

Concord School District
Board of Education
Communications and Policy Committee

Date: Wednesday, December 14, 2016

Committee members present: Jennifer Patterson, *chair*; Maureen Redmond-Scura; Alana Kimball; Thomas Croteau

Board members also present: Clint Cogswell

Administration: Terri Forsten, *Superintendent*; Donna Palley, *Assistant Superintendent*; Donna Reynolds, *Director, Food Service*

Also in attendance: Leslie Barry, *PE teacher*

Committee Chair Jennifer Patterson called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. The meeting agenda included a review of four policies, and an update on guidance being developed to support transgender students in the schools.

Superintendent Forsten introduced Donna Reynolds, who presented Policy #530 – Wellness. Ms. Reynolds introduced Leslie Barry, who assisted in developing the policy. Ms. Barry explained the process the policy update process and mentioned that the Wellness Committee felt this was a strong policy and hoped the Communications & Policy Committee agreed. Mrs. Patterson asked whether the policy was being presented as a draft or if the Committee was being asked for an approval. Superintendent Forsten clarified that this was an initial approval requested before the revised policy is presented to the full Board. Ms. Barry explained that new standards have been released since the original policy was created, necessitating this update.

Tom Croteau asked for nutrition guidelines in the context of the K-12 curriculum. Ms. Barry clarified that an ongoing discussion with Athletic Director Steve Mello and school administration has been taking place to identify gaps and overlaps where this education would fit. Mr. Croteau asked for clarification regarding classroom activities and fundraising activities. Ms. Barry explained that teachers would be provided with guidelines and lists of healthier choices in the context of celebrations and parties. Ms. Patterson asked if the District is required under federal standards to adopt these guidelines and, if so, whether it would make sense – if not required – to begin with education of the PTOs, booster clubs, etc. rather than by implementing policies. Ms. Reynolds responded that this was a gray area under federal regulations and that the existing guidelines on food being sold are clearer, but fairly nebulous on food being provided for fundraising activities and celebrations.

Ms. Patterson suggested tweaking the language so it comes across less like a directive. Maureen Redmond-Scura noted that the policy as presented seemed like a procedure

rather than a policy, as it contained detailed enactment language which might commit the District to suggestions made therein. Ms. Patterson again suggested tweaking the policy to incorporate more general concepts rather than specific, detailed language. Alana Kimball was uncomfortable with the language regarding times for lunch and recess, as this may make it difficult for principals and administrators as they develop schedules. Ms. Patterson suggested that the policy should be directed to students only, rather than students and employees. Clint Cogswell asked if the District has enough resources to implement the suggestions in the policy.

Donna Palley asked that the required amount of physical education versus physical activity be clarified. Ms. Barry noted that much of the language in the policy emphasized the importance of physical education in the curriculum as a whole. Ms. Patterson suggested tweaking the policy in a way to delineate the items mandated per federal guidelines and policy items the District would like to implement. Ms. Patterson noted that the policy would likely be more fluid than other policies and would evolve over time. Mr. Croteau noted that the policy contained excellent content and ideas.

Ms. Patterson suggested distilling the current document into an actual policy, and repurposing the additional details into a procedural document. Mr. Croteau suggested identifying resources within the District to enable and enact the actions identified in the policy, as this would be helpful when presenting to the full Board. Superintendent Forsten noted that she and Ms. Palley would work with administration and faculty regarding rolling this policy and associated procedures out to teachers and students.

Ms. Patterson introduced the next proposed Policy #711 – Transportation. Superintendent Forsten introduced the suggested amendments, including conflict resolution regarding student misbehavior on buses, and transportation for charter and private school students. Ms. Patterson asked if the District's current policies are perhaps more generous than required by law, focusing on revision of existing bus routes to transport charter and private school students. She then asked if language should be added to clarify eligibility for transportation in the context of what is required by law. Mr. Cogswell asked if a fee for St. John's School students who take the buses is charged. Superintendent Forsten stated that she does not believe that there is a fee, but will check. Mr. Croteau asked for clarification of transportation provisions for students with parents living separately and suggested that this language be clearer. Mr. Cogswell asked about trends in school bus incidents. Superintendent Forsten responded that very few incidents have come to her level and that most of those have been bus stop location-related issues. Mr. Croteau asked whether school principals receive updates on student conduct issues on buses, and the committee collectively responded that yes, this is part of the existing procedure.

Ms. Patterson introduced Policy #683 – School, Family and Community Partnerships. Superintendent Forsten noted that this policy was formerly known as Parental Involvement in Education, and that the proposed changes primarily address community partnerships. Mr. Cogswell asked that language regarding communication between parents and schools be clarified, and suggested that parent-teacher

communication be specified. Mr. Croteau agreed, and added that a given teacher could claim that general printed information from the school office suffices according to the current language. The committee re-crafted a sentence regarding communication between school staff and parents.

Policy #684 – Title I Family and Community Engagement. Mrs. Patterson suggested changing the title to “Family and Community Engagement with Respect to Title I.” Superintendent Forsten recommended that this policy be adopted as written, as it was crafted in collaboration between the NH DOE and NH School Board Association using federal guidance. Mrs. Patterson noted concerns similar to those she had with the Wellness policy, regarding delineating between a policy and a procedural document.

The committee voted 4-0 to recommend to the full Board that it adopt both Policy #683 and Policy #684 as presented and amended (motioned by Ms. Patterson, seconded by Ms. Redmond-Scura).

Ms. Patterson introduced an update to the District transgender student guidelines. Superintendent Forsten provided the May 2016 “Dear Colleague” letter from US DOE and US DOJ as a resource. She highlighted nuances about student records, terminology/language, school facilities and activities, and family support for transgender students. Ms. Patterson noted that privacy was a major issue with transgender students, and these student and families need support from the school community. Mr. Croteau noted that the terminology in the policy was helpful and beneficial, as this was a tricky and relatively new issue. He asked about circumstances when a student and their parents may disagree regarding the student’s preferred gender expression. Mr. Cogswell clarified that the policy was meant to support the student, and let them know the District fully supports their identity. Superintendent Forsten emphasized that the District has the intent to support families and to make sources of support and community resources available to them. Ms. Patterson noted that the subject of the discussion was currently a set of guidelines rather than an official policy.

The committee voted 4-0 to adjourn (motioned by Ms. Redmond-Scura, seconded by Mr. Croteau).

The committee adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Patterson, *Chair*

Terri Forsten, *Recorder*