

**EAST STROUDSBURG AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING
JULY 20, 2020
MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM DUE TO COVID-19 SCHOOL CLOSURE—4:30 P.M.
MINUTES**

- I. Meeting was called to order at 4:34 p.m. by Sharone Glasco.
- II. **Policy Committee Members Present were:** George Andrews, Rebecca Bear, and Sharone Glasco. Wayne Rohner was absent.
- III. **Board Members Present were:** Richard Schlameuss and Lisa VanWhy
- IV. **School Personnel Present were:** Brian Baddick, Eric Forsyth, Ryan Moran, Dr. William Riker, William Vitulli, Debra Wisotsky, and Stephen Zall
- V. **Members of the Public Present were:** Hailey Jeanlouis, Maria Hopkins, Keith Karkut, Ninette Kurtz, Denise Matrisciano, Jacob Morris, Darryl Sabino, Savietta Sharma, and Amanda Sierra
- VI. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE: Motion was made by Rebecca Bear to approve this agenda for July 20, 2020 (page 1), with members of the Committee reserving the right to add to the agenda and take further action as the Committee deems appropriate. Motion was seconded by George Andrews and carried unanimously, 3-0.

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE: Motion was made by Rebecca Bear to approve the minutes for for June 22, 2020 (pages 1-4). Motion was seconded by George Andrews and carried unanimously, 3-0.

POLICIES FOR DISCUSSION:

- a. Policy 005 Organization—Administration presented an update, adding the Education and Resource Committee to the list of permanent sub-committees of the Board. Mr. Andrews requested more time to review the policy as he had concerns with page 2 of 4 with regard to delineating the Board Secretary’s responsibilities as opposed to those handled by the Business Office. Mr. Schlameuss interjected that we appoint the Board Secretary to do these tasks or be ultimately responsible to do these tasks. We then indemnify and provide insurance for our Secretary and Treasurer so that they are bonded. No matter how you delineate it, it goes back to the Business Office. If you want additional language that is fine, but I don’t know if that is the legal language. We might want to assign this to Chris Brown to ask him if we can make those adjustments based on what the State or PSBA is saying we have to do. Dr. Riker added that the Board appoints the Secretary who is ultimately responsible for preparing all of these items for inclusion in the monthly agenda. If you are getting down to the granular piece of who is actually doing the behind-the-scenes work, they are predominantly members of the Business Office who would be doing these tasks. Mr. Forsyth also piggybacked that a lot of the language that is added here is verbatim to what is assigned to that position in Section 433 of the School Code where it says the Secretary shall. Mr. Andrews also questioned if the district or Board had ever appointed an alternate secretary as it is stated in Policy that the Board shall. Administration will consult with Chris Brown to be sure we are not severing what is in school law. This policy will be reviewed and placed on next month’s agenda with any further revisions.

- b. Policy 221 Dress and Grooming—Ms. Bear stated this is exactly what we were looking for. Mr. Andrews asked if administration had decided who will be responsible for enforcing the policy? Ms. Bear suggested the homeroom teacher, first thing in the morning and that there be no further right-ups during the school day. Dr. Riker reminded the committee that if we state this in the policy, students are very wise and may bring a change of clothing to bypass this later in the day. Ms. Bear offered perhaps once in the morning and once in the afternoon, perhaps after lunch. Dr. Riker suggested making the timing part of the AR rather than the policy. Ms. Glasco added that if Covid has taught us anything, it is that apparel doesn't impact a student's ability to learn. The relaxed policy provides parents who are struggling due to Covid, to not have to purchase extra clothes, at least from an expense perspective. Ms. Bear asked if masks were addressed in the policy or should masks be addressed under the back-to-school safety plan. Dr. Riker said yes, on page 3 of 4 masks are currently listed. Ms. Bear asked for the committee's approval to expedite Policy 221, stating that she would like to make a motion to add 221 to tonight's Regular Board Meeting agenda for waiver of first read and subsequent adoption in order to have the policy in place prior to the start of the school year. This will allow families to be aware of the more relaxed dress code prior to shopping.
- c. Policy 220 Student Expression—Dr. Riker shared that he wanted to put Policy 220 on their radar as a reminder that the district does have a policy on Student Expression and the distribution/posting of material. This is in conjunction with the document included in your packet from law firm Sweet Stevens and Katz on the recent ruling on students' freedom of speech rights. I'm not looking for any action this evening other than to make you aware of the policy and the email from the law firm should we need to make any adjustments. Mr. Andrews asked that it pretty much says that if the bullying is done in school, we have control and if it is done from home, we do not. Dr. Riker stated he is correct. Mr. Andrews asked, so that makes it a little more difficult for us? Dr. Riker shared that PSBA will be coming out with updates based on this new ruling, so we are ahead of the curve on looking at how we might want to adjust our policy. Ms. Glasco inquired, in terms of our policies, how aware are the students of policies that govern their day-to-day activities. Is it the parent's responsibilities or are the policies just placed on the website for them to review? Is there ever discussion with the students of expectations? Ms. Bear stated the parents/students sign off on the Code of Student Conduct. Dr. Riker asked if Ms. Glasco was asking if there is any purposeful time where students discuss the policies that impact them, that is a great question, as I am not aware that this occurs. It is not to say that it doesn't but is a very good question. Ms. Glasco suggested, in the near future perhaps, discussing the top five policies with students, such as dress code, acceptable use and student expression to name a few. She asked what discipline violations are we seeing as a problem that cause the most suspensions? Start with those. Ms. Wisotsky stated that PDE requires that the Bullying/Cyberbullying policy be posted in each classroom. Mr. Moran also added that Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Harassment is another policy that we are required to provide students and staff with training. Dr. Riker agreed that getting information out to the parents and students is a great idea. No action was taken on updating the policy at this time; however, language could be addressed in the AR with regard to dissemination of policy info to students.
- d. Policy 815 Acceptable Use of Communications and Information (CIS) Systems—Ms. Glasco shared that she had an opportunity to speak with a few students about the issues and it seems to mostly be the earbuds. Depending on the teacher and the mood, sometimes it is acceptable and sometimes it is not. The policy states no earbuds, so how do we send one solid message about expectations? Mr. Andrews stated they should not be allowed in the classroom because if a teacher is giving a lesson, how are the students supposed to be paying attention if they have their earbuds in. Ms. Bear stated if taking a test, they may be able to get the answers too. Mr. Andrews added perhaps it's more a teacher issue that the teachers are not following the rules of the school district. We need to educate the teachers as well as the students. Rather than change the policy, the AR can address that a teacher can announce that during this time he/she is specifically permitting the use otherwise unless told, earbuds are not permitted. Ms. Glasco

stated that the dress code survey students conducted was the only other issue with this policy. Perhaps surveys can occur as long as a student gets permission from administration to set it up. So if it is for educational, student-centered research, with permission from the highest building official or if it is district-wide, perhaps Superintendent permission. Mr. Andrews added this is a great idea so as not to hinder the student rights. Ms. Glasco shared that students would appreciate it and it keeps us in the loop with what's being distributed. Conducting surveys teaches students the right way to get information when advocating to substantiate a way of thinking or initiate change. Mr. Borosh added that there are also ARs with this policy 815AR where we can make some adjustments without having to touch the policy. The survey went to staff and students in violation of policy and that's how the students got themselves in trouble. This policy should be clearly communicated to both faculty and staff and be included in that top five discussed earlier. An abridged version is also in the student handbook. No action was taken on updating the policy at this time.

The PSBA handout Volume III-2020 is included in the packet for the committee's review.

Public Participation:

Keith Karkut applauded the committee for discussing these policies and that it is nice to see, in great detail like they are. I just want to caution that if we allow teachers to permit earbuds during certain times, then it is the teacher not following the policy. It gets confusing when a sibling comes home and one teacher allows earbuds and the other does not. It sends a mixed message. Ms. Bear said there are also times when students use earbuds to connect to their Chromebooks, when learning independently. Mr. Andrews suggested, again, that it is where we keep the policy straightforward and address the issues/exceptions in the AR.

Darryl Sabino thanked the committee for going over months and months of the dress code and agrees it is acceptable that after lunch we check students again for compliance. She asked for clarification on earphones for individual work vs. just wearing earbuds. Also, I can't imagine that a teacher reads every policy, so how do they know when a policy is updated. What happens in one classroom may not happen in the other and what happens with one principal may not happen in another building. That is where the confusion comes in from parents as to why I can do it at JTL and not at the high school. Again, thanks for the dress code and listening to the kids and for being open-minded.

Mr. Andrews agreed that we need to have a session perhaps during the week before school when staff come in to go over the updates to policy. Ms. Sabino asked what about during the school year as we constantly make updates to policy? Ms. Wisotsky added that an email goes out to all staff each month following the board meeting, alerting staff to the policies changes for that month, which includes links to each policy. Ms. Glasco agreed that there is no guarantee that they open the email and read it. I don't want to create more work, but we need to make sure staff are aware. Dr. Riker suggested that the principals include in their monthly faculty meeting any changes each month and that it be a standing topic on their agenda. It is a mandatory meeting that they must attend each month. Ms. Glasco agreed that would be an ideal solution and at least teachers would have greater access and it would be an easy fix. Dr. Riker agreed to make that fix.

Maria Hopkins thanked the committee for the update to dress code and stated she thinks that it is definitely more appropriate for our district. The ability not to have the added expense of going shopping for khaki pants and collared shirts and with parents not wanting to go shopping at this time and dressing rooms not even being open, if ever there was a time for a dress code change, it would be now. Hopefully, the Board at large will support these updates and she thanked the committee for their work.

Ms. Glasco thanked the parents and students for standing up to request a change to the dress code

VIII. ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS

ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE: Motion was made by Rebecca Bear to authorize and direct the administration to add a motion at the Regular School Board meeting this evening to waive the first reading in addition to a motion for the adoption of Policy 221 Dress and Grooming. Motion was seconded by George Andrews and carried unanimously 3-0.

IX. ADJOURNMENT: 5:19 p.m.

ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE: Motion to adjourn was made by Rebecca Bear. Motion was seconded by George Andrews and carried unanimously, 3-0.

Next meeting: August 17, 2020 at 4:30pm via Zoom

Respectively submitted by,
Debra Wisotsky