

PHOENIXVILLE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Phoenixville, Pennsylvania

Minutes of the January 22, 2008 Board Policy Committee Meeting

OPENING

Mr. Josh Gould, Chairperson, called the January 22, 2008 meeting of the Board Policy Committee to order at 6:01 p.m. The meeting was held in the conference room of the Administration Building.

ATTENDANCE

Board Policy Committee Members Present: Mr. Josh Gould; Mr. Paul Slaninka; and Mr. Keith Wickstrom.

Also in Attendance: Dr. David R. Noyes, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Maria Schwab, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; and Mrs. Catherine S. Varady, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent/Assistant Board Secretary.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of the November 13, 2007 Board Policy Committee Meeting were approved as presented.

OLD BUSINESS

• Policies Approved at the January 17, 2008 Board Meeting

Dr. Noyes informed the Committee that the following policies were approved by the Board at the January 17, 2008 Board meeting and have been forwarded to the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) for final review and formatting:

- Policy No. 217—Pupils: Graduation Requirements
- Policy No. 351.1—Administrative Employees: Drug Testing for Cause and Reasonable Suspicion
- Policy No. 451.1—Professional Employees: Drug Testing for Cause and Reasonable Suspicion
- Policy No. 551.1—Classified Employees: Drug Testing for Cause and Reasonable Suspicion
- Policy No. 805—Operations: Emergency Preparedness
- Policy No. 808—Operations: Food Service
- Policy No. 808.1—Operations: Lunch Tickets
- Policy No. 810—Operations: Transportation
- Policy No. 810.2—Operations: Video/Audio Monitors on School Buses
- Policy No. 916—Community: Volunteer Coaches/Advisors

• Continuation of Policy Review/Discussion from November 13, 2007 Policy Committee Meeting

- Policy No. 806—Operations: Child/Student Abuse – Proposed Revisions

Dr. Noyes reviewed Policy No. 806, which included PSBA's recommended revisions. In the Committee's review of the proposed revisions, there was discussion that the policy mentioned child abuse of a child under eighteen years of age; however, there was no mention of an eighteen year old still in school. Dr. Noyes felt it was better not to define an 18 year old student in the policy. Mr. Slaninka felt that once this policy is approved, the school community should be informed of this policy. Following completion of the review, the Policy Committee recommended that a "first reading" of the policy be presented at the February 7, 2008 Board Workshop meeting, and "second reading" and approval at the February 21, 2008 Board meeting.

Please Note: A digital recording of the January 22, 2008 Board Policy Committee Meeting is on file in the Administration Building.

OLD BUSINESS (*Continued*)

- **Posting Policies on District Website**

- Information from PSBA – Re: Policy on the Web
- Information from PSBA – Re: Policy Manual Audit
- Information from PSBA – Re: Policy Maintenance Program (District currently participates in this program)

Dr. Noyes provided the Committee with information from PSBA on Policy on the Web (PoW) manuals, which are hosted on PSBA's website with access via username and password. The PoW manuals hosted by PSBA contain a powerful search engine, with search options, including policy number or name, key word, phrase, index or table of contents. The fee for the initial posting is \$3,000, with an annual \$300 online maintenance fee. The school entity must also subscribe to the Policy Maintenance Program at a cost of \$900. Our District currently participates in the PSBA Policy Maintenance Program only.

Mr. Gould was in favor of posting the District's policies on the District's website and asked if it could be done. Mr. Gould felt that the posting of policies should be done in-house without any bells or whistles. Dr. Noyes responded that the policies could be posted by District staff on the District's website. However, Dr. Noyes was not in favor of posting policies on the website and commented on problems that could occur with interpretation of the policies by the public. He also pointed out that according to PSBA, it is important that all policies posted to a website be current with state and federal laws and regulations, as well as current school operations. Therefore, all policies would need to be reviewed before posting on a website. Dr. Noyes further explained that PASD Policy Manuals are available to the staff and public in each school building, the administration building, and the Phoenixville Public Library. In addition, copies of policies are provided to any resident making an inquiry.

Dr. Schwab commented that there are some outdated policies in the District's Policy Manual that would need to be eliminated before policies are posted on the website. Another option would be to post policies as they are reviewed and updated by the Policy Committee.

Mr. Slaninka asked if people would have a tendency to pick things apart when policies are available on a website. In response, Dr. Schwab shared some of the difficulties experienced by her former school district, Unionville Chadds-Ford, who had policies posted on their website.

Mr. Wickstrom commented that he was not in favor of posting policies on the District's website. Mr. Slaninka expressed agreement with Mr. Wickstrom.

Mr. Gould was fine with the Committee's decision not to post policies on the website at this time; however, he indicated that it is a topic that may surface again for discussion.

NEW BUSINESS—Policy Review

- **Proposed Policy Revisions as a Result of the November 28, 2007 Campus Outreach Seminar**

Dr. Noyes explained that the District held a Campus Outreach Services Committee meeting in November and reviewed policies on Off-campus Conduct Control; Electronic Devices, Unlawful Harassment—Pupils, Administrative Employees, Professional Employees, and Classified Employees, and Bullying. Dr. Noyes presented the Policy Committee with the proposed policy revisions for review and comments. Dr. Noyes intends to share the Policy Committee's feedback with the members of the Campus Outreach Services Committee for additional review and revision.

NEW BUSINESS—Policy Review *(Continued)*

• **Proposed Policy Revisions as a Result of the November 28, 2007 Campus Outreach Seminar** *(Continued)*

- **Policy No. 218.2—Pupils: Off-Campus Conduct Control**

Dr. Noyes pointed out that the Campus Outreach Services Committee added guideline #7 regarding electronic communications. Mr. Slaninka pointed out that the policy contains incomplete sentences. Dr. Schwab explained that the policy contains a list of seven guidelines that indicate actions that shall be the subject of disciplinary investigation and action. Guideline #7 is a recommended addition to the policy—*“Electronic communications or postings that harass, bully or defame other students or district employees; or transmit pornographic, violent, obscene or child pornography images to students and employees.”* It was recommended that “and” be changed to “or.” It was also noted that the page numbering of the policy needs to be corrected. Dr. Noyes agreed to provide the Campus Outreach Services Committee with feedback from this discussion.

- **Policy No. 237—Pupils: Electronic Devices**

The Committee received the recommended revisions to Policy No. 237, which were made by the Campus Outreach Services Committee. Dr. Noyes reviewed the proposed changes.

Mr. Gould inquired about unfiltered technology. Dr. Noyes responded that the high school has all filtered technology access, preventing students to connect to pornographic sites, etc.

Mr. Slaninka commented that the policy mentions what is prohibited, however, he did not notice any mention of consequences. Dr. Noyes referred to the guideline section of the policy, which states that violations of this policy by a student will result in disciplinary action and may result in confiscation of the electronic device.

There was discussion on section two of the policy—Delegation of Responsibility—*“The Superintendent or designee shall annually notify students, parents/guardians and staff about the district’s electronic device policy by publishing such policy in the student handbook, newsletters, posted notices, and other efficient methods.”* It was recommended that “and” be changed to “or.”

There was discussion on the last sentence in the first paragraph of the section—Personal Communication Devices—*“Utilizing cell phones to photograph or video-record other students, teachers and staff, especially without their prior consent, is strictly prohibited.”* Mr. Gould felt that the word “especially” should be removed. The Committee was in agreement.

The question was raised if there is any time when electronic devices are allowed on school property. Dr. Noyes explained that electronic devices are allowed on school property, but must be put away during school hours.

NEW BUSINESS—Policy Review *(Continued)*

• **Proposed Policy Revisions as a Result of the November 28, 2007 Campus Outreach Seminar** *(Continued)*

- **Policy No. 248—Pupils: Unlawful Harassment**
- **Policy No. 348—Administrative Employees: Unlawful Harassment**
- **Policy No. 448—Professional Employees: Unlawful Harassment**
- **Policy No. 548—Classified Employees: Unlawful Harassment**

Dr. Noyes reviewed the additions to Policies 248, 348, 448, and 548. Mr. Slaninka commented that he did not like the use of the word “vulgar” on page two in the paragraph listing examples of conduct that may constitute sexual harassment. Dr. Schwab commented that those who served on the Campus Outreach Services Committee discussed their choice of the word “vulgar” and each person’s interpretation of the word. Mr. Wickstrom had no problem with the use of the word “vulgar.” Mr. Gould who has training in writing policy specifications commented that being vague at times leaves an interpretation up to the administration. Mr. Slaninka liked that on page four of each of the policies there was mention that “false accusations” would result in the most serious disciplinary action provided in the School Code.

Mr. Gould commented that there was no mention in the policy regarding notification of parent(s)/guardian(s). Dr. Noyes explained that whenever a minor is involved with harassment, the parent/guardian is brought in by the District administration. The question was raised, if there is a policy that states that any discipline action requires that the parent/guardian must be notified. Dr. Noyes responded that parent notification does not take place in all cases. Dr. Schwab added that notification is dependent upon the level of investigation—i.e., District may be working with the police who are conducting an investigation. Dr. Noyes asked the question—At what step it is important to notify parents that an investigation is going on—at the beginning or unless something substantive is found? Dr. Schwab felt that it might be better to wait in certain situations, as it could hamper an investigation. The Policy Committee was in agreement with the recommended revisions to the four policies presented on Unlawful Harassment.

Policy Question

In response to a question regarding a policy on adult/student relationships, Dr. Noyes indicated that the District does not have a policy on adult/student relationships. Dr. Noyes agreed to check with PSBA for sample policies from other school districts.

• **Review of “Sample Policies” received from PSBA – No. 249—Pupils: Bullying**

The Policy Committee received samples of policies on bullying from the Benton Area School District, Saucon Valley School District, Mount Carmel Area School District, and Highlands School District. Dr. Noyes explained that in developing a policy on bullying, the Campus Outreach Services Committee will use the policies received from the four school districts, so that the proposed policy on bullying for the District will represent an amalgamation of these policies.

Mr. Gould asked why a policy on bullying is needed in addition to the policy on harassment. His thought process was that harassment is limited by the legal definition of what is harassment. Mr. Wickstrom commented that bullying can be hurtful, without being illegal. Dr. Noyes recommended that the District use the definition and examples of bullying as defined in the sample policy from the Mount Carmel Area School District. Dr. Noyes indicated that he would ask the committee that participated in the Campus Outreach Services Committee to develop a policy by consolidating information from the sample policies received from PSBA. Mr. Slaninka noted that the Saucon Valley School District policy did not mention discipline action. He felt that it is important that the administration have some type of consequences included in dealing with bullying. Mr. Slaninka commented that it is real important that an administrator follow through on any bullying, as children need to feel safe in order to learn.

NEW BUSINESS—Policy Review (*Continued*)

- **Proposed Revisions—Policy No. 815—Operations: Acceptable Use Policy for Use of Computers and Information Technology**

The Policy Committee received the recommended revisions to the Acceptable Use Policy, as proposed by the Campus Outreach Services Committee. Committee participants were Dr. Maria Schwab, Mr. Joseph Anderson, Mrs. Amber Gentile, Mr. Charlie Kramer, and Mr. George Frazier. Mr. Frazier, Director of Technology requested that the proposed revisions be reviewed by the Policy Committee and then submitted to the District's solicitor for further review.

Dr. Schwab reviewed the proposed revisions to the policy. It was noted that on page one that the policy applies to all users of PASD computers, technology devices, network connectivity, and information technology (IT) resources. In addition, the policy applies to PASD IT Resources, personally owned technology devices, and other technology devices and services used during PASD sponsored events on and off campus.

Mr. Gould commented the addition of guideline "n" on page three,—*"The Phoenixville Area School District logo, insignia, and name may not be used in any electronic media without written consent of the Superintendent or a designee."* Dr. Schwab explained the concern was with students using home computers. Dr. Schwab also commented that the Committee might want to consider changing guideline "n" to a "numbered" item for emphasis.

There was discussion regarding "#6"—Communications Compliance—*"Employees must conduct all PASD business using IT Resources to include electronic communications between teachers and students and teachers and parents. School Board members must use IT Resources to communicate any school district business electronically."* In discussions, it was suggested that definitions of IT Resources, Technology Devices, Internet and ISP be included as part of the policy. Dr. Schwab explained using the portal into the District's server to conduct School District business. Dr. Schwab also explained that in the case of an investigation, all District email, including personal email, can be subpoenaed. The District's server saves all email.

Mr. Slaninka commented that the list of prohibited uses on pages two and three are not parallel—i.e., some beginning words end in "ing" and others not. Dr. Noyes agreed that the list was not parallel, but felt it was clear. Both Mr. Wickstrom and Mr. Gould agreed that the list did not need to be changed.

The Committee commented on page five, the last sentence in #9—*"Users may not connect personally owned computers or other technology devices to the PASD network."* There was discussion that this may need to be changed to "physically connect" to the PASD network. It was suggested that this recommendation be checked with Mr. George Frazier, Director of Technology.

The Committee commented on #12 on page six and suggested that "technology related incidents" be changed to "violations of the Acceptable Use Policy." Dr. Noyes agreed to share this suggestion with Mr. Frazier.

Mr. Slaninka inquired about consequences/disciplinary action. Dr. Noyes referenced #8 on page five—Consequences for Inappropriate or Improper Use of IT Resources.

The Board Policy Committee requested that their comments/suggestions be referred to Mr. Frazier and the Campus Outreach Services Committee for further review/changes and then be resubmitted to the Board Policy Committee.

- **PSBA Policy News Network (PNN) Recommendations**

Dr. Noyes reported that no PNN recommendations were received for the first quarter of 2008.

NEW BUSINESS—Policy Review *(Continued)*

• **Begin Policy Review of Policy Section 000—Local Board Procedures**

Dr. Noyes pointed out that in November 2001, PSBA completed a review of the District's entire Policy Manual. During the years following that review, District policies have been revised based on PNN recommendations from PSBA. Dr. Noyes noted that at this time, the administration will begin by reviewing policies in Section 000. According to PSBA, no significant revisions were made to policies in the 000 section since adoption in 2001; however, it may be that the policies in Section 000 may need to have updated legal citations added. This can be done as the reviewed policies are submitted to PSBA for maintenance. Any recommended revisions will be presented to the Policy Committee by the administration; otherwise, the Policy Committee will be notified of the policies that were reviewed by the administration and the date of the review will be added to the policy.

• **Policy Review Summary**

Dr. Noyes distributed a "Policy Review Summary" of all District policies, as prepared by the Superintendent's Office. The Policy Committee was appreciative of this information.

• **Future New Business**

According to Dr. Noyes, future new business will include the Policy Committee and administration continuing its review of the Policy Manual and the review of Vol. 1—2008 Policy News Network (PNN), upon receipt from PSBA.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

There were no visitors in attendance.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board Policy Committee was scheduled for Tuesday, March 18, 2008, at 6:00 p.m., in the conference room of the Administration Building.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business brought before the Board Policy Committee, Mr. Slaninka moved that the meeting be adjourned. The meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Josh Gould, Policy Committee Chairperson

Minutes of the meeting were prepared by Catherine S. Varady, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent/Assistant Board Secretary.