



POLICY/COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

October 12, 2023

Virtual Meeting - 4:00 p.m.

Committee Members: Jennifer Wolf, Chair

Jodi Bettermann, Elizabeth Fiore, Randall Peach

Absent: Michele Mencer

Administrative Staff: Dr. Jonathan Hart, Superintendent of Schools

Jason Bohm, SBA/Board Secretary

Minutes

1. The district currently utilizes Strauss Esmay to provide suggested updates to policy that align with the NJ DOE updated statutes and codes. Some of these updates include changes in gender pronouns from "his/her" to "their". A committee member raised concerns that these changes are substantive and not administrative, and the committee discussed options for handling this issue. The desire to minimize risk, maintain consistency with the DOE, and to not increase the burden excessively on the superintendent who provides recommendations on policy updates to the committee was expressed. The majority of committee members came together to agree that the use of nouns in place of pronouns can be done as much as practical, and one committee member advocated that "his/her" pronouns should remain in policy as it does today. All agreed that the review of this language and any pronoun references can be shared between the superintendent and the Policy Committee as future policies are updated.
2. The committee reviewed policies in anticipation of a DOE announcement on the preschool funding. If the district receives the State Preschool Funding, then the committee will suggest to abolish Policy 2471 - Integrated Preschool, as preschool will be integrated by definition in the same way all the districts K-8 classes are integrated. The committee reviewed Policy 5112 - Entrance Age, and the entrance age was revised to be age 3 by October 1st of preschool year. This aligns with the requirement to be age 5 by October 1st of a Kindergarten year. The committee also reviewed a sample policy for Preschool Program which describes providing a high-quality preschool program, curriculum consisting of state-approved developmentally appropriate experiences, and enrollment procedures. For this year, if funded, the district would propose to enroll age-eligible students using a lottery-based system until such time the district is able to serve all age-eligible general education students. Eligible preschool students with disabilities will be admitted into the appropriate program based on their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and will not be subject to the lottery. The district may develop a priority order to enrolling students in the general education preschool program including: students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch, students who are currently enrolled in a preschool program at a school or approved private provider location, and students who will attain the age of 4 years old on or before October 1st. The committee made suggestions to update verbiage to include confirmation that enrolling in preschool would be making a commitment to a full day program. Dr. Hart reviewed the communication plan including utilizing e-mail blasts, social media posts, and lawn signs, should the funding be received.
3. The committee reviewed sample school calendars from Hunterdon Central, Delaware Township and Flemington Raritan, as well as different iterations of a the Readington school calendar. Having received an e-mail from a parent in the district inquiring about the observation of Juneteenth, the committee wished to explore adding a holiday to the calendar. With input from the administration and staff, it was

decided not to make any changes to the school calendar at this time. Not all federal holidays are currently observed in the district and in certain iterations of the calendar, adding another holiday would push the graduation date to the following Monday in June. With this year's school calendar, students will be off for the summer on the Friday Juneteenth is observed in New Jersey. The committee also discussed a valuable learning opportunity for students in school revolving around the Juneteenth holiday.

4. Due to Readington News suspending publication, the district continues to explore different options to reach the community. Currently Readington is reaching approximately 40% of the town's citizens via e-mail as students and parents. Ideas were discussed to find the most effective and cost-effective ways to reach the balance of the town's citizens. Ideas include utilizing a PR consultant to provide guidance, collaboration on a bulletin with the Township, targeted postcard/flyer on our own, and utilizing the Whitehouse Community Board on FB.
5. Advocacy
 - a. Pensions and other teacher retention strategies
 - b. Coordination with Central and sending districts.
6. Legislation signed on July 3, 2023 revising N.J.S.A. 18A:30-1 and N.J.S.A. 18A:30-4 expanded the allowable uses of sick time for school employees. Policy Guide 3212 for teaching staff members and Policy Guide 4212 for support staff members have been revised to reference the revised statutes and the new Policy and Regulation Guides 1642.01.
7. The committee will abolish Policy and Regulation 3432 and 4432 sick leave and replace with the new policy that aligns with statute.
8. Agenda items: Preschool Policies (if able), Policy 3212, 4212, and abolish Policy 3432 and 4432
9. Next Meeting: Monday, November 27th at 4pm