

**CONSOLIDATED
SCHOOL DISTRICT
— OF —
NEW BRITAIN**

**NEW BRITAIN BOARD OF EDUCATION
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING**

May 17, 2021 – 6:00 PM | NEW BRITAIN HIGH SCHOOL



NOTICE OF MEETING

TO: New Britain Board of Education Members
Mayor Erin Stewart
Mr. Mark H. Bernacki, Town and City Clerk
New Britain Common Council Members

DATE: May 14, 2021

RE: New Britain Board of Education Committee Meetings

The following Board of Education committee meetings will be held:

- **The New Britain Board of Education Policy Committee** will hold a regular meeting on Monday, May 17, 2021 at 6:00 PM at the New Britain High School Lecture Hall, located at 110 Mill Street in New Britain, Connecticut.
- **The New Britain Board of Education Curriculum Committee** will hold a regular meeting on Monday, May 17, 2021 at 6:15 PM at the New Britain High School Lecture Hall, located at 110 Mill Street in New Britain, Connecticut.

Members of the public may attend meetings in person or view a live broadcast of the proceedings online via the livestream link:

<https://www.csdnb.org/board/>





CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT OF NEW BRITAIN

New Britain Board of Education | Policy Committee Regular Meeting

May 17, 2021 – 6:00 PM | New Britain High School

Members of the public may attend meeting in person or view a live broadcast of the proceedings online via the livestream link:

<https://www.csdnb.org/board/>

1. Call to Order and Opening

- A. Meeting Called to Order

2. Old Business

- A. Review and/or Re-affirm Policies:
 - a. 6162.30 – City-Wide Group Testing Program (Approved March 1, 1993)
Page 5
 - b. 5141.24 – AIDS/ARC (Approved May 3, 1993)
Page 6

3. New Business

- A. Review and Approve Minutes from Policy Committee Meeting on April 19, 2021
Submitted by Ms. Kristin Salerni | Page 12
- B. School Uniform/Attire Survey Update
Submitted by Mr. Matthew Cannata | Page 14
- C. Information Sharing
Page 15

4. Closing

- A. Other Business as Permitted by Law
- B. Adjournment

New Britain Board of Education

Merrill Gay – President | Nicholas Mercier – Vice President | Violet Jiménez Sims – Secretary

Monica Dawkins | Anthony Kane | Joseph Listro | Annie S. Parker | Diana Reyes | Gayle Sanders-Connolly | Tina Santana



**CONSOLIDATED
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OLD BUSINESS



CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT OF NEW BRITAIN

Board Policy Statement **6162.30 - City-Wide Group Testing Program** Approved on March 1, 1993

The Board of Education shall establish and maintain a city-wide testing program which provides periodic evaluation of students and programs useful to school personnel, parents, and students. The program will also include testing mandated by the State Board of Education in fulfilling this purpose.

General Purposes

- To help establish the academic potential and school progress of all eligible students at selected grade levels where it is felt such measurement will be valuable to students, parents, and school personnel.
- To aid in curriculum evaluation, instructional planning and in the development of the school program.
- To provide information to assist teachers in their teaching.
- To help identify those students whose group test results suggest further diagnosis, evaluation and/or placement in specialized programs of instruction, counseling or support.
- To provide information helpful to parents regarding academic performance.
- To provide appropriate reports to test performance to the board regarding educational progress.



CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT OF NEW BRITAIN

Board Policy Statement

5141.24 - AIDS/ARC

Approved on May 3, 1993

Chronic infectious Disease includes, but is not limited to, AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), ARC (AIDS Related Complex), CMV (Cytomegalovirus), Hepatitis B and Herpes Simplex.

A child with a chronic infectious disease will be allowed, with the approval of the child's physician, to attend school in a regular classroom setting and will be considered eligible for all rights, privileges, and services provided by law and existing policy of the Consolidated School District of New Britain.



CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT OF NEW BRITAIN

Administrative Procedure

5141.24 - AIDS/ARC

Approved on May 3, 1993

I. Overview

- A. The school will respect the right of privacy of the individual and maintain strict confidentiality of any records containing health information. Therefore, knowledge that a child has a chronic infectious disease will be confined to those persons authorized by the parent/guardian and with a direct need to know. Those persons will be provided with appropriate information concerning the child's needs and confidentiality requirements.
- B. Based upon individual circumstances special programming may be warranted. Special education will be provided if determined to be necessary by the Planning and Placement Team.
- C. Under certain circumstances a child with a chronic infectious disease might pose a risk of transmission to others. If such circumstances exist, the school medical advisor, in consultation with the school nurse and the child's physician must determine whether a risk of transmission exists in school. If it is determined that a risk exists, the student shall be removed from the classroom.
- D. A child with a chronic infectious disease may be temporarily removed from the classroom for the reasons stated in #3 until an appropriate school program adjustment can be made, an appropriate alternative education program can be established, or the medical advisor determines that the risk has abated and the child can return to the classroom.
 - a. Removal from the classroom will not be construed as the only response to reduce risk of transmission. School personnel should be flexible in developing alternatives and should attempt to use the least restrictive means to accommodate the child's needs.
- E. In the case of temporary removal of a student from the school setting, state regulations and school policy regarding homebound instruction will apply.
- F. A child known to have a chronic infectious disease may need to be removed from the classroom for his/her own protection when other communicable disease (e.g., measles or chicken pox) are occurring in the school population. This decision will be made by the child's physician and parent/guardian in consultation with the school nurse and/or the school medical advisor.

II. Guidelines for handling body fluids in schools

Recent concern about how children with Chronic Infectious Diseases should be educated has raised several questions regarding exposure of teachers and children to potentially infectious body fluids from children and communicable diseases in the school setting:

- Does contact with body fluids present a risk of infection?
- What should be done to avoid contact with potentially infected body fluids?
- What should be done if direct contact with body fluids is made?
- How should such fluids when spilled be removed from the environment?

The following guidelines are meant to provide simple and effective precautions against transmission of disease for all person, including pregnant women, potentially exposed to the blood or body fluids of any student. No distinction is made between body fluids from students with a known disease or those from students without symptoms or with an undiagnosed disease.

III. Does contact with body fluids present a risk?

The body fluids of all persons should be considered to contain potentially infectious agents (germs). The term “body fluids” includes: blood, semen, drainage from scrapes and cuts, feces, urine, vaginal discharge, vomitus, respiratory secretions (e.g., nasal discharge) and saliva. Contact with body fluids presents a risk of infection with a variety of germs. In general, however, the risk is very low and dependent on a variety of factors including the type of fluid with which contact is made and the type of contact made with it.

Table 1 provides examples of particular germ that may occur in body fluids of children and the respective transmission concerns. It must be emphasized that with the exception of blood, which is normally sterile, the body fluids with which one may come in contact will usually contain many organisms, some of which may cause disease. Furthermore, many germs may be carried by individuals who have no symptoms of illness. These individuals may be at various stages of infection: incubating disease, mildly infected without symptoms, or chronic carriers of certain infectious agents including the AIDS and hepatitis viruses. In fact, Transmission of communicable disease is more likely to occur from contact with infected body fluids of unrecognized carriers than from contact with fluids from recognized individuals because simple precautions are not always carried out.

IV. What should be done to avoid contact with body fluids?

When possible, direct skin contact with body fluids should be avoided. Disposable gloves should be available in at least the office of the custodian, nurse, or principal. Gloves are recommended when direct hand contact with body fluids is anticipated. (e.g., treating bloody noses, handling clothes soiled by incontinence, cleaning small spills by hand). If extensive contact is made with body fluids, hands must be washed afterwards. Gloves used for this purpose should be put in a plastic bag or lined trash can, secured, and disposed of daily.

V. What should be done if direct skin contact occurs?

In many instances, unanticipated skin contact with body fluids may occur in situations where gloves are not immediately available (e.g., when wiping a runny nose, applying pressure to a bleeding injury outside the classroom, helping a child in the bathroom). In these instances, hands and other affected skin areas of all exposed persons would be routinely washed with soap and water after direct contact has ceased. Clothing and other non-disposable items (e.g. towels used to wipe up body fluid) that are soaked through with body fluids should be rinsed and placed in plastic bags. If presoaking is required to remove the stains (e.g. blood, feces), use gloves to rinse or soak item in cold water prior to bagging. Clothing should be sent home for washing with appropriate directions to parents/teachers. Contaminated disposable items (e.g. tissues, paper towels, diapers) should be handled as with disposable gloves. The child’s clothing should be placed in a plastic bag and sealed to

be sent home with the child for cleaning, after which, clean-up material such as towels should be gathered (in gloves) and disposed of in the red bag waste. Feces and Vomitus may be flushed.

VI. Hand Washing Procedure

Proper hand washing requires the use of soap and water and vigorous washing under a stream of running water for approximately 10 seconds. Soap suspends easily removable soil and microorganisms allowing them to be washed off. Running water is necessary to carry away dirt and debris. Rinse under running water. Use paper towels to thoroughly dry hands.

VII. Disinfectants

An intermediate level disinfectant should be used to clean surfaces contaminated with body fluids. Such disinfectant will kill vegetative bacteria, fungi, tubercle bacillus and viruses. The disinfectant should be registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for use as a disinfectant in medical facilities and hospitals.

Various classes of disinfectants are listed below. Hypochlorite solution (bleach) is preferred for objects that may be put in the mouth.

- Ethyl or isopropyl alcohol (70%)
- Phenolic germicidal detergent is a 1% aqueous solution (e.g., Lysol*)
- Sodium Hypochlorite with at least 100 ppm available chlorine (1/2 cup household bleach in 1 gallon water, needs to be freshly prepared each time it is used).

Students

Students/Staff with HIV, ARC (AIDS Related Complex) or AIDS

Scientific studies show that the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), the virus which causes the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) or ARC (AIDS Related Complex), is transmitted through sexual intercourse with an infected individual or through exposure to contaminated blood or needles. There is no evidence to support the notion that the HIV virus can be transmitted through ordinary school or household activities, e.g. coughing, sneezing, hugging, sharing of utensils or food, or shaking hands.

The anonymity of individuals with HIV infection or AIDS is protected by law. Moreover, individuals with HIV infection or AIDS are protected from discrimination by both federal and state laws. Neither attendance at school nor employment may be denied to an individual with HIV infection or AIDS. It is the policy of the District that no student or staff member with HIV infection or AIDS may be prohibited from attending school/employment unless there is an immediate risk of injury or harm to the individual or to others.

Because the diagnosis of HIV infection or AIDS is a confidential matter between the individual student or staff member and his or her physician, the District may be unaware of the diagnosis. Consequently, the Board of Education has adopted a policy of "universal precautions" which protects all students and staff from contact with blood and body fluids of others. These precautions are enumerated in the Bloodborne Pathogen policy.

(cf. - 4147.1/4247.1 Bloodborne Pathogens)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

[10-19b](#) AIDS education

[10-76\(d\)\(15\)](#) Duties and powers of boards of education to provide special education programs and services

[10-154a](#) Professional communications between teacher or nurse and student

[10-207](#) Duties of medical advisors

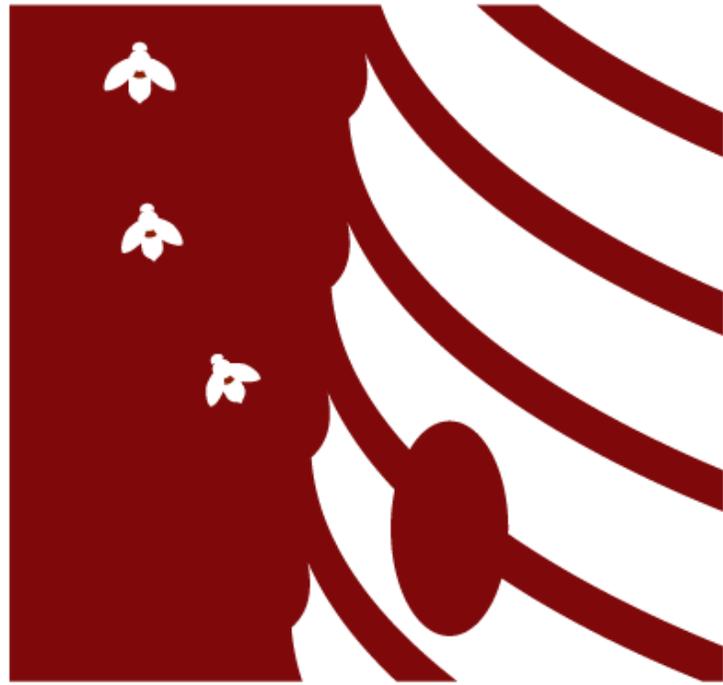
[10-209](#) Records not to be public

[10-210](#) Notice of disease to be given parent or guardian

[19a-221](#) Quarantine of certain persons

[19a-581-585](#) AIDS testing and medical information

Policy adopted:



**CONSOLIDATED
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NEW BUSINESS



CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT OF NEW BRITAIN

New Britain Board of Education Policy Committee Meeting

April 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 6:03 PM.

Board Members Present

Mr. Anthony Kane*, Mr. Joseph Listro*, Mr. Nicholas Mercier*, Ms. Diana Reyes*, Ms. Tina Santana, Dr. Violet Jiménez Sims*

*Committee member

CSDNB Staff Present

Ms. Amy Anderson, Ms. Kristin Salerni, Dr. Nicole Sanders, Ms. Nancy Sarra, Mr. Mark Spalding

New Business

Review and Approve Minutes from the Policy Committee Meeting on March 22, 2021

There were no recommended changes to the minutes from the Policy Committee Meeting on March 22, 2021.

Dr. Jiménez Sims motioned to approve the minutes from the Policy Committee Meeting on March 22, 2021 as submitted, seconded by Ms. Reyes. Motion carried unanimously.

Review and/or Re-affirm Policy 6162.30 – City-Wide Group Testing Program (Approved March 1, 1993)

Mr. Mercier recommended postponing review of this policy in order to see if the language can be inserted into another existing board policy instead. He will bring forward any suggestions or recommended revisions.

Mr. Listro motioned to postpone review of Policy 6162.30 – City-Wide Group Testing Program to the next Policy Committee Meeting, seconded by Mr. Kane. Motion carried unanimously.

Review and/or Re-affirm Policy 5145.14 – On Campus Recruitment (Approved March 11, 1993)

Mr. Mercier recommended adoption of the language from the updated CABA policy in order for the board policy to be more up-to-date and aligned with current law.

Mr. Kane motioned that the Board approve revised Policy 5145.14 – On Campus Recruitment at their next meeting, striking language from current board policy and replacing with language from updated CABA Policy 5145.14, seconded by Dr. Jiménez Sims. Motion carried unanimously.

New Britain Board of Education

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Monica Dawkins | Anthony Kane | Joseph Listro | Annie S. Parker | Diana Reyes | Gayle Sanders-Connolly | Tina Santana

Review and/or Re-affirm Policy 5141.24 – AIDS/ARC (Approved May 3, 1993)

The Policy Committee agreed that Mr. Mercier will bring forward Policy 5141.24 – AIDS/ARC for continued review at the next Policy Committee Meeting pending feedback and recommendations from legal counsel at CBE and Shipman and Goodwin.

Information Sharing: CBE Policy Highlights – April 16, 2021

CBE Policy Highlights from April 16, 2021 were shared with committee members.

Closing and Adjournment

Dr. Jiménez Sims motioned to adjourn at 6:27 PM, seconded by Ms. Reyes. Motion carried unanimously.

New Britain Board of Education

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Uniform Survey Results

The uniform survey was conducted over the past two months and we received a total of 5,486 individual responses. This accounts for more than 50% of the student population.

The narrative and question posed on the survey was:

In September 2007, the New Britain Board of Education approved a uniform policy for students in grades K-8. That policy has changed over the years and most recently, was suspended for this school year because of the COVID pandemic. Now, as we look forward to the 2021-2022 school year and the potential reinstatement of this policy, we are looking for your input as there continue to be multiple perspectives and opinions regarding a uniform policy for students in public education.

Therefore, we want to know what your preference would be regarding possible changes to our uniform policy ([click to read policy](#)).

Which of the following do you prefer?

- a. Maintain the current Board Policy (click to read Policy) on School Uniforms for K-8 students*
- b. Eliminate School Uniforms in K-8*
- c. The adoption of a modified Uniform Policy that allows the parent/caregiver to either follow the uniform policy or not.*

Survey Results

| 20-21 Grade Level | Maintain Policy | Eliminate Uniforms | Modified Policy | Total |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| PK-5 | 2,211 | 781 | 1,047 | 4,039 |
| 6-8 | 569 | 217 | 179 | 965 |
| 9-12 | 211 | 50 | 221 | 482 |
| Total | 2,991 | 1,048 | 1,447 | 5,486 |



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education

Vincent A. Mustaro, Senior Staff Associate for Policy Services

PRESENTS POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

May 14, 2021

Volume 20 – Issue #23

Censure of Board Member and the First Amendment: The U.S. Supreme Court, in *Houston Community College System v. Wilson*, will decide whether boards of education and local governmental bodies may censure speech by one of their members without violating the First Amendment. The Court’s ruling will impact school boards who have used the censure process against its members who they have seen as disruptive and/or difficult to work with. More recent examples of censure involve nationally official reprimands of school board members who had posted racist rants or other inappropriate material on social media.

In the case to be heard by the Supreme Court, the U.S. court of appeals for the 5th Circuit, in New Orleans, ruled that “A reprimand against an elected official for speech addressing a matter of public concern is an actionable First amendment claim under’ federal law. This ruling resulted in the appeal to the Supreme Court, with the community college saying the 5th Circuit panel’s ruling conflicts with several other federal appeals court that have upheld censure against First Amendment challenges. For example, a federal appeals court upheld the Bethel, Washington board of education’s censure and removal as board vice president of a member who had publicly undermined the superintendent. The court said the board member had no first Amendment claim.

The Legal Assistance fund of the Texas Association of School boards filed a friend-of-the-court brief in support of the community college, stating, School boards across Texas have been challenged with individual board member misbehavior.” Besides social media rants, its brief indicated that the misbehavior includes seeking special treatment because of their office, independently investigating employees, demanding administrators forbid employees from speaking Spanish in schools, openly criticizing or yelling at fellow board members, and inappropriately criticizing teachers.

“A censure does not prevent a board member from speaking out, the brief says. “Rather, a censure acts as an attempted check on board member conduct in an effort to curtail unprofessional acts and ensure compliance with board bylaws, rules, and codes of conduct.”

Source: “U.S. Supreme Court to decide when censuring board member violates First Amendment,” COSA, Council of School Attorneys, National School Boards Association, May 2021.

“Supreme Court to Weigh When School Board Censure of a Member Violates the First Amendment,” by Mark Walsh, *Education Week*, April 26, 2021.

Policy Implications: Generally speaking, the purpose of a board of education is to facilitate the business of the school system. Board members act on behalf of the public, which is the reason they run for election. Board members may represent different points of view, but it is essential that they work in harmony with each other as well as with the superintendent, administrators, teachers, staff and the general public.

Effective board members are willing to stand up for what they believe, but understand that their major purpose is to set policy and goals for the school district. Their responsibilities are best fulfilled when they operate as a team, rather than on an individual level.

It is likely that at some time a board of education is going to have to deal with a board member whose attitude and temperament go beyond merely “disagreeable” and is viewed as antagonistic. Such board members can be discourteous, obstructionist and at times, hostile, to other board members or administrators and staff.

A “difficult” board member may not subscribe to a code of ethics, content to do what is necessary to further the cause at hand. In such situations, they may see rules as made to be broken. Such member may refuse to support the board’s majority decisions and works to disrupt and undermine board authority when it conflicts with his/her own interests or preferences.

Keep in mind that the great majority of board members in Connecticut are elected officials. Therefore, only the electorate can remove them through the regular election process. Connecticut does not have a statutorily-provided recall procedure to remove a board member. Therefore, boards of education have no power to remove a board member for what might otherwise amount to poor conduct, no matter how negatively that conduct may impact the district and the operation of its board of education.

A board can consider reprimanding or “censuring” a board member, which may be considered a drastic action. Before taking such a step, discuss the potential action with legal counsel. Also, thoroughly review the board’s bylaws and policies. The board, through censure, cannot limit the individual board member’s ability to carry out their duties as a publicly elected official.

Censure, as a very public reprimand, should specifically address the offenses concerning any violations of federal, state, or local laws and regulations as well as board policies and bylaws including board conduct and ethics and/or the violation of board standards, if the board has adopted such a document. Censure can only take place through the action of the board voting to endorse a resolution concerning the matter.

While not legally binding, censure may prove useful for shaping public perceptions to better understand the effect of a disruptive members/ actions and at some point may be preferable to trying to ignore unacceptable behavior. In short, censure is more or less a symbolic gesture that the board as a whole does not approve of the activities of one of its board members.

Sample bylaw #9222, “Resignation/Removal from Office/Censure,” was recently revised and contains an expanded section pertaining to censure. Also recently developed were sample public censure statements. In addition, a new bylaw, #9271.1, “Ethics Violations,” has been developed and is available for local consideration.

Research Reveals Effectiveness of Online Learning: The pandemic health emergency dictated school closings and the rapid expansion of online education. Can online lessons replace in-school time? Clearly online time cannot provide many of the informal social interactions students have at school, but how will online courses do in terms of moving student learning forward? Research to date gives us some clues and also points us to what we could be doing to support students who are most likely to struggle in the online setting.

Susanna Loeb, Director of Brown University's Annenberg Institute for School Reform, reported on the research pertaining to the effectiveness of online learning.

The use of K-12 virtual courses has grown rapidly in recent years. Online learning can take a number of different forms. Most online courses serving K-12 students have a format similar to in-person courses. The teacher helps to run virtual discussion among the students, assigns homework, and follows up with individual students. Sometimes these courses are synchronous (teachers and students all meet at the same time) and sometimes they are asynchronous (non-concurrent). In both cases, the teacher is supposed to provide opportunities for students to engage thoughtfully with subject matter, and students, in most cases, are required to interact with each other virtually.

Online courses provide opportunities for students. Students can access courses not available in their own school or make up courses they failed during evenings or summer using online classes. Therefore, almost certainly, online classes sometimes benefit students.

Loeb reports that in comparisons of online and in-person classes, however, online classes aren't as effective as in-person classes for most students. Only a little research has assessed the effects of online lessons for elementary and high school students, and even less has used the "gold standard" method of comparing the results for students assigned randomly to online or in-person courses. Where that has been done to make up for a failing course, students' credit-recovery success rates and test scores were lower in the online setting.

Most of the research on online courses for K-12 students has used large-scale administrative data, looking at otherwise similar students in the two settings. One of these studies, conducted by NYU and the RAND Corp., examined Ohio charter schools. Loeb conducted another with colleagues looking at Florida public school coursework. Both studies found evidence that online course taking was less effective.

She reported that it is not surprising that in-person courses are, on average, more effective. Being in person with teachers and other students creates social pressures and benefits that can help motivate students to engage. Some students do as well in online courses as in in-person courses, some may actually do better, but, on average, students do worse in the online setting, and this is particularly true for students with weaker academic backgrounds.

Further, she reported that students who struggle in in-person classes are likely to struggle even more online. While the research on virtual schools in K-12 education doesn't address these differences directly, a study of college students found very little difference in learning for high-performing students in the online and in-person settings. On the other hand, lower performing students performed meaningfully worse in online courses than in in-person courses.

However, Loeb states that, “But just because students who struggle in in-person classes are even more likely to struggle online doesn’t mean that’s inevitable. Online teachers will need to consider the needs of less-engaged students and work to engage them. Online courses might be made to work for these students on average, even if they have not in the past.”

Similar to brick-and-mortar classrooms, online courses need a strong curriculum and strong pedagogical practices. Teachers need to understand what students know and what they don’t know, as well as how to help them learn new material. What is different in the online setting is that students may have more distractions and less oversight, which can reduce their motivation. The teacher will need to set norms for engagement, such as requiring students to regularly ask questions and respond to their peers, that are different than the norms in the in-person setting.

Loeb’s review of the research indicates that online courses are generally not as effective as in-person classes, but they are certainly better than no classes. She cites a substantial research base developed by Karl Alexander at Johns Hopkins University and many others shows that students, especially students with fewer resources at home, learn less when they are not in school. Right now, virtual courses are allowing students to access lessons and exercises and interact with teachers in ways that would have been impossible if an epidemic had closed schools even a decade or two earlier. “So we may be skeptical of online learning, but it is also time to embrace and improve it.”

Source: “How Effective Is Online Learning? What the Research Does and Doesn’t Tell Us,” by Susanna Loeb, *Education Week*, March 20, 2021.

Policy Implications: Many boards of education, prior to the pandemic, offered some education through virtual/online courses as an alternative means of instruction for students. A virtual school was defined as an educational organization that offers courses at various grade levels through Internet or Web-based methods. Such schools offer courses to enhance, supplement or enrich the existing curriculum and provide an alternative means of instruction.

In order to earn credits in meeting the requirements for high school graduation through the successful completion of on-line coursework, board’s must comply with the standards of C.G.S. 10-221a (g). These standards are a part of C.A.B.E.’s model policy. Further, If the drop-out rate of a district is 8% or higher in the previous school year, the board of education must establish an on-line credit recovery program for students identified as being in danger of failing to graduate. These students must be allowed to complete on-line district-approved coursework toward meeting high school graduation requirements.

Policy #6172.6, “Virtual/on-line Courses,” pertains to this topic. This policy does not speak to the remote learning programs put in place due to COVID-19. Policy #6141.3291, “One-to-One Tablet Program” addresses the remote learning used during the pandemic when schools were closed.

Recently, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) released its “Interim Guidance for Remote Learning” addressing remote learning for the 2021-2022 school year based upon the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. It stresses the importance of in-person education. Access to in person learning opportunities is a priority, particularly due to the significance of the social-emotional environment provided through student and adult interactions during the school day.

While the interests of educational opportunity, social-emotional learning, access, and equity support the return to in-person learning, the CSDE guidance identifies the intent of the CSDE to provide support for school districts to employ remote and virtual learning judiciously going forward, as a dynamic educational option where it is supported by CSDE standards, current law, or legislation.

The CSDE is working with stakeholders on this topic. Conversations with stakeholders include discussion about limitations on the use of remote learning, such as consideration of concerns raised about requiring educators to provide instruction simultaneously to in-person and remote student groups, as well as consideration of the importance of student social interaction and exposure to diverse individuals and settings.

The Interim Guidance states, “At this time, DPH and CSDE do not anticipate the need to mandate, due to public health necessity, that all school districts provide an option for students and their families to opt-in to a voluntary remote option after this school year. The CSDE is currently working to draft standards for long-term changes to engage remote and virtual learning.

The Interim Guidance concludes, “Rapidly shifting to entirely remote learning or a hybrid model was mandated during the emergency because it was a required public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The educational community has made immense progress and shown great resilience when implementing this emergency departure from the traditional approach to education. Nonetheless, it remains broadly accepted that in-person access to school is the best long-term approach for most students to be educated, have equitable and effective access to educational opportunities, find necessary supports from adults and proper nutrition, as well as to engage in age-appropriate and necessary social and emotional growth. Therefore, additional guidance will be forthcoming to address the necessary balance, and it will be informed by the outcome of the legislative session. Currently, school districts already have the option to give credit for online instruction as set forth in Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-221a (g).”

Food for Thought:

“Returning to my classroom, some students have forgotten how to carry on a face-to-face conversation. They’re rusty. And now they’re relearning how to treat friends, belong to a community that’s been ephemeral, and, yes, court each other. They are probably more aware of their bodies now, and more insecure, having spent a year considering what their cameras capture in daily Zooms.”

Source: Andrew Simmons in “Using Literature to Help Teens Develop Healthy Relationships.” in *Edutopia*, April 26, 2021.

