

School Committee Policy Review Subcommittee  
Monday, May 17, 2021  
5:00 PM – 6:45 PM  
Remote via Zoom

Policy Review Subcommittee members present: David Pearlman (Chair), Andreas Liu, and Jennifer Monopoli.

Policy Review Subcommittee members absent: Dimitry Anselme.

Other School Committee members present: Susan Wolf Ditkoff.

School Staff present: Mary Ellen Normen, Matt Gillis, Donna Chisholm, Anthony Meyer, Hal Mason, and Robin Coyne.

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 April 12, 2021 Policy Review Subcommittee meeting.

**2) Discussion of Course and Graduation Requirements Policies and Procedures (I9-I10, I13; I18-I28 for context)**

Brookline High School (BHS) Head of School Anthony Meyer and BHS Assistant Head of School Hal Mason were present to discuss the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Wellness requirement. The 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Wellness Class is a skills-based health education class that provides students with content knowledge and continuous opportunities to practice skills, aligned with the National Standards for Health Education (i.e., health promotion and disease prevention; analyzing influences on health behaviors; access valid information, products and services; decision-making; goal setting; communication; advocacy for personal, family, and community health), to enhance health and avoid or reduce risk behaviors. The course includes CPR instruction. The BHS administrators discussed the following: why the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Wellness class was not offered this year (including the difficulty of discussing sensitive topics over Zoom); options for making up the material (summer option and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Wellness class in the fall - one semester course, two days per week); how taking the class in the fall might impact students with other demands on their schedules; and State graduation requirements.

The following members of the public spoke about this issue: Carolyn Thall, Frederica Piccioni, and Nathan Shpritz. Comments included the following: concerned that students in learning centers will lose an elective in the fall and that this will reduce opportunities for inclusion; asked if there could be some flexibility for students with other commitments; requested clarification of the content of the course; suggested that the summer option be free; and asked that the district verify whether or not wellness is a state graduation requirement.

Mr. Pearlman referred to the current Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) Policies on High School Graduation Requirements and Curriculum Development. He asked whether the Policies align with current practice. Mr. Mason provided an overview of the course

development/approval process, which includes Curriculum Subcommittee and School Committee review/approval. It was noted that Mr. Mason discussed the Health and Wellness requirement with the Curriculum Subcommittee on January 19, 2021. Subcommittee members suggested not amending policies to reflect temporary changes and soliciting input from stakeholders including the Office of Teaching and Learning.

Mr. Meyer will verify the State/Brookline graduation requirements for Health and Wellness classes, the feasibility of offering the summer class at no charge, and whether there are alternatives for students who have other demands on their fall schedules. Members asked that the district consider whether it is important that the students access this material regardless of the state graduation requirement, and that the district try to meet student/family needs by being as flexible as possible in terms of how/when the material is delivered.

### **3) Discussion of Transportation to School Activities and Events Policies and Procedures (E46)**

Director of Operations Matt Gillis reviewed State Student Transportation Requirements and Brookline practices. Ms. Normen and Mr. Gillis spoke to the suggestion that the district provide transportation from South Brookline to the Florence Ruffin Ridley School Universal Summer Program site (no precedent; need to maintain equity among programs; would be a cost). Members requested the following: that the district consider whether there is sufficient interest for a second site, preferably closer to South Brookline; and that the district be proactive and reach out to families to find out whether transportation is a barrier to participation and find ways to offer support.

Mr. Pearlman referred to the current PSB Policy on Transportation to School Activities and Events. He requested feedback on whether the School Committee should make any changes to the Policy. Ms. Normen suggested changing the minimum mileage requirement from two miles to one and a half miles. This would align with the State reporting requirement. Members suggested that the district may want to encourage use of buses rather than individual vehicles.

### **4) Discussion of Proposed Draft Revisions to Calendar Policy (I3)**

Mr. Pearlman is waiting for input on this Policy. As such, the Policy will be discussed at a later meeting.

### **5) Possible Policy Deletions (e.g. I48)**

Members agreed that it would be beneficial to try to streamline the Policy Manual by eliminating policies that are no longer relevant. Members suggested scheduling time at each meeting to review possible policies for deletion. Mr. Pearlman commented that the Gifted and Talented Program was eliminated and suggested that the Gifted and Talented Policy be eliminated. Ms. Normen noted that much of this section of the Policy Manual should have been removed or revised under Education Reform. Members suggested reviewing Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) sample policies, getting input from stakeholders, and possibly scheduling a joint meeting with the Curriculum Subcommittee. Ms. Normen reported that the Student Activities Policy is

ready for Subcommittee review. She will be preparing a plan on how to revise the Finance section of the Policy Manual.

**6) Update on Status of School Resource Officer Program Analysis**

Mr. Pearlman reported that Senior Director of Data and Strategy Erin Cooley will be surveying Grade 6-12 students and staff regarding their views on SROs. The results will be presented at the June 2, 2021 School Committee meeting. The Select Board has requested that the School Committee provide a recommendation on SROs before the Select Board's June 15, 2021 deliberation. The Subcommittee discussed survey content and how to enhance the response rate. Ms. Ditkoff will forward surveys that have been done in other districts. She suggested asking people most impacted or proximate to this issue to review the draft survey.

The Subcommittee discussed scheduling an additional meeting (Monday, June 7, 2021; 5:00 PM-6:30 PM).

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 PM.

# 5/17/21 School Policy Subcommittee meeting Zoom Chat

17:08:24 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : You introduced another mandated class in 10th grade in order to graduate.

17:09:17 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : And the mandated course has been taken by 9th graders,

17:09:21 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : Yes but you can take a sport instead of a health class

17:09:45 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : You can definitely offer it, but not mandate it

17:10:13 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : The new requirement is not PE (movement), it is the 'health' (sensitive topics). The movement is what the state requires, as I understand it.

17:11:26 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Can someone please point to where the state requires Health and Fitness? I looked it up and see "Physical Education" as a requirement.

17:11:29 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : Special ed students are more affected

17:14:06 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : This decision is impacting more special education students, they can't take 2 electives next year, but only ONE. At the end of 10th grade special education students can take only 2 electives while a general education student can take up to 6 electives

17:17:32 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Thanks. Here is the MGL language:

17:17:33 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : MA GENERAL LAW SECTION 3 - PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education shall be taught as a required subject in all grades for all students in the public schools for the purpose of promoting the physical well-being of such students. Instruction in physical education may include calisthenics, gymnastics and military drill; but no pupil shall be required to take part in any military exercise if his parent or guardian is of any religious denomination conscientiously opposed to bearing arms, or is himself so opposed, and the school committee is so notified in writing; and no pupil shall be required to take part in physical education exercises if a licensed physician certifies in writing that in his opinion such physical education exercises would be injurious to the pupil.

<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section3>

17:17:38 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : Thank you Anthonu

17:17:41 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : Anthony

17:19:22 From Faith Dantowitz to All panelists : I am glad to hear the equity for Special Education is a concern, how are you addressing this concern, we have written to you and to date have had no response.

17:20:26 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Maryellen, this is the DOE info:

17:20:28 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : MA DOE GRADUATION

REQUIREMENTS<sup>SEP</sup> IV. Other High School Requirements and Guidelines

"Massachusetts state law requires the instruction of American history and civics (G.L. c. 71, § 2) and physical education (G.L. c. 71, § 3)."

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/graduation.html>

17:21:42 From Connie Clauson to All panelists : The issue of disparate impact on special education students is a complicated one. Yes, all students should have equal access to electives but there were reasons the health curriculum was developed with critical components. Students with disabilities could also be potentially harmed by not being provided with sex education or nutrition instruction.

17:23:11 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : Can we have the important part

of the Curriculum by the end of the year?

17:25:45 From Matt Gillis to All panelists : Be back in a few minutes

17:25:54 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Nathan would like to speak but is on the phone.

17:27:35 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : I said sex, drugs and CPR! ;)

17:28:38 From Jennifer Oneil to All panelists : I am concerned about the charge this summer particularly since K-8 universal program is free. an we have more creative options to make this up other than a full semester of this class being repeated so my daughter does not lose a wonderful elective.

17:35:16 From Anthony Meyer to All panelists : Sorry, Carolyn! I heard wrong.

17:36:25 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Yes!!

17:36:35 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Thank you all for considering this issue.

17:40:49 From Robert Cox to All panelists : Thank you all very much !!

17:40:50 From Federica Piccioni to All panelists : Thank you David. That will be more inclusive for students with special needs

17:42:00 From Anthony Meyer to All panelists : Hal and I will work with Carlyn to contact DESE and learn the history of the wellness requirement and whether we will mandate or offer flexibility.

17:42:29 From Connie Clauson to All panelists : I think David's solution to the Wellness issue sounds very reasonable! Thanks for a thoughtful discussion (as always!)

17:43:19 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : I'm familiar with this because the request came from my Town Meeting Member colleagues in Precincts 13, 14, 15 and 16.

17:43:37 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : The program is not optional if it's not an option. It is not an option if kids can't get there.

17:43:51 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Maryellen, how is the USP being funded? Thank you.

17:44:38 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Does the grant require all students to have access to the program?

17:45:50 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : It is the USP specifically that TMMs wrote in about. Because it is being offered to make up for lost learning, parents feel it should be equally accessible to all K-8 students.

17:46:58 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : (Full disclosure: I am NOT registering a student for the USP. But I am concerned on behalf of families in my community.)

17:47:31 From Anthony Meyer to All panelists : I think Hal and I are going to depart unless you still need us. Should we plan to circle back to district leaders and Jennifer/Curriculum Subcommittee?

17:47:38 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Maryellen, can you please provide the name of the grant? Thank you.

17:52:10 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : I appreciate what Maryellen is saying, and the attention to this. But the deadline to register is today and there was no information about transportation in the program announcement. So (again, not speaking for myself), families are not going to ask about transportation if they haven't been told it is a possible option.

17:52:33 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Thank you, Maryellen. Yes, proactive.

17:53:36 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Low income families are not the only people without cars.

17:53:50 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : This is not a convenience issue. It is an access issue.

17:54:18 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Equitable access.

17:54:41 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : Baker families were the second most interested group in the interest survey about this program.

17:56:11 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : \* People are not going to register if there is not transportation from South Brookline to FRR \*

17:56:54 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : What is the grant? What does the grant say about who this program is for?

17:59:55 From Jennifer Oneil to All panelists : I am signing off, but I want to again express my concern that rising sophomores will be charged to take the remote summer Wellness class b/c BHS chose to not provide the required content, and yet there, is a free universal program for k-8 with potential transportation for free.

18:02:02 From Jennifer Oneil to All panelists : Additionally, I hope there are other free options besides taking this summer or losing an elective - for example, an abbreviated version over a three day weekend or vacation - for free.

18:04:06 From Carolyn Thall to All panelists : David, I don't know if anyone is replying to my particular questions because I can't see the chat. Is there any way I can see if Maryellen has replied to my questions about the grant?

18:04:06 From Matt Gillis to All panelists : Student Transportation Services The School Committee provides transportation free of charge to resident students in Gr. K-6 attending the Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) who reside 1.5 miles or more in walking distance from their homes to their assigned schools. PSB may provide transportation to students in Gr. 7-12, on a space available basis, and may charge a fee for such transportation, provided that the fees offset the costs incurred by the school system.

PSB may provide transportation to students in Gr. K-8 who voluntarily elect to attend a school other than the one to which they would ordinarily be assigned, on a space available basis, and provided that the fees charged will offset the costs incurred by the school system.

All fees mentioned above will be determined by an annual vote of the School Committee, and must be prepaid.

Exceptions

Exceptions to the above include:

1. students who are in a Special Education placement, and who are entitled to transportation by law (IDEA, MGL Ch. 71B);
2. st

18:16:27 From Mary Ellen Normen to All panelists :  
<https://www.brookline.k12.ma.us/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=176&dataid=1068&FileName=Section%20I%20%209.14.20.pdf#page=48>

18:22:18 From Mary Ellen Normen to All panelists :  
<https://z2policy.ctspublish.com/masc/browse/masterset/welcome/root>

18:22:33 From Mary Ellen Normen to All panelists : MASC Policy manual Samples