

School Committee Policy Review Subcommittee  
Monday, March 8, 2021  
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM  
Remote via Zoom

Policy Review Subcommittee members present: David Pearlman (Chair), Dimitry Anselme, Andreas Liu, and Jennifer Monopoli.  
School Staff present: Mary Ellen Normen, Casey Ngo-Miller, Sasha Palmer, and Robin Coyne.  
Others present: Clint Richmond, Werner Lohe, and Rebecca Stone.

Mr. Pearlman called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

**1) Approval of Minutes**

On a motion of Dr. Liu and seconded by Ms. Monopoli, the Policy Review Subcommittee voted unanimously (by roll call) to approve the minutes of the February 8, 2021 Policy Review Subcommittee meeting.

**2) Grievances Update**

Ms. Ngo-Miller provided an update on grievance procedures related to 1) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (a federal law that protects qualified individuals from discrimination based on their disability) and 2) the new Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Retaliation (approved on January 7, 2021). Director of Guidance and Clinical Services Maria Letasz serves as the district's PreK-12 District Title IX and Title VI Coordinator (students) and Section 504/Title II Coordinator. Information on the how to file a complaint of discrimination based on disability is available on the PSB Website, or by contacting Dr. Letasz. The district follows specific procedures and does thorough investigations, regardless of the type of complaint (level of formality may differ). Dr. Letasz has been working with Counsel on procedures for the new Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Retaliation. Ms. Ngo-Miller will check on the status of Counsel's review.

Subcommittee Member Comments: consider development of a policy on the district's general approach to handling complaints; ensure that all procedures align with policy; procedures are under the domain of staff; emphasized that complaint procedures should be put in a format that is easily understandable, e.g., a flow chart, and that the information should be readily available to the public.

**3) Discussion of Creating a Policy on Pesticide Protections for Massachusetts Schoolchildren**

Chair of the Green Caucus Clint Richmond and Chair of the Climate Action Committee Werner Lohe explained proposed State Legislation to improve pesticide protections for Massachusetts schoolchildren. Mr. Richmond and Mr. Lohe asked if the School Committee would consider taking actions to support these changes, e.g., contacting legislators to advocate for passage and/or adopting a district policy. Mr. Pearlman will forward a copy of the proposed legislation. It was noted that the Department of Public

Works is responsible for School Grounds, and that the Town and Schools already follow a Green Cleaning Policy. Ms. Charlupski suggested that the School Capital Improvements Subcommittee take up this issue. The Capital Improvements Subcommittee could ask the Director of Operations for an update on current practice and the potential operational and budgetary implications of any changes.

#### **4) Discussion of Wellness Policy, including Foods, Health Education, and Potential Creation of a Mission Statement on Sexual Education**

The Subcommittee discussed efforts to include natural food in school lunches. Director of Food Services Sasha Palmer explained that the district had made great progress in this area, but that this year has been challenging because the district needed to provide individually packaged items. Chair of the Green Caucus Clint Richmond asked that the district consider a policy to require, to the extent possible, natural food. Ms. Normen suggested that this would be an appropriate topic for the Wellness Committee to consider. She noted that the Wellness Policy will be up for review.

On a motion of Ms. Monopoli and seconded by Mr. Anselme, the Policy Review Subcommittee voted to request that the Wellness Committee consider the feasibility (including financial implications) of requiring that the district provide, to the extent possible, natural food.

Chair of the Brookline Commission for Women Rebecca Stone provided an update on the Commission's work with Brookline High School Dean Jenee Uttaro and the student group SHARP Warriors on sexual health education. The working group has looked at the current curriculum (Get Real from Planned Parenthood), but it is not clear how the curriculum is being used. There is no School Committee philosophy or articulated learning expectations for sexual health education as there are for other curricular areas. The working group wants to work with the School Committee on a philosophy statement that would then guide curriculum review. Curriculum revision is done by teaching/learning staff, not the School Committee, and the Policy Manual is clear on how to introduce a need for curriculum review.

Subcommittee members thanked Ms. Stone for the update and the working group for engaging in this work. The Subcommittee discussed and expressed support for a review of the curriculum and sequence. Members commented that the program should be interdisciplinary (e.g., incorporate Literature) and discussed creating a Policy Manual Mission Statement (either a separate statement or one that is woven into the current Wellness Policy). Subcommittee members suggested that this may be an appropriate topic for the Wellness Committee. It was noted that the Wellness Committee has a School Committee liaison (Mr. Pearlman will check who this is). Members emphasized the importance of student input. Members requested that the Curriculum Subcommittee schedule a review of the current scope and sequence for sexual health education (it was noted that March and April agendas are already established, so this may not take place until May). Ms. Stone commented that no one expects staff to take on a curriculum review during the pandemic, and that the review could take place during the next school year. Ms. Ngo-Miller will follow up with staff on the possibility of a future review.

### **5) Discussion of Proposed Draft Revisions to the Calendar Policy**

This item will be discussed at a future meeting.

### **6) Possible Policy Deletions**

On March 4, 2021, the School Committee voted to delete the PSB Policy on Support Services because the Policy's provisions are obsolete. The Subcommittee discussed approaches to reviewing whether there are additional policies that can be deleted or need to be updated: hiring the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) to do a review (Ms. Normen will check the scope, cost, and timeline); assigning relevant sections to senior staff; and reviewing policies that have not been updated in many years, e.g., before the start of Education Reform, and policies that are not included in other district's Policy Manuals and/or the MASC sample policies.

### **7) New Business**

Ms. Monopoli noted that the new PSB Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Retaliation includes requirements for annual reporting to the Superintendent and School Committee. She asked whether the Subcommittee should consider adding similar language to other policies.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 PM.