

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 Mr. Yamartino

Committee members absent: Dr. Taylor

Board members present: Dr. Friedrich and 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. Yamartino, 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 Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.*

### **Approval of Minutes - February 18, 2021**

*Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Booth, to approve the minutes of February 18, 2021, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of February 18, 2021, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.*

### **Policy review**

#### **A. Draft Equity Policy**

Dr. Schuch shared a copy of the latest version of the policy for the committee. He added that they can always draft regulations under this policy, if needed. Mr. Yamartino asked if the district's attorneys have looked at this policy and Dr. Schuch stated that they had not done that yet. He offered to run this by the attorneys before bringing it to the full board for adoption.

*Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to move the draft Equity Policy, as presented, to the full board and that the district's attorneys review it to be sure that it is not in violation of any state or federal statutes.*

Mrs. Petrella liked Dr. Schuch's edits to the policy, but she asked that the policy be renamed and focused on unity rather than equity or diversity. Her reasons for that are that diversity and equity have more of a tendency to talk about what's different as opposed to what's the same. She read the definition of the word unity and felt that unity is what the policy is striving for and not to focus on differences. Mrs. Petrella felt that a unity policy would be different than what other districts are doing and would focus on what brings us together as human beings as opposed to what's different.

Mr. Moore felt that the reason for an equity policy is to try to deal with the differences in people and educate everyone about those differences. He felt that equity means that the district will provide an education that is equitable to everyone, considering that not everyone is the same and people have differences. Mrs. Petrella agreed that not all students learn the same, but worried that there is so much focus on the differences between people rather than the fact that we are all people. She did feel that Dr. Schuch's policy is not biased, but would like the district to think out of the box.

Dr. Friedrich felt that the point of having this policy is that there are, in fact, differences in the way people are treated and a policy can't be effective if it doesn't recognize that and address it explicitly. He felt that if the policy doesn't recognize those differences would be to deny that it is happening. Dr. Friedrich would feel uncomfortable with a policy that glosses over the differences and inequities that occur.

Mr. Yamartino agreed with Dr. Friedrich and suggested naming the policy, the Policy for the Equitable Treatment of All People. Dr. Schuch admitted that he did not spend any time on the title and would support his suggest if the committee agreed. He did acknowledge that a lot of districts are currently drafting equity policies. Mr. Hicks felt that equity and diversity policy is short and sweet, yet notes exactly what the district is trying to accomplish. He also noted that the full board can have a conversation about this as well. Mr. Moore added that the Town of Durham has an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Mr. Yamartino asked if Mrs. Petrella would like to amend the motion with a new title or wait for the full board to discuss it. Mrs. Petrella added that she is not part of the Policy Committee and is unable to make a motion. She did stress that she is not trying to ignore any differences but would want to try to create a unified school community that is inclusive of diversity, race, ethnicity, language, etc. Mrs. Petrella noted that Columbia University is having six different graduations and felt that that is not the way to unify people.

Dr. Friedrich would be happy to support substituting the word "unified" for "equitable" in the first bullet and would be happy to support that at the board meeting. Mrs. Petrella reiterated that she would like the policy to focus more on unity. Mr. Yamartino suggested that Mrs. Petrella offer modifications at the full board meeting.

*In favor of moving the draft Equity Policy, as presented, to the full board and that the district's attorneys review it to be sure that it is not in violation of any state or federal statutes: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.*

Dr. Schuch mentioned that the attorneys may not have time to review the policy before the next board meeting and asked that it be moved to the following meeting, if necessary. Mr. Moore also suggested that the revised policy be sent back to the Well-Being Committee as well. Mr. Yamartino encouraged Mrs. Petrella to get her suggestions to Dr. Schuch for the attorneys to review as well.

**B. Policy 9327 Electronic Participation at Board Meetings**

Mr. Moore explained that the board has been acting under the governor's emergency authority to have all meetings via Zoom and that authority expires in April. Mr. Moore felt that some people may not want to attend live meetings and felt that they should be accommodated. He did not feel that the current policy does that.

Mr. Hicks felt that the attorneys may have some thoughts about this. Dr. Schuch stated that he spoke with Ed Bailey and Laura Francis after the last board meeting and they both felt that the requirement would be that anyone participating, either remotely or in person, can be heard clearly by the other board members. Dr. Schuch and Mr. Pietrasko felt that the best way would be to have people call in, rather than use the Zoom platform. He did offer to ask the attorneys about this, but everyone he has spoken with is in favor of the call-in accommodation.

Mr. Hicks did not feel calling in is a very good way to do it as it makes hearing the person difficult. Dr. Friedrich stated that the current guidelines require that whatever is presented visually is accessible to everyone which is never the case by telephone. He also felt that the district needs better audio so that people can be heard by everyone. Dr. Friedrich is concerned about going back to telephone only and would like the district to think about what would be necessary for mixed-mode meetings.

Dr. Schuch felt that this accommodation was for convenience and should not be a substitution for in-person participation. He did not feel that existing policies anticipated a pandemic and it was more for someone being out of town. He agreed that something needs to be in place after April 19<sup>th</sup> if board members decide not to attend live meetings, though he did feel that the directive from the state will be for in-person meetings that can be augmented by a policy such as this.

Dr. Schuch stated that Mrs. Francis was pretty clear that no additional emergency relief will be issued by the state. Mr. Yamartino felt that they should modify the policy to accommodate newer technologies as they become available/affordable and added that they are probably more expensive than the district is willing to pay right now. He will forward information on the equipment that his employer uses.

Dr. Schuch agreed to ask Shipman and Goodwin about this policy as well as the Equity Policy. Mr. Moore added that CABE is having a discussion about how to hold meetings in the future as well. Mr. Roraback added that having committee meetings one after another is very difficult for the board members and there doesn't seem to be public attending the committee meetings. He would be in favor of in-person full board meetings with occasional participation from the public and keep the committee meetings remote. They can continue to provide access to the public remotely. Mrs. Petrella reminded everyone that they were considering having the committee meetings at the different schools. Mr. Moore thought they may be able to get an exemption on the committee meetings since they do not take any votes. Mrs. Booth also liked Mr. Roraback's idea of in-person full board meetings and remote committee meetings. Dr. Friedrich added that the goal of meeting at different schools was before the district had so many committees and it becomes a logistics issue and may no longer be possible. Mr. Hicks noted that the number of committees has gone up and down over the years and he would love to see committees meeting at the different schools once again.

**C. Policy 6153 Field Trips - discuss imbedding field trip disclaimer and board motions**

Mr. Hicks stated that, after 9/11, the board started talking about field trips that went out of state and if there were to be a national emergency or activity that would prohibit interstate travel, that parents would need to know that the trip would be canceled. Mr. Hicks asked if the committee felt that the language should be added to the existing policy.

Mr. Yamartino felt that it should be added to the policy and the language about the CDC should be there as well and this information should be included in applications that go home as well. Mr. Moore felt it was a good idea as well.

Mr. Hicks agreed to craft the language to be included.

**Public Comment**

None.

**Adjournment**

*Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mr. Yamartino, to adjourn the meeting.*

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First