

BOARD OF EDUCATION
FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FAIRFIELD, CT

Special Policy Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 29, 2022
5:00 PM
501 Kings Highway East

In Attendance:

Ms. Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly, Ms. Jennifer Jacobsen, Ms. Carol Guernsey, Dr. James Zavodjancik (left at 6:37pm), Dr. Zakia Parrish (left at 6:37pm), Dr. Greg Hatzis (left at 6:08pm), Ms. Courtney LeBorious (arrived at 6:38pm), Mr. Michael Testani (arrived at 6:13pm)

Call to Order – Ms. Maxon-Kennelly called meeting to order at 5:02pm.

Approval of November 1, 2022 meeting minutes – Approved with changes by a 3-0 vote.

Meeting dates for calendar year 2023 – Ms. Maxon-Kennelly scheduled the next Special Policy Committee meeting for Thursday, January 12, 2023.

Policy:

6146 Requirements for Graduation

Dr. Hatzis thanked the committee for the opportunity to discuss proposed changes to the Mastery-Based credit within this policy. Dr. Hatzis explained the proposed changes reflect a more efficient way for school staff to monitor the Mastery-Based credit. Dr. Hatzis further explained students will demonstrate their proficiency of the academic expectations by passing the class and thus will earn the Mastery-Based credit.

Dr. Hatzis stated the proposed changes would eliminate the half credit for the Assured Content Experience. Dr. Hatzis also explained since the SAT will still be reported, the schools would continue to emphasize the need for a strong performance by students on these assessments.

Dr. Hatzis stated he believes the proposed changes to this policy are more in line with the Vision of a Graduate. Dr. Hatzis stated he also believes the proposed changes are better for families and students as a simpler way to track their progress on the Mastery-Based credit.

Ms. Guernsey stated she was surprised to see the Assured Content piece disappear and was interested in hearing the explanation about why this is a proposed change to the policy. Ms. Guernsey also stated she would like to see how it impacts student participation in the SAT.

Dr. Hatzis explained staff does not appear concerned about student participation in the SAT and he believes this will be well received by the students.

Dr. Hatzis also explained that many surrounding school districts are also following this Mastery-Based Diploma Assessment (MBDA). Ms. Guernsey stated her understanding is that many parents do not understand the MBDA so she finds this refreshing. However, Ms. Guernsey expressed concern about leaving students behind that do not meet these expectations. Ms. Jacobsen stated she struggles with graduating students without some content mastery skill.

Ms. Maxon-Kennelly stated she believes we are lowering our standards and does not believe there is a compelling argument to make these proposed changes. Ms. Maxon-Kennelly explained she is more interested in keeping this policy intact and would like to wait to see what happens with the SAT changes. Ms. Maxon-Kennelly stated she is open to a continued discussion; however, she is a hard “no” to dropping the Assured Content piece.

Dr. Hatzis stated they are open to a common ground and will come back to the committee with another draft of proposed changes.

6161 Instructional Resources – Equipment, Books and Materials, Textbooks and Workbooks

Dr. Zavodjancik stated the purpose of these proposed changes is to define “textbook”.

Ms. Guernsey asked Dr. Zavodjancik what resources he used for the proposed language changes to this policy. Dr. Zavodjancik stated the red-lined language came from CABE.

Ms. Guernsey questioned the use of “and/or” after item (a) in paragraph five. To answer Ms. Guernsey, Dr. Zavodjancik provided an example of a teacher handing out a copy of a Robert Frost poem to the whole class would not be considered a textbook. However, if the teacher handed out a book of Robert Frost poems to each student in the class, that would be considered a textbook.

Ms. Maxon-Kennelly stated she likes the inclusion of resources as textbooks because it protects the teachers from parents who disagree with the selection of resources. Ms. Maxon-Kennelly would like a clearer definition of “supplemental resources”. Dr. Zavodjancik agreed to provide a clearer definition of the term “supplemental resources” in the revised draft. Ms. Jacobsen requested the definition not contradict language in other policies such as the Survey of Students policy.

Dr. Zavodjancik stated he will create a new draft and break out the red-lined paragraph. Dr. Zavodjancik also stated he will provide a clearer definition of “textbook”.

3280 Gifts, Grants, And Bequests

Ms. Maxon-Kennelly asked Ms. Katie Flynn, PTA Council President, for feedback from PTA Council. Ms. Flynn responded saying PTA Council does have some concerns at the secondary level about the definition of a “gift” and what may inadvertently get classified as a “gift”. Ms. Flynn stated PTA Council did not have concerns with the threshold amounts for a gift. Ms. Flynn also stated PTA Council liked the requirement for a biannual meeting with the school principals.

APPROVED 1/23/2023

Ms. LeBorious stated there were past discussions on the importance of clarity of the definition of a gift without being restrictive.

The committee discussed revising the second bullet point on page 25 to read “Not be inconsistent with the school program”.

The committee also discussed a change to the timing in the appeal process by the Principal and the Superintendent.

Ms. LeBorious stated she will make the recommended edits to this policy to present to the committee at the January meeting.

1324 School-Sponsored Fundraising

There was no discussion on this policy due to time restraints.

1230 Booster Clubs

There was no discussion on this policy due to time restraints.

Open Discussion/Public Comment

Katie Flynn – PTA Council President

Ms. Flynn spoke during the discussion of policy 3280, Gifts, Grants, And Bequests.

Adjournment – Ms. Maxon-Kennelly adjourned the meeting at 7:07pm.