

School Committee Policy Review Subcommittee
Wednesday, September 8, 2021
5:00 PM - 6:45 PM
Remote via Zoom

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

Other School Committee members present: Suzanne Federspiel, Helen Charlupski, and Susan Wolf Ditkoff.

School Staff present: Lesley Ryan Miller, Casey Ngo-Miller, Tricia Laham, Michelle Herman, and Robin Coyne.

Others present: Remote Task Force Advisory Panel 4 Co-Chair David Gacioch and Town Human Resources Director Ann Braga.

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. Frias, the Policy Review Subcommittee voted (by roll call), with a vote of 3 in favor, 0 opposed, and 1 abstention (Ms. Monopoli), to approve the minutes of the August 12, 2021 Policy Review Subcommittee meeting.

2) Discussion of Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) Policy on Covid-19 Vaccines (Possible Vote)

Remote Task Force Advisory Panel 4 Co-Chair David Gacioch reported that the vast majority of Advisory Panel 4 members expressed support for a PSB staff COVID-19 vaccine mandate. Other members expressed support for COVID-19 vaccination, but had concerns about imposing a mandate. Members who expressed support for a mandate recommended that exemptions be as limited as possible and that the mandate start as quickly as possible. Advisory Panel 4 will likely consider a recommendation for students once the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has sufficient data to give its authorization. Ms. Laham estimates that more than 70 percent of eligible students have been vaccinated. Members suggested asking families directly.

Mr. Pearlman presented a draft policy, which has already been discussed by members of the school administration. The Brookline Educators Union (BEU) is aware that this is being discussed. Ms. Laham spoke in support of the proposed policy. Mr. Pearlman noted that the district will develop procedures that will be more specific. Subcommittee members spoke in support of the draft policy, with some edits (Attachment A).

On a motion of Dr. Liu and seconded by Ms. Monopoli, the Policy Review Subcommittee voted unanimously (by roll call) to recommend the draft PSB Staff COVID-19 Vaccination Policy (Attachment A) to the full School Committee for consideration.

Town Human Resources Director Ann Braga reported on the results of an anonymous voluntary survey of Town and School Employees regarding their COVID-19 vaccination

status. The vast majority of respondents self-reported that they are fully vaccinated. It was noted that a significant number of PSB employees (approximately half) did not participate in the survey.

3) Discussion of Attendance Policies for Quarantining Students and School Committee Statement (Possible Vote)

The Subcommittee discussed a proposed Brookline School Committee Statement on Learning for Absent Students in COVID-19 Protocols. It was noted that the School Committee Negotiations Subcommittee is scheduled to meet with the BEU on September 17, 2021 and September 20, 2021. Staff expressed concerns about some of the wording of the proposed statement (the statement may set an expectation that students will be able to use Zoom for synchronous learning, teachers will have a full class of in-person students, need to hear from educators and school leaders, may need to consider individual circumstances to determine the best approach, confident teachers with support of administration will be able to address this issue).

Members noted that this is an aspirational statement and not a policy. To the extent possible, there should be consistent and equitable practices across the district. It would be helpful to have guidelines for grade bands. Students shouldn't be penalized (both educationally and by being marked absent) if they are staying home for public health reasons. It was noted that the new "Test and Stay" protocols should substantially reduce the number of quarantined students. Ms. Ryan Miller will ask the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) for clarification of attendance policies (i.e., what qualifies as a full day of school for attendance purposes). Members suggested use of OWL video conferencing cameras.

Subcommittee members expressed support for the statement, with some edits (Attachment B).

On a motion of Ms. Frias and seconded by Dr. Liu, the Policy Review Subcommittee voted unanimously (by roll call) to recommend the draft Brookline School Committee Statement on Learning for Absent Students in COVID-19 Protocols (Attachment B) to the full School Committee for consideration

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 PM.

PSB STAFF COVID-19 VACCINATION POLICY

The Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) are committed to providing a safe environment during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to public health experts, vaccination is the leading prevention strategy to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, reduce hospitalizations and severe disease, and keep members of our school community safe. Particularly due to the inability of many students to obtain vaccination until they are age-eligible, and the setting of schools where groups gather indoors, the Public Schools of Brookline, consistent with public health guidance and the Governor's Executive Orders, shall require all staff to provide proof that they have received full COVID-19 vaccination and maintain full vaccination as a condition of employment, unless they receive a documented medical or religious exemption in accordance with relevant state and/or federal law. In the event that such an exemption is approved, exempted staff shall provide continuing proof of three weekly negative COVID-19 viral test results to the Office of the Coordinator of School Health Services (or entities designated by the Office of the Coordinator of School Health Services) every school week as a condition of employment. At least one of the three weekly COVID-19 viral tests must be a molecular test performed in a clinical setting.

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Definitions:

1. "Full COVID-19 vaccination" status will be accorded to any person two weeks after the final dose of initial vaccination (one dose for Johnson & Johnson and two doses for Pfizer and Moderna).
2. The "maintain full vaccination" provision obligates staff with "full COVID-19 vaccination" status to receive any Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-recommended booster vaccine shot(s) for the Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, and Moderna vaccines within 8 weeks of availability.
3. "COVID-19 viral test results" refer to the results of molecular (nucleic acid, RNA or PCR tests) and rapid antigen tests.
4. "School week" refers to any week in which there is at least one school day.

This policy applies to all existing and newly hired employees and staff, transportation and food service vendors, and PSB-employed contractors, regardless of whether the employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past. Staff must demonstrate that they are fully vaccinated with an FDA-approved or emergency use authorized COVID-19 vaccine by November 1, 2021. Staff who cannot demonstrate full vaccination by the date of implementation of this policy must submit their first weekly COVID-19 viral test result by the first Monday after policy implementation, and every school week thereafter. PSB leadership will establish processes in consultation with the Brookline Educators Union (BEU) and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSME) for verifying staff vaccination status and testing protocols necessary to implement this policy. This policy will remain in place until revised or rescinded by the School Committee.

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Brookline School Committee Statement on Learning for Absent Students in COVID-19 Protocols

The Brookline School Committee acknowledges the vital importance of maintaining health and safety protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic. These protocols include encouraging any of our students experiencing potential symptoms of COVID-19 to not attend school (pending COVID-19 viral test results), and temporarily quarantining outside of school any students who may have been exposed to a person testing positive for COVID-19. Although the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) no longer allows public school districts to offer remote learning as a primary option, the School Committee is committed to offering any students absent due to medically-documented COVID-19 concerns or quarantine protocols the ability to access learning remotely via Zoom, or other technological platforms such as Learning Management Systems (PreK-2: Seesaw; 3-5: Google Classroom; Grades 6-12: CANVAS) that will allow educators to share assignments, materials and provide a platform for streamlined communication between educators, students and families), to the greatest extent possible and pedagogically practicable. The School Committee further expects that students will be marked present, if this is consistent with Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) attendance regulations. The School Committee appreciates the ongoing efforts of our staff, administrators, educators, parents, guardians, and volunteers to keep our students connected.