



Minutes

Special

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

Avon Board of Education

34 Simsbury, Avon, Connecticut 06001

Via Zoom

Tuesday, March 14, 2023 – 6:00 p.m.

Attendance

Members Present: Ms. Laura Young, Chair; Ms. Nicole Russo; Ms. Thej Singh; Ms. Sarah Thompson

Member(s) Absent:

Administration Present: Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Jess Giannini, Assistant Superintendent; Mr. Roberto Medic, Assistant Superintendent

Others Present: Ms. Deb Chute, Board Chair; Ms. Lynn Katz, Board Member; Ms. Sarah Gleason, Shipman & Goodwin Attorney; Ms. Christine Sardinkas, Recording Secretary;

I. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Committee Chair, Laura Young.

II. **Approval of February 13, 2023 Minutes**

Ms. Singh moved to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2023 Policy Committee meeting, with corrections, Ms. Thompson seconded.

The motion passed 4-0-0

III. **Communication from Public**

There was no communication from the public.

IV. **Old Business –Policy 5144 - Student Discipline**

Dr. Carnemolla introduced Ms. Sarah Gleason, an attorney and policy expert with Shipman & Goodwin, who works with the Board of Education and Superintendent. Ms. Gleason discussed numerous policy updates, including some that are required by new legislation and/or Shipman’s recommended legal advice. Ms. Gleason had presented legislative updates to the Board earlier in the year, including parts of the discipline policy. It was mentioned that some Board Member’s individual questions regarding the policy were already answered by the Superintendent and may also be addressed during a second read discussion this evening.

Attorney Gleason explained that there are overarching changes to the discipline policy and that while the existing one has many items found in the Shipman model, changing legislation and regulations at the state level continually require district updates. Adopting the Shipman model at this time will ensure compliance and also allow for straightforward updates in the future. Ms. Gleason stated that the model policy is more comprehensive, including many definitions, which will help parents and administration fully understand terms of the law.

Dr. Carnemolla asked Ms. Gleason to address changing Connecticut legislation of cannabis and any potential effect(s) on this policy. Ms. Gleason talked briefly about how the legalization of cannabis conveys that a student cannot be disciplined more severely for possession of cannabis than for alcohol. A short discussion ensued regarding how consequences for alcohol vs. cannabis would look in practice, as a result of changes in law.

Dr. Carnemolla asked Ms. Gleason to talk about mandatory discipline vs. discretionary discipline. Ms. Gleason reviewed the three mandatory expellable offenses, and then discussed how other discretionary offenses are based on many underlying factors. The policy is written purposely to allow for the discretion of the administration to consider all mitigating and aggravating circumstances to ensure that discipline is fair and equitable.

Ms. Young had a question regarding how “lesser offenses,” such as insubordination, disrespect, and/or foul language etc. would be addressed in the policy. Ms. Gleason responded that the scope of the policy states specific parameters must exist to meet the criteria for certain consequences. For lesser offenses, the goal would be to try to redirect the behavior, but if it keeps happening (repeat offenses), and is “disruptive to the educational process,” this is when more substantial consequences might be administered, which the policy provides guidance for.

Ms. Russo had a follow up question regarding the accumulation of lesser offenses becoming a bigger disruption to class, and potential bullying issues. Ms. Gleason made reference to the phrase “serious disruption of class,” and explained that if the consistent disruptive behavior of a student is interrupting class, and redirection or other interventions are not working, that again is when the discretion of the administration is necessary to determine what discipline to issue a student. Dr. Carnemolla proceeded to give an example of discipline of repeat offenders. Ms. Gleason addressed bullying by referencing the Board’s bullying policy, which requires substantiation, based on numerous criteria as defined in state statute. Once bullying is substantiated, it is then the discipline policy that provides the guidance for disciplinary consequences. Bullying does not have to be based on a “differentiating characteristic.” It includes all types of harassment.

Ms. Thompson had a question about potential liability of not taking action for an offense. Ms. Gleason stated that there is always potential liability no matter what action is taken or if no action is taken. The policy is written to allow compliance with the law and best practices. Therefore, following it reduces the risk of liability. Dr. Carnemolla stated that there are often underlying circumstances as to the reason(s) why some disciplinary actions are not taken; such as special education or 504 needs of an individual student.. Ms. Thompson asked about support services after an expulsion and Dr. Carnemolla answered that the district does provide support, depending on the student’s needs while excluded from school.

Ms. Young brought up the issue of Artificial Intelligence and asked if there is a need to be specific to this factor of academic dishonesty. Dr. Carnemolla and Ms. Gleason concurred that while the methods of cheating in regards to technology will continue to change, the policy covers the district as it stands with sufficient wording regarding academic dishonesty.

***Laura Young moved to bring forward to the full Board Policy 5144-Student Discipline as presented, to the full Board, for a first read and possible action to adopt this new policy, Thej Singh seconded.
The motion passed 4-0-0***

V. New Business-Items for Review and Discussion

A. Policy Gifted and Talented

This is a new policy required by law. The version presented is Shipman’s model policy. Ms. Gleason stated that this policy is being recommended as a result of legislation and state guidelines that need to be followed regarding the identification of gifted and talented students. The law requires identification of gifted and talented students, but districts are not required to accommodate the students identified. The policy is intended to address identification of students through a comprehensive process.

Ms. Singh asked Attorney Gleason if she thinks the law will change to have interventions be included in the law and also policy, rather than just to identify but not provide services. Ms. Gleason answered that she had not heard anything related to changes, but that this issue is often discussed.

Dr. Carnemolla turned over the discussion to Mr. Jess Giannini to discuss programs in place for gifted and talented students.

Mr. Giannini talked about how the district provides enrichment to students, including Workshop Models, where students read and select text at their level; Enrichment Clusters; Maker Spaces and TI (Targeted Instruction) or Flex Time, where there is time embedded into the day to have opportunities for enrichment, as well as Advanced Math.

Dr. Carnemolla mentioned that any of these opportunities may be recommended for a talented and gifted student, but also students who are *not* identified as talented and gifted would not be excluded from them.

Ms. Young asked about the 10% threshold of students who can be identified. Ms. Gleason and Dr. Carnemolla explained that this percentage is written in the law. The district implemented new procedures for identification in 2019, so it is already in compliance with this policy. The district is also working to restart many initiatives that were put in place prior to the pandemic (health regulations caused a temporary pause) that provide opportunities for enrichment.

Ms. Russo asked about what happens once a child is identified, including next steps to support the student. Mr. Giannini answered that each student is supported by what their strengths are and what is right for them, which is decided via discussions with the parent/guardian, student, and teachers.

***Laura Young moved to bring forward Policy 6172.1-Equitable Identification of Talented and Gifted Students to the full Board, for a first read and possible action with change to how the parent is notified of their child’s identification, Thej Singh seconded.
The motion passed 4-0-0***

Policy 3543.31 Retention of Records and Information

This is a new policy for Avon, and it is the Shipman model policy. Dr. Carnemolla stated that this is related to all electronic messages for the district, whereas our other policies speak to records in general. Avon needs a policy to address electronic records as most records are now kept this way. Ms. Gleason explained that guidance in this area changes quickly as technology changes; and with FERPA and FOIA requests, this is an important policy for the BOE to have.

Ms. Young moved to bring forward Policy 3543.31 Retention of Records and Information to the full Board, for a first read and possible action, Ms. Nicole Russo seconded.

The motion passed 4-0-0

Ms. Katz left the meeting at 7:13 p.m.

VI. Future Items for Review

- a. Education Stability Procedures
- b. Use of Private Technological Devices by Students
- c. Student Use of the District's Computer Systems and Internet Safety
- d. Management Plan and Guidelines for Students with Food Allergies, Glycogen Storage Disease and/or Diabetes
- e. Parent - Teacher Communication
- f. Board Bylaws:
 - Meeting Conduct
 - Time, Place and Notice of Meetings
 - Construction and Posting of Agenda
 - Quorum and Voting Procedures
 - Minutes
 - Removal of Board Officers

Ms. Young read over the policies that still need to be revised/adopted under Future Items for Review, and Dr. Carnemolla added that the next Policy meeting is May 2nd.

Ms. Young ended the meeting thanking Ms. Gleason and all the other Administrators who contributed to the meeting tonight to help understand and explain the policies: it was much appreciated.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 7:19 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Christine Sardinkas, Recording Secretary

Minutes respectfully submitted by Laura Young, Policy Committee Chair

Laura Young

Minutes approved by Jeffrey S. Fleishman, Board Secretary

Jeffrey S. Fleishman

Minutes are approved at the next Policy meeting, and any corrections to the minutes, if needed, will be made at that time.