



CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT OF NEW BRITAIN

New Britain Board of Education Policy Committee Meeting

January 19, 2021 – 6:00 PM | New Britain High School

Call to Order and Opening

Mr. Nicholas Mercier, Policy Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

Board Members Present

Mr. Merrill Gay, Mr. Joseph Listro*, Mr. Nicholas Mercier*, Ms. Diana Reyes*, Ms. Gayle Sanders-Connolly, Dr. Violet Jiménez Sims*

**Committee members*

CSDNB Staff Present

Ms. Lara Bohlke, Mr. Michael Foran, Mr. Kevin Kane, Mr. John Mayette, Mr. Jason Miramant, Mr. Damon Pearce, Ms. Kristin Salerni, Dr. Nicole Sanders, Ms. Nancy Sarra, Mr. Mark Spalding

New Business

Review and Approve Minutes from the Policy Committee Meeting on December 21, 2020

There were no recommended changes to the minutes from the Policy Committee Meeting on December 21, 2020.

Mr. Listro motioned to approve the minutes from the Policy Committee Meeting on December 21, 2020 as submitted, seconded by Ms. Reyes. Motion carried unanimously.

Review Policy 5132.10 – School Attire

This policy was originally approved on December 1, 2014. Superintendent Sarra and Assistant Superintendent Michael Foran provided committee members with some of the historical context behind adoption of the original policy by the Board and Superintendent Doris Kurtz. The topic of school uniforms was discussed at the Policy Committee Meeting on June 15, 2020 upon request of community members who were concerned about being able to provide uniforms for their children in light of financial insecurity and challenges they are facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Board unanimously approved suspension of the school uniform policy for the entire 2020-2021 school year at a special meeting on July 28, 2020. Recommendations also included discussing the topic with families and the larger community when students returned to school in order to evaluate if any changes to the current policy should be considered.

Superintendent Sarra reported that she is working to create a survey to send out in order to get input from families as had previously been done in 2014. Mr. Mercier requested that committee members and Board members be able to give feedback as to what questions should be asked in the survey as well as how to ask them. He further recommended asking families what they liked about the current policy and what they would like to see changed. Ms. Reyes recommended that the exceptions to the prohibition of scarves and head coverings in Section II of the Administrative Procedure be extended to include cultural considerations as well as religious beliefs. Dr. Jiménez Sims agreed that this was a good opportunity to look at all of the provisions included in our current policy and echoed the importance of community involvement. She emphasized the importance of making

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sure that we do not have policies that unfairly impact people of color or target a specific gender. Dr. Jiménez Sims also encouraged administrators to carefully consider whether or not provisions of the policy have any actual impact on learning.

Mr. Mercier recommended next steps which include reviewing a draft of the survey questions at the next Policy Committee Meeting in February. Committee members will then have the opportunity to provide feedback and recommend revisions. Data and recommendations from the survey would then be shared with the Board and committee members in March. If further action is deemed necessary, it will take place at the Board of Education Meetings in April and May.

Old Business

Review Recommended Policy on Level of Fund Balance Percentage for Board of Education Self-Insurance Fund

Mr. Kevin Kane, Chief Financial Officer, recommended the Board set a policy on what is an appropriate fund balance for the Self-Insurance Fund. The Finance Committee favorably referred this proposed policy to the Policy Committee for review at the Finance Meeting on October 26, 2020. On November 16, 2020, the Policy Committee motioned to postpone approval of this policy until an actual draft was submitted. Mr. Kane has submitted the draft policy for review.

The recommendation is as follows:

- Goal to maintain a fund balance in the range of 25% to 35% of current year expenditures excluding IBNR (Incurred but not reported).
- Maximum allowable capped fund balance of 50% of current year expenditures excluding IBNR (Incurred but not reported).

IBNR are claims that are incurred prior to June 30th but are paid after the close of the year in the months of July and August. It is a requirement to adjust the financials to reflect these expenditures which also includes reversing out the prior year July and August claims that were for the previous year. This adjustment is made around October 1st. The Board of Education annual financial report filing with the State of CT, Department of Education needs to be filed with the State Department of Education by September 1st for the prior year.

The Policy Committee made the following recommendations with regard to this item:

- Raise maximum allowable capped fund balance to **70%** of current year expenses, excluding the annual year end adjustment for incurred but not reported expenditures (IBNR)
- Add third section to policy addressing financial reporting to the Board of Education

The Policy Committee recommended that this new policy with aforementioned revisions be added to the Board's agenda under New Business for the regular meeting in February.

New Business

Review Policy 6146.22 – Revised Special Graduation Requirements for the Class of 2021

New Britain High School Principal Damon Pearce presented recommended changes to graduation requirements exclusively for the Class of 2021. Mr. Pearce explained that proposed changes include reducing credit requirements to align with the current Connecticut State Department of Education minimum standards and offering a fifth year to students who “feel in-person learning for an additional year will better prepare them for post-secondary opportunities.” Proposed revisions also include the removal of specificity regarding some of the course requirements. Mr. Pearce emphasized the importance of the need for flexible pathways to graduation for our students due to the continued challenges of remote learning and the lack of direct in-person daily support by teachers and other support staff.

Mr. Mercier recommended that members of the Policy Committee review other current Board policies regarding enrollment and

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advancement at a future meeting.

Ms. Reyes motioned that the Board approve revised Policy 6146.22 – Revised Special Graduation Requirements for the Class of 2021 as part of the Consent Agenda at their next regular meeting in February, seconded by Mr. Listro. Motion carried unanimously.

Closing and Adjournment

Mr. Mercier motioned to adjourn at 7:05PM, seconded by Dr. Jiménez Sims. Motion carried unanimously.

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