the board didn't really provide any direction. Their position is that the existing policies are appropriate and in line with other districts. Many districts had already started restricting this prior to COVID. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that they were more concerned about limiting instruction around food in the schools and that would not happen. Dr. Schuch added that food-based celebrations will not be completely eliminated, but limited in scope and provided by the school.

Mr. Moore felt that these two policies are protective, not advocating for events, and agreed that the current policies would be the safest. Mrs. Dahlheimer was concerned that this will keep reoccurring if the committee doesn't give information to the board as a whole. Dr. Darcy suggested that it be a building-level decision and the board policy would be to adhere to state and federal guidelines. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that it needed to be equal across buildings and realized that they won't be able to make everyone happy. Mr. Moore felt that there is no need to change the current policies. Most everyone felt that having cupcakes should not be a board decision.

Mr. Moore agreed to draft something for the full board on these policies.

Discussion on employment of athletic coaches

Mrs. Caramanello had raised the issue about hiring coaches who have kids in the district and Mrs. Dahlheimer read an email from her. She is not in support of the trend of hiring parents of players on sports teams as coaches for those specific teams. This is not an indication of her opinion of the coaches' abilities or expertise, but she believes that the district owes it to the student athletes to hire unbiased, high-quality coaches which she thinks is close to impossible with their own child on a team. Mrs. Caramanello sees nothing wrong with a parent being hired for a coaching position in a sport that their child doesn't participate in. She felt that there must be experienced coaches who will be unbiased. She has had many parents reach out to her disappointed with hiring decisions for coaches. She also noted that her own children were never put in her classroom. She hoped that the board can have an open discussion on this.

Mr. Moore explained that most coaches have favorites and high school coaches are really focused on winning, not on training. He felt that the Athletic Director has the responsibility to ensure that favoritism is balanced. Mr. Moore did not feel that the board should prohibit parent coaches. Dr. Darcy agreed. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked what current policy is tied to this and Mr. Moore explained that it is Evaluation and Termination of Non-Renewal Athletic Coaches in the 4000 series.

Dr. Schuch and Mr. Brough felt that if they wanted to do this, a new policy would need to be created as it doesn't fall under nepotism. Mr. Mennone did acknowledge that a lot of people were upset about this, but felt that if the coach is qualified and has gone through the application process then it is okay. Mr. Moore pointed out that all coaches go through training, certification and have to meet the requirements. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked how hiring committees are formed for coaches and Mrs. Stone noted that there are student representatives and outside representatives for screening interviews. The second round is usually Mrs. Stone, the athletic director and another administrator or another party. The candidates are then forward to Dr. Schuch. Mrs. Stone asked the committee to think about that there are lots of stipended

positions in clubs and activities and she would worry about the slope that this would create. The district does rely a lot on parents and noted that parents oversee a lot of the clubs.

Mrs. Dahlheimer wanted to avoid the appearance that the district hires parents over better-qualified coaches. Mrs. Stone added that, in the interview process, they have picked the best candidates for the positions, not based on family situations. Dr. Schuch didn't see this as being different from hiring for any other position, except that sports is very public and open to more criticism. Mrs. Dahlheimer wondered if there were policies from other districts on hiring committees and unbiased members and felt they could discuss this further at the next meeting. Mr. Moore did not see any reason to go any further with this unless a problem arises in the future. Mrs. Dahlheimer is hesitant to not bring it back next month since Mrs. Caramanella wasn't present tonight. Dr. Darcy felt that they need to trust the athletic director's judgment and Mr. Roraback felt that the district runs off of parent involvement and they should not set up barriers to that.

Draft new policy on Board Oversight Responsibilities

Mr. Moore looked through statutes and felt that board responsibilities are hiring the superintendent, managing the superintendent through performance evaluations, controlling the budget and curriculum, course work and libraries. He felt that the board has all of those oversight responsibilities already. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked for this issue to be tabled until next meeting because Shipman will be providing some draft recommendations.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to adjourn the meeting.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
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