



CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT OF NEW BRITAIN

New Britain Board of Education Special Policy Committee Meeting

July 20, 2020 – 5:30 PM | Virtual Meeting

Call to Order and Opening

Mr. Nicholas Mercier, Policy Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:32 PM.

Board Members Present

Mr. Merrill Gay, Ms. Diane Leja*, Mr. Nicholas Mercier*, Ms. Annie Parker, Ms. Diana Reyes*, Ms. Nancy Rodriguez*, Ms. Gayle Sanders-Connolly

**Committee members*

CSDNB Staff Present

Mr. Antoine Billy, Mr. Matthew Cannata, Mr. Michael Foran, Mr. Damon Pearce, Ms. Kristin Salerni, Dr. Nicole Sanders, Ms. Nancy Sarra, Mr. Mark Spalding, Ms. Donnah Swaby

New Business

Review and Approve Minutes from the Policy Committee Meeting on June 15, 2020

There were no recommended changes to the minutes from the Policy Committee Meeting on June 15, 2020.

Ms. Reyes motioned to approve the minutes from the Policy Committee Meeting on June 15, 2020 as submitted, seconded by Ms. Leja. Motion carried unanimously.

Review Policies and Agreements Pertaining to School Resource Officers and Police Presence in CSDNB Schools

Committee members were provided with copies of current Board Policy 5145.11 – School Resource Officer, the Administrative Procedure regarding School Resource Officers dated July 14, 2014 (Protocols for Police School Resource Officers Access to and Intervention with Students at NBHS), and the MOA between New Britain Public Schools and the New Britain Police Department dated December 8, 2017 for review.

Dr. Nicole Sanders (Senior Equity and Talent Officer), Ms. Donnah Swaby (Coordinator of Special Education and Pupil Services, K-Age 21 and Districtwide), Mr. Damon Pearce (NBHS Principal), and Mr. Antoine Billy (Associate Principal of New Britain High School) updated committee members on their efforts to review the MOA and administrative regulations regarding School Resource Officers over the past month. Dr. Sanders and Ms. Swaby emphasized the importance of taking into account context, research, and data collection as they decide on their long-term plans for SROs in the district.

Attorney Natalia Sieira Millan, of Shipman and Goodwin LLP, attended the meeting to provide some general context of how SROs started out in school buildings and offer guidance relative to the development of policies and agreements regarding SROs. She explained that the original role SROs served was not only to provide safety but also to serve as community liaisons and desensitize students to the idea of police. Attorney Millan shared the model SRO Memorandum of Agreement developed by the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee in 2015. This MOA details specific expectations for SROs and the school district. She explained that

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the relationship between SROs and the school district is driven by what is specifically set forth in the MOA. Attorney Millan explained that educators are the enforcers of discipline while SROs do not get involved in disciplinary matters unless there are safety concerns relative to the life of a student or property or some type of criminal act. She emphasized the importance of amending the MOA if the method of interventions relative to the types of behavior you see are not in line with the district's expectations. This revision should include dialogue with the police department about what the relationship should look like moving forward. Attorney Millan also recommended having conversations with the police about the enforcement of existing agreements regarding data collection and reporting.

Dr. Sanders clarified that she has been meeting with high school administrators and Chief of Police Christopher Chute to look closely at the MOA together. Chief Chute assured Dr. Sanders that there are not very many arrest warrants executed on campus.

Ms. Swaby stated that she strongly disagrees with language in the Administrative Procedure that states that police may speak to students without parents being present if they have a warrant. She believes that parents should be present when Miranda Rights are being read to their children. Attorney Millan explained that the age of the minor student has a large impact on how the police respond in these situations. She recommended amending the MOA to address concerns the district may have regarding arrest warrants and related issues.

Mr. Pearce stated that while we do not have an accurate data monitoring system at the high school at present time, he has plans to develop a robust system for monitoring the data moving forward. He believes the SROs are not considered an extension of the school discipline procedure and are only present for emergency situations and to provide support to staff and students.

Mr. Mercier noted that Board Policy 5145.11 – School Resource Officer has not been approved since 2009 and is very vague and loosely worded. He recommended working with Mr. Spalding, Mr. Pearce, and Ms. Swaby to draft a policy that reflects the vision the district has for SROs. This draft policy would be created from board member and administrator feedback and would serve as a vehicle for discussions regarding the MOA and administrative regulations.

Ms. Rodriguez shared that she witnessed students having positive interactions with SROs in the Career Center. She also stated that it is important to be able to have SROs that can immediately step in and respond to an emergency when it occurs.

Ms. Leja emphasized the lack of data in the district regarding what the SROs are doing at the high school and what role they are serving. She would like to explore the benefits and the face of the SRO in New Britain and how it affects the school climate. Ms. Leja would also like student and teacher feedback considered in the decision making process.

Ms. Sanders-Connolly expressed concern that the language we use needs to be very clear regarding the steps that are taken to reach a parent when there is an arrest on campus.

Ms. Reyes emphasized the importance of looking at the data regarding how often SROs are involved and the gender, race, and ethnicity of students they are involved with. She would also like to know how often and how long the interview rooms are used. Ms. Reyes would like to ensure that they are receiving accurate data which reflects what is actually going on. She would also like to get feedback from parents, families, and children regarding how they feel about SROs.

Mr. Billy would like the MOA to include a provision that SROs will run programs that will continue a positive bond between the SROs and students while they are in the building. He believes he can work with his administrative team to track data at the high school easily.

Mr. Mercier recommended the following next steps:

- Draft a policy using board member and administrator feedback and see how it aligns with our current MOA
- Continue discussions regarding this topic
- Have a plan in place to solicit student feedback in the fall

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Review Policies Impacted by COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Mark Spalding, Director of Pupil Services, introduced and reviewed sample policies from CBE regarding face masks and coverings. The state has requested that school districts put face mask/covering policies in place for staff and students.

Recommended revisions to the CBE sample policies include:

- Amend first sentence of the fifth paragraph of the “School Buildings and Grounds” section of each policy to read “In addition to the wearing of face masks, the District will maximize social distancing between student’s workstations and desks, achieving three to six feet when feasible.”
- Amend first sentence of seventh paragraph of the “School Buildings and Grounds” section of each policy to read “Face shields may be an option for those students with documented medical or behavioral challenges who are unable to wear face masks or coverings.”
- Add the following eighth paragraph to the “School Buildings and Grounds” section of each policy: “In the event that a student is unable to wear a face shield due to documented medical or behavioral challenges, the school district will work to find the least restrictive accommodation that still provides for the safety of all staff and students.”
- Strike “Limited Exceptions to Use of Face Coverings” section of each policy.
- Amend end of first paragraph of the “Mask Breaks” section of each policy to include “To the maximum extent possible mask breaks should be taken outside.”
- Amend first sentence of the second paragraph of the “Violations of this Policy” section of each policy to read “If a student refuses to wear a face mask or covering and does not fulfill any of the exemptions allowed by this policy, such student shall be escorted to a designated area.”
- Strike last sentence of the “Violations of this Policy” section of each policy: “Teachers or schools may provide incentives for compliance with the face mask requirement.”
- Strike third bullet of the “Other Considerations” section of each policy: “When medically appropriate, nurses shall substitute use of metered dose inhalers and spacers for students with respiratory issues.”

Ms. Leja motioned that the Board approve Policies 4118.237, 4218.237, and 5141.8 – Face Masks/Coverings as amended at the next meeting, seconded by Ms. Reyes. Motion carried unanimously.

Closing and Adjournment

Ms. Rodriguez motioned to adjourn at 7:20 PM, seconded by Ms. Reyes. Motion carried unanimously.

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