

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Policy Committee met in Regular Session on Thursday, February 18, 2021 at 6:00 PM remotely. Committee members present: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor
Committee members absent: Mr. Yamartino
Board members present: Mrs. Petrella
Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Hicks called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

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

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

Approval of Minutes - January 20, 2021

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Booth, to approve the minutes of January 20, 2021, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of January 20, 2021, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.

Review of draft equity policy

Mr. Moore explained that he only received comments from Dr. Taylor and Mrs. Stephan. He felt that it was important for more board members to comment on the policy and see if there were any other issues that are needed. Once he gets more comments, he will incorporate them and send a draft out to everybody.

Dr. Taylor explained that both he and Mrs. Stephan felt that they could cut out the words racism and antisemitism and just say all discriminatory, to make it broader. His other comments were minor textual changes. Dr. Taylor did have some questions about how this will be put into action though he did realize that that is mostly Dr. Schuch's job. He felt that there should be some type of concept as to what it means to equitably proportion resources across learners. He had also changed some language regarding hiring practices and procurement of services and contracts as he felt that they may not be able to guarantee diversity, but should at least strive for it. Dr. Taylor noted that he has never seen any data about how many people the district looks at for jobs and what the diversity of the applicants are.

Mr. Hicks also had a question about assuring diversity in hiring because hiring is basically the purview of the superintendent and that may be more of a regulation than part of the policy.

Dr. Schuch felt that they needed to make sure that the policy fully complies with existing policies and statutes. There are a number of federal statutes that address nondiscrimination in hiring practices. Dr. Schuch believed that it reads more like a philosophical position and less of an actual policy. He felt that it leaves them open to criticisms where the answer is very subjective, though he does believe that this would be better than not having any policy at all. Dr. Schuch urged that they not promise what they can't deliver or that can't be enforced.

Dr. Schuch believed that the way to achieve equity is by working with individuals one at a time, trying to convince them to change their mindsets around what may be deep-seated family or community feelings. He noted that there is not a lot of ethnic diversity in the community and they shouldn't have to apologize for that. He has heard, however, that there may be a reluctance to have conversations around these topics because people feel like their words will be used against them. Dr. Schuch felt that the most important thing in the policy is the ability for them to do more staff training and to keep them engaged in conversations. He also noted that most of the conversation has been around racial equity and they should not ignore economic diversity and gender equity.

Mrs. Petrella agreed that racism and antisemitism should be removed and it should be more broad. She was also concerned with any biases that may exist in the curriculum or instruction. Mrs. Petrella also felt that the policy should include that the board approves the curriculum.

Mr. Moore agreed with Dr. Schuch in that the policy needs to reflect what is being done and he would like to take more time to get input from various people. He would like to hear more from the teachers and administrators. Mr. Moore will make the edits that he has received and send it out again.

Mr. Hicks felt there may be an issue with the two sections of bullet statements and he thought they could be dropped. Pieces of those two sections could be incorporated into the policy, but he has trouble with meeting expectations.

Mr. Moore reviewed that this all started by looking at policies that had been adopted by larger school systems that have issues in their communities that are different than in the district. The CAFE policy also includes a lot of detail about implementation.

Dr. Schuch added that policies in districts that have a lot more diversity than District 13 are really going after very different things. They look at limited educational opportunities, boundary lines and achievement gaps based on race. District 13 simply doesn't have the numbers in those categories to make comparisons meaningful. Dr. Schuch felt that the way equity impacts the district's communities may be very different than the national narrative which he believes is based around large cities and suburbs to a lesser extent.

Mr. Roraback noted that the state has long acknowledged that there is a serious deficit of a diverse certified teaching staff and have put monies towards that. Dr. Serino had stated that they didn't even get anyone of a diverse nature applying for jobs in the district.

Dr. Taylor felt that the district needs to start measuring some of these things and how that can be displayed. He reiterated that he has never seen the demographics of applicants. He added that he agreed with Mr. Moore and felt that it would be helpful to get more input on the policy.

Mr. Moore summarized that he will redraft the policy to include the comments they have and send it back out to board members for comment. He would ask Dr. Schuch to have administrators comment on it as well. Mr. Hicks asked if they would like to look at policies from other schools and Mr. Moore stated that it might be good to take a look at some from smaller schools.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Dr. Taylor made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hicks, to adjourn the meeting.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

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Alwaz First