

**CITY OF NORWALK  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING  
JANUARY 20, 2015**

ATTENDANCE: Heidi Keyes, Chair; Artie Kassimis, Sherelle Harris

STAFF: Anthony Daddona, Brenda Williams  
Dr. Manuel Rivera, Superintendent; James Connelly, Interim Superintendent

OTHER Bruce Mellion, NFT.

Call to Order

Ms. Keyes called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m. and stated that Committee members were in attendance as listed above, and a quorum was present.

Discussion: Update on Committee Work for Attendance, Excuses, Denial of Credit Policy (5113)

Mr. Daddona reported that a sub-committee has been formed with administrators and teachers to review the attendance policies. He stated that the logistics of enforcing the “H” policy are complicated and need to be improved. He reviewed the work in progress covering the following:

- Research other districts and compare “H” policies  
Preliminary comparisons to Stamford, West Haven and Hamden, reveal that our policies are not as strict as others. He reviewed Norwalk’s structure of total absences for the year are 24 in comparison to 20 for other cities.
- Establish an Attendance Appeal Committee  
Members will consist of Housemaster, Teacher, Student Counselor (as student advocate)
- Establish guidelines – review student/parent rights
- Need to work on definition of authorized/unauthorized absences
- Tardy – Early Dismissals
  - Consistency in teacher practices – enforcement – Clarification on procedures
  - Disciplinary Consequences
    - Detention – After-School – Saturday Detention
    - Make up class-work missed
    - Outline of penalty and affect on class rank or grade

Ms. Keyes asked for the data on absences so this can be factored into the policy discussions.

There was a general discussion on areas that need to be covered in further depth including:

- Power School features that enable the parent portal to be used to view attendance.
- Parent Communication – Letters, auto phone system notifications
- Exceptions - Homebound Instruction – Extended absences.

Mr. Daddona explained that with the Norwalk High accreditation coming in March, they will not be able to do further work on policy updates until that involved process is over.

There was discussion on other issues such as high school reform and block scheduling and the impact on attendance procedures. There was further discussion about the Professional Development that is needed to instruct teachers how to conduct 88 minute class periods.

#### Discussion: Information Technology Policies

Development of “Bring Your Own Device” Policy (New)  
Updates to Telecommunications/Internet –  
Acceptable Use (6141.321),  
Computers: Websites/Pages (6141.322)  
Internet Acceptable Use: Filtering (6141.323)  
Electronic Resources (6141.326)

Ms. Keyes noted that Ralph Valenzisi was unable to attend and suggested that the item be tabled until the next meeting.

#### Discussion: Board of Education Meeting Start Time

Ms. Keyes stated that the start time of 7:45 p.m. is not only an unusual time being on a quarter hour mark, it is the latest start time for any City meeting. She explained that when there is public participation it really becomes a deterrent to attendance and the meetings can go on well after a reasonable hour. There was discussion on having the start time 7:00 or 7:30 and there was agreement to present the following to the full Board for approval at the next meeting.

**\*\* MR. KASSIMIS MOVED TO CHANGE THE START TIME FOR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS TO 7:00 P.M. STARTING WITH THE NEXT MEETING FOLLOWING APPROVAL BY THE FULL BOARD.**

**\*\* MS. KEYES SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

There was discussion about meeting minutes and how public comments are captured in the minutes. Mr. Kassimis explained that there have been requests for changes to the minutes by members of the public disputing what was said, and it causes additional meeting time and clerical effort that are really not necessary. He noted that the Board is not required to provide verbatim transcripts of comments in the minutes and if there is a dispute there is a record on the meeting tape. He suggested that only the name, address and subject be put into the minutes.

There was further discussion about changing rules of public comment to require the subject be an agenda item to avoid personal issues being addressed to the Board. It was noted that meeting rules of public comment and minutes be put on the agenda for review at a future meeting.

Dr. Rivera suggested the meeting format be changed to have one of the monthly meetings be a workshop style to encourage more public participation and involvement. Mr. Connelly stated that he agreed with this as it is the trend that other districts have followed. He cautioned against it being a power-point presentation format and suggested it be a workshop discussion forum.

There was discussion on progress reports and the timing of conferences and distribution of letters to parents. Mr. Daddona explained that the three marking periods did not line up with the timing of the progress reports, but this has been re-worked into the reporting schedules.

There was further discussion about conference scheduling, early dismissals for high school and middle schools, and the resulting loss in education time. Mr. Daddona explained that it is difficult to have elementary schools be on a uniform conference schedule due to high school mid-terms and the quarter marking periods and semesters. He explained the primary reason for early dismissals at the secondary level is we are on a tiered bus transportation schedule with the bus companies and there was consideration of reversing this for conference days.

There was discussion on professional development and how elementary teachers can have this make-up time for PD put into the calendar.

#### Agenda Items for February Meeting

Discussion and Recommended Revisions - Policy 1140 Distribution of Materials by Students

It was suggested for Committee members to come back to the next meeting with feedback and recommended changes.

#### Adjournment

\*\* **MR. KASIMIS MOVED TO ADJOURN.**  
\*\* **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marilyn Knox,  
Telesco Secretarial Services