

School Committee Policy Review Subcommittee
Thursday, September 10, 2020
4:00 PM – 4:50 PM
Remote via Zoom

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

School Staff present: Casey Ngo-Miller, Tricia Laham, and Robin Coyne.

Mr. Pearlman called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

1) Discussion of Policy on Remote Learning and Possible Vote

Mr. Pearlman reviewed the changes to the draft Policy on Remote Learning. Members suggested changing “clients” to “students.”

On a motion of Ms. Monopoli and seconded by Dr. Liu, the Policy Review Subcommittee VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (by roll call) to recommend the proposed Public Schools of Brookline Policy on Remote Learning (Attachment A), as amended above, for a School Committee 1st Reading

2) Discussion of Policy on Covid-Related Issues and Possible Vote

Mr. Pearlman reviewed the changes to the draft Policy on COVID-Related Issues. Members suggested expanding the Illness and Contact Tracing section to require the superintendent to establish protocols for notifying others who may have come into contact with a person testing positive.

On a motion of Ms. Monopoli and seconded by Dr. Liu, the Policy Review Subcommittee VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (by roll call) to recommend the proposed Public Schools of Brookline Policy on Covid-Related Issues (Attachment B), as amended above, for a School Committee 1st Reading

3) Discussion of Policy on Face Coverings and Possible Vote

Mr. Pearlman reviewed the changes to the draft Policy on Face Coverings. Members suggested the following edits: add a requirement for face coverings at school-sponsored activities; correct gaiter spelling; change “parents” to “parents or guardians”; and clarify the requirement for outdoor activities in physical education and extracurricular activities.

On a motion of Mr. Pearlman and seconded by Ms. Monopoli, the Policy Review Subcommittee VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (by roll call) to recommend the proposed Public Schools of Brookline Policy on Face Coverings (Attachment C), as amended above, for a 1st Reading.

4) Discussion of Policy on Immunizations

Coordinator of School Health Services Tricia Laham explained that the district already has a lengthy Immunizations Policy in place. The existing policy needs to be updated. The Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) recommended policy

would be an addendum to the existing policy. The Subcommittee agreed to take this up at the next Subcommittee meeting.

5) Discussion of Policy on Harassment Complaint Procedures

Deputy Superintendent for Student Services Casey Ngo-Miller explained that the proposed policy would replace some existing policies. This will take some time to review. The Subcommittee agreed to take this up at a later meeting.

6) New Business

Members suggested that the Policy Review Subcommittee schedule time to discuss 2020-2021 Subcommittee goals that will support 2020-2021 School Committee/District Goals.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 PM.

REMOTE LEARNING

In the event of a district-specific emergency requiring the use of remote learning, the superintendent of schools may declare such emergency and shall, as soon as possible, obtain the approval of the School Committee. The remote learning plan below will be applicable in cases of disease, weather emergencies, destruction or damage to schools rendering them inaccessible, or other extraordinary circumstances, including emergencies declared by government officials, the School Committee, or the superintendent.

When it becomes necessary for the PSB to provide support to students who are unable to attend classes or access appropriate services due to an extended closure, the superintendent shall establish a plan and procedures to ensure that such services are provided. The provision of educational services may include the use of technology and devices, and strategies designed to support student learning away from the school building.

The remote learning plan will, to the extent possible:

- Ensure the safety of all students and faculty in coordination with appropriate local and state departments and agencies;
- Provide support for student social and emotional wellbeing and address the implications of trauma experienced by students or faculty as a result of the emergency;
- Identify goals and strategies for maintaining standards of student achievement and school improvement plans;
- Ensure instruction and services are delivered by district educators and personnel as much as practicable;
- Utilize the most effective tools and resources available to deliver content for students and faculty, including the skills and talents of district personnel, in the delivery of instruction and services while sharing resources as needed;
- Provide resources and services to meet the needs and circumstances of all students;
- Identify remedial strategies necessary after the emergency to advance student achievement (i.e. after-school, extended day, summer school, and contingency scheduling to cancel vacations.);
- Gather information both during and after the period of emergency regarding the most effective means of remote learning curricula to implement, as appropriate.

In developing a remote learning plan, the superintendent will:

- Identify and prepare effective means for communicating with faculty, students, parents and community stakeholders.
- Collaborate with municipal agencies that support the schools and community.
- Consult with the School Committee to identify any extraordinary actions necessary or authority required to administer emergency and remote learning plans. This includes any changes to district policies on the school calendar, grading, promotions and retentions, local graduation requirements, testing, and standards and accountability.
- Consult with administrators and principals to ensure the continuing education of students at all levels, including:
 - use of the most appropriate resources, tools and strategies to deliver the curricula given local circumstances and conditions;
 - ensure access to appropriate content for all students;

- specific accommodations for students at high risk, including special education students, students with disabilities, English language learners, students at economic disadvantage, homeless students, students in foster care and students of military families.
- Utilize available technological resources suitable for serving students at all levels. This inventory will be prepared to the extent possible in anticipation of an emergency.
- Ensure the privacy rights of students, faculty and families are protected, including assessing the security of district technology.
- Consult with bargaining units to determine if modifications to collective bargaining agreements need to be established for the period of the emergency.
- Identify the financial implications of the emergency plan and recommend transfer of funds as may be necessary.

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General (Interim) Policy on COVID-Related Issues

The School Committee takes note of the COVID-19 emergency, the resulting disruption of the traditional school day and year, the growing concerns of students, families and the community, and the growing number of issues that will affect public education.

Therefore, the School Committee establishes this general interim policy on COVID-Related Issues to:

- promote the safety of students, faculty, and the broader community,
- maintain to the extent possible the high and efficient level of educational services,
- ensure support for students in general education and special education, as well as those at social and economic risk,
- comply with the emergency orders of the governor and adhere to the guidance of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and other agencies of state and federal government, and
- expedite safe strategies for returning students to school.

The School Committee will vote on the final plan submitted to DESE which will outline its strategy for returning students to school and will, in collaboration with the superintendent, make such modifications to the “back to school plan,” and district policy, and when necessary will vote on authorizing the superintendent to suspend, revise or create protocols to facilitate the safe return to school.

The superintendent will designate the appropriate staff members to oversee the safe administration of COVID-related policies during the period of the pandemic emergency and shall make such recommendations to the School Committee as needed.

The School Committee will authorize the superintendent to act expeditiously in executing the “back to school” plan in accordance with current law and regulations and will, where noted, vote when necessary on authorizing the superintendent to suspend, revise, or recommend policies, rules and protocols as needed to serve the best interests and safety of students, their families, and the community.

The “back to school” plan shall constitute the policy of the PSB during the pandemic emergency, and the superintendent shall exercise the authority provided in law to carry out the plan as needed.

- General district goals affected by the pandemic.

The superintendent, subject to a vote by the School Committee, may suspend or modify individual district policies to address the COVID-19 emergency as declared by the governor. Such suspension of policy shall expire by a subsequent vote of the School Committee.

The goal of emergency pandemic policies shall be to:

- ensure the safety and health of students, faculty, staff, and all persons who may come in contact with them;

- provide the most effective educational services as possible to students under the circumstances;
- authorize changes to operating protocols as needed to open and operate schools effectively from various venues or platforms;
- conduct the policies and operational functions of the PSB as efficiently as possible;
- allow the superintendent and staff to act quickly to carry out a “back to school” plan and,
- facilitate the re-establishment of a safe and productive school day and year.

- Student assignment to schools

Subject to guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and a vote by the School Committee, the superintendent may suspend or revise the assignment of students to schools, including the assignment of new students for such a period as the emergency declaration is in force.

- Subject to guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and provisions of collective bargaining agreements, the superintendent may suspend or revise the school calendar upon a vote by the School Committee.

- Class size

In order to maintain healthy, safe, and effective classrooms, the superintendent may suspend district policy on class size, subject to a vote by the School Committee and relevant provisions of the collective bargaining agreements.

- Attendance

Subject to operative law and a vote by the School Committee, the superintendent may suspend, modify or adapt procedures related to student attendance. .

- Time on learning

Subject to operative law, regulations, guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), a vote by the School Committee and relevant provisions of collective bargaining agreements, the superintendent may suspend or amend requirements for time on learning for the duration of the COVID pandemic.

- Grading and retention

In accordance with guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the superintendent may propose, subject to a vote by the School

Committee, modifications to the policy of the district for grading and retention of students.

- Local graduation requirements

In accordance with guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), modifications to current regulation or law, and a vote by the School Committee, the superintendent may propose modifications to the policy of the district regarding graduation requirements.

- Special education

The superintendent and School Committee shall be mindful that attainment of a high school diploma may render certain students ineligible for further services.

- Discipline and Suspension/Expulsion

The “back to school” plan recommended by the superintendent, subject to a vote by the School Committee, shall contain protocols for serving all students who are disciplined or suspended during the pandemic emergency.

- Exemptions for particular groups of students (i.e., use of masks for youngest children, high risk students)

The superintendent shall provide protocols to principals and educators regarding students who may require special exemptions from health and safety standards during the pandemic emergency.

- Job descriptions

The superintendent may revise job descriptions for district staff, subject to a vote by the School Committee and relevant provisions of current collective bargaining agreements, in order to secure the safety and health of students and staff, establish effective communications between school and community, maintain facilities, transport students as needed, provide food services, and acquire necessary materials to operate schools safely and securely during the pandemic. The superintendent will inform the School Committee of any proposed changes. Any changes to job descriptions shall expire upon a vote by the School Committee.

- Students at Risk

During the COVID pandemic, the superintendent or principal of a school may revise or suspend provisions of policy to facilitate the education of students at risk or with special needs consistent with law and regulation, subject to a vote by the School Committee.

- Privacy of Students.

During the pandemic, the rights to privacy held by students and their families shall not be abridged by the PSB. Such rights extend to the confidentiality of student academic records, health data, economic status, and other such information as may be considered confidential by law.

Massachusetts law prohibits the recording of individuals without their permission. Similarly, students may not be recorded in classrooms by audio, visual, or remote means without the permission of parents or, if of age, by individual students. During periods of remote learning, the privacy of students participating in on-line classes shall not be violated by recording them without appropriate permissions.

- Pivoting back to remote learning, or back to in-school instruction

The superintendent shall incorporate into the “back to school” plan protocols for modifying these plans including addressing the needs of students who may require reversion from in-school to remote learning modalities because of the pandemic emergency.

- Home schooling (temporary), home-bound instruction (e.g., students with physical disabilities) and remote instruction for students in quarantine

The “back to school” plan shall provide for students who are temporarily homebound due to illness, quarantine, or disability.

- Public Safety Officers, including the school resource officer

Subject to current law or regulation, the superintendent shall report to the School Committee any changes in status of the school resource officer(s).

- Eligibility for participation in extra-curricular activities, including sports

Subject to law, regulation and standards established by the appropriate and legitimate regulatory body, the superintendent may propose changes to district protocols for participation in extracurricular activities including sports subject to the rules established by the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, and by a vote of the School Committee.

- Attendance vs. participation in events

Subject to law, regulation or emergency declaration, the superintendent may propose protocols or modifications or suspensions of district policies regarding attendance by students or the public in school events including, but not limited to assemblies, sports events, large gatherings, or other programs.

- Visitors in schools and buildings

Subject to current emergency declarations and a vote by the School Committee, the superintendent may propose suspension or modification to district policies regarding visitors to school buildings during the school day and after school hours.

- Illness and contact tracing

Subject to the provisions of the “back to school” plan, the superintendent shall establish protocols for tracking student contacts as a means of locating others from whom students may contract or expose other persons to COVID-19, and for notifying others who may have come into contact with a person testing positive. Such protocols will be consistent with law and regulation and be consistent with standards to protect the privacy of students, their families, and other persons.

- Transportation and busing

Subject to current law and regulation, the superintendent may suspend or modify policies related to the transportation of students by the school district, subject to a vote by the School Committee. Legal requirements relating to IEP’s that contain transportation for students shall not be altered without the appropriate family consent. These modifications shall be consistent with the district “back to school” plan.

- Operations and plant maintenance

Subject to the provisions of law, regulation, a vote by the School Committee and relevant collective bargaining agreements, the superintendent may suspend or amend current policy to ensure the efficient operation of business functions and maintenance of school buildings and other such offices as the district maintains.

FACE COVERINGS

The Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) are committed to providing a safe environment as schools reopen during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to public health experts, one of the best ways to stop the spread of coronavirus and to keep members of our school community safe is to wear face masks or face coverings. Therefore, in accordance with guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), the following requirements are in place until further notice.

A face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth must be worn by all individuals in school buildings, on school grounds, on school transportation, and at school-sponsored activities even when social distancing is observed. Masks must fit snugly against the sides of the face, secured with ties or ear loops. Gaiters, balaclavas, bandanas, and coverings with valves are prohibited.

Individuals may be excused from this requirement for the following list of reasons, per CDC guidance:

The individual:

- has trouble breathing;
- is unconscious;
- is incapacitated;

In addition, masks or face coverings will not be required for anyone who has a medical, behavioral or other challenge making it unsafe to wear a face mask or face covering. Face shields or physical barriers may provide an alternative to masks as an exemption in some instances, subject to the approval process outlined below.

A written note from a physician is required prior to approval of a requested exemption. In the event that a written note from a physician cannot initially be obtained due to hardship with timely access to a doctor, a written note from an NP or RN may be accepted on an interim basis, subject to the discretion of the school principal after consultation with the PSB Coordinator of School Health Services. Parents or guardians may not excuse their child from the face mask requirement by signing a waiver. Until an exemption waiver is approved, students must abide by the general terms of the PSB Face Coverings policy.

Additionally, face masks or face coverings will not be required when appropriate social distancing is enforced:

- while taking staggered mask breaks of less than 5 minutes under strict protocols to be laid out in detail by the superintendent in consultation with the PSB Coordinator of School Health Services;
- while eating or drinking;
- during certain outdoor activities in physical education classes and extracurricular activities.

A student's mask or face covering is to be provided by the student's family. Staff members are responsible for providing their own face coverings. However, the district will supply disposable face coverings for individuals who arrive at a building, or board school transportation without one.

If students are in violation of this policy, they will be sent home while the building principal consults with the parent/guardians to determine whether an exception is appropriate. If an exception is not appropriate the students may be removed from the school building for in-person learning until such time as they can comply with the requirement or the requirement is lifted.

Violations of this policy by staff will be handled in the same manner as other violations of School Committee policy.

Visitors in violation of this policy will be denied entry to the school/district facility.

This policy will remain in place until rescinded by the School Committee.

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