



# FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 18, 2023

5:00 PM

501 Kings Highway East

Instructional Conference Room

### **In Attendance:**

Ms. Jennifer Jacobsen, Ms. Jennifer Maxon Kennelly, Ms. Carol Guernsey, Dr. James Zavodjancik, Dr. Zakia Parrish, Superintendent Testani, Ms. Courtney LeBorious (left at 5:24pm), Ms. Jennifer Racioppo, (FEA Representative), Ms. Kristen Hardiman

**Call to Order:** Ms. Maxon Kennelly called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

**Approval of September 5, 2023 Policy Committee meeting minutes:** Approved with changes by a 3-0 vote.

### **Policy:**

#### 3280.1 – Grants and Other Revenues

The committee discussed and agreed to edit language in item #3 about the approval process for only new or modified grant applications instead of all grants. Ms. Guernsey stated she does not want to slow up any process with grant applications. Ms. Maxon Kennelly recommended removing the language pertaining to the approval of grant applications that exceed \$100,000. Ms. Jacobsen agreed with the removal of that language. Ms. LeBorious stated she will add an item to that section of the policy which states the Board will be notified of any new grant applications in excess of \$100,000. Ms. LeBorious also stated she will highlight any new grants or revisions in the quarterly report.

Superintendent Testani stated the State will sometimes issue grants late and then gives a very short time period to complete the grant application process. Ms. Jacobsen acknowledged that; however, she stressed the importance of knowing the District applied for a grant before and not after the fact. Ms. Jacobsen stated she is fine with being notified through communication such as the Friday packet.

This policy was approved with changes by a 3 -0 vote and will be presented to the Board at the next meeting for a “first read” along with policies 1324 School-Based Fundraising and 3280 Gifts, Grants and Bequests which were approved for a “first read” at the May 2, 2023 Policy meeting.

#### 6141 - Advanced Curriculum

Ms. Jacobsen recommended adding language from the Program of Studies into this policy. Ms. Jacobsen asked Dr. Zavodjancik for an update on this policy. Dr. Zavodjancik stated they have had meetings at both the middle and high school levels. Superintendent Testani stated the only concern

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with teachers is they want to make sure they can still sign off on the courses they are recommending for students.

Ms. Maxon Kennelly stated she liked that this policy is robust with student involvement except for the “over-ride” process. Ms. Jacobsen stated student involvement in the selection of courses is lacking for students in eighth grade. Ms. Guernsey stated she is concerned about the students who do not get the support or guidance at home in selecting their courses. Ms. Guernsey continued to say that many high school courses need to be planned for and if a student does not have a parent who advocates for them, they will need assistance in selecting their high school courses. Ms. Guernsey stated she would like students to receive support while in eighth grade when selecting their high school courses. Superintendent Testani suggested adding a “conference a night” or “high school planning meeting” which parents and students can attend. Dr. Parrish stated she was concerned about adding that type of meeting since she does not think it is feasible to put that responsibility on an eighth grade counselor to have those individual meetings. Superintendent Testani then suggested only having a meeting when there is an “over-ride” issue, meaning the parent or student does not agree with the counselor’s suggestion. Ms. Racioppo stated if parents “waived” their child into a class against the counselor’s recommendation, the parent and student need to know there may be consequences. Ms. Racioppo also stated waiving a student into a class could also become a staffing issue since classes become full. Ms. Jacobsen stated she believes there is language in the Program of Studies which pertains to that issue.

After continued discussion, the Committee agreed no changes will be made to this policy at this time.

#### 6163.33 – Service Animals/Therapy Dogs

Superintendent Testani informed the Committee he sent a memo to all administrators informing them that no dogs are permitted in the schools at this time and until further notice. Superintendent Testani stated only one administrator provided feedback stating therapy dogs were beneficial two times a year for about ten students during exam time. Ms. Jacobsen asked the Committee why they do not want therapy dogs permitted in the schools. Ms. Guernsey stated her number one concern is due to safety and allergies. Ms. Jacobsen asked Ms. Maxon Kennelly if she would like a one-line policy stating they are not permitted in the schools at any time. Ms. Maxon Kennelly stated she would like to hear back from staff to find out if there is a tangible educational benefit to having therapy dogs. Dr. Parrish stated she would like Mr. Mancusi to be included in this discussion before any final decisions are made. This policy will be on the agenda for the next Policy Committee meeting.

#### **Open Discussion/Public Comment:**

The Committee discussed the new age for kindergarten admission. Ms. Maxon Kennelly suggested the District put together guidelines for parents. Superintendent Testani recommended we have some data to discuss at the next meeting regarding the “red-shirting” of kindergartens. Dr. Parrish stated she will have information about the District’s position on this for the next meeting.

Ms. Guernsey stated communication from the high schools about grading has been fantastic. As an end user, she is very impressed. Superintendent Testani stated they have emphasized the importance of communication to parents and students.

**Adjournment:** Ms. Maxon Kennelly adjourned the meeting at 6:30pm.