

BOE Policy Committee Minutes
Wednesday, September 13, 2023, 9:00 – 10:30 am
Multi-Purpose Room – Newtown Community Center
8 Simpson St. Newtown, CT 06470

CALL TO ORDER Meeting was called to order at 9:00 am

IN ATTENDANCE Dan Cruson, Deborra Zukowski, Todd Higgins, Chris Melillo, Anne Uberti, Sarah Connell, 18 public

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

APPROVE MINUTES Dan Cruson made a motion to postpone the approval of the August 16, 2023 minutes. Deborra Zukowski seconded. Motion passes.

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion and possible action:

| Item | Reports |
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| <p>Bylaw 9221 – Method of Filling Vacancies D. Cruson made the requested edits from D. Zukowski and T.Higgins. The committee agrees to send this bylaw back to the BOE for approval.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Connell will send this policy to K. June for BOE first read. |
| <p>Bylaw 9100 – Organization Meeting of the Board D. Cruson will make the approved edits to make this bylaw consistent with Bylaw 9221. The committee agrees to send this bylaw back to the BOE for approval.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Connell will send this policy to K. June for BOE first read. |
| <p>Policy 6000 – Instruction (Concept and Roles) The committee approved the edits S. Connell made to this policy. S. Connell will send this policy to the BOE for approval.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Connell will send this policy to K. June for BOE first read. |
| <p>Policy 6111 – School Calendar The committee and A.Uberti agree that having this policy in place with be beneficial to the Board. The committee agreed to use the first CABA sample policy with a minor edit. S. Connell will remove “Beginning with the 2019-202 school year” in the last paragraph. The committee agreed to send this policy to the BOE for approval.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Connell will send this policy to K. June for BOE first read. |
| <p>Policy 6156 – Graduation Requirements A.Uberti presented her edits to the committee. The edits were approved and S. Connell will send this policy to the BOE for approval.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Connell will send this policy to K. June for BOE first read. |

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion and possible action:

| Item | Reports |
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| <p>Policy 8-302 - Selection of Library Media Resources</p> <p>A.Uberti started the discussion of this proposed policy by stating that it is important that she considered all of the feedback that she received last Spring from all viewpoints. Throughout that process, A.Uberti met with the LMS, members of the English department and also reached out to several of the parents that requested re-consideration of the books last year. From those conversations, it was determined that it is important to have criteria within the policy that sets forth guidance that we can point to as to why we are including a book in the library or not. The focus of the policy was to make it clear why the book was selected.</p> <p>A.Uberti explained that if the LMS believes that a particular resource belongs in the library, the library media specialist will conduct an examination of the material and prepare a written rationale for selection. The rationale for selection will then be presented to the building administrator and Assistant Superintendent to determine whether to include the material in the School Library Collection. If it is determined that the resource is appropriate in the school library, the rationale will be approved and will remain on record with the school.</p> <p>The rationale helps with newer staff to understand why a resource was chosen by a previous LMS.</p> <p>During an initial reconsideration request, the LMS would pull the book from the collection and do a thorough review of the material to determine whether or not it meets the selection criteria set forth in the policy.</p> <p>If the Material for Reconsideration is decided appropriate for the school library collection by the LMS, building administrator and Assistant Superintendent, the requester will be notified of this decision within fifteen school days of the original request. If, after the process outline is complete and the Requester is not satisfied with the decision, they may choose to submit a final reconsideration request form the Superintendent.</p> <p>A.Uberti reminded the committee that the forms that will be included with this policy will still be subject to FOIA. After researching more than 30 policies, they all included forms. A.Uberti suggests putting a disclaimer at the top of the form that states it is subject to FOIA so parents are aware. The restriction requests are FERPA protected.</p> <p>D. Cruson asked if the LMS were comfortable with the proposed policy.</p> <p>A.Uberti said they are mostly comfortable, however, they do feel strongly that process should be limited to the members of that school community. A majority of the requests that was received last year were from parents of students in elementary school but the books were in the high school. They also requested that forms were included in the policy so A.Uberti added that into the policy.</p> <p>D. Cruson asked if policy 8-302 included curriculum materials. A.Uberti answered that it did not. It is a separate policy.</p> <p>A.Uberti outlined her most recent edits in the Selection Criteria. She stated</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• S. Connell will send this policy to K. June for BOE first read. |

that she included *“To represent differing viewpoints on controversial issues”* and *“To provide a global perspective and promote diversity by including materials by authors and illustrators of all cultures.”* This language was taken from ALA.

D. Zukowski has difficulty using the word “promote” and “all” in this section. She requests changing the language to *“To provide a diverse global perspective by including materials from authors and illustrators across cultures.”*

D. Cruson does not agree removing “promote diversity”.

T. Higgins asked D. Zukowski if her concern was that it promotes too much advocacy. D. Zukowski said that she would love promote diversity, promote citizenship, promote family unity but the question is “what is the job of the library and materials in the library?”.

T. Higgins and D. Zukowski agree with D. Zukowski’s recommended edits. The recommended edits will go forth to the BOE for discussion. D. Cruson needs more time to think of another option and will bring his recommendations to the BOE meeting.

T. Higgins stated he also reviewed dozens of policies and agrees that the selection criteria is an important addition to this draft policy.

D. Cruson said that he has concerns about the selection criteria being the policy vs. the regulation.

A. Uberti answered that she made the decision to keep in the policy because it gives it more strength.

D. Cruson believes that the selection of library materials and the evaluating age appropriateness may need to be edited frequently and should be in a regulation.

D. Zukowski stated that she believes it is important to keep in the policy so the Board is aware of any changes to those sections.

T. Higgins believes this language should stay in the policy. D. Zukowski recommends editing the language to now read “Recommendations set forth by the following organizations (“Library Review Resources”) will be consulted when determining age appropriateness *including but not limited to:*” The committee agreed with this edit.

D. Cruson asked if it was possible to be provided the book titles that the parents have restricted to use as a study with the search criteria in this policy.

M. Melillo suggests that if the BOE would like to do a test case, not to use a book that a family has chosen to restrict. Using a family decision as a test case does not make him comfortable.

D. Cruson is concerned about a flood of reconsideration requests once the policy is approved.

T. Higgins does not believe that will happen. He said he is an optimist and believes that this policy shows what the LMS do so the community can fully understand. They can also see what the criteria and rationale is that is being adopted. A. Uberti agreed with T. Higgins and is hopeful that this policy and having the option for parents to restrict books with minimize the amount of reconsideration requests.

T. Higgins asked the committee to discuss how to set the scope of who is

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| <p>able to make the reconsideration request. T. Higgins believes it should stay as written and open to the entire community, not just the school community.</p> <p>D. Cruson said that if we limited it to school communities, parents who were concerned about a high school book but had a child in 8th grade would have to wait until they reached 9th grade. A. Uberti agreed and both agreed it should stay as written.</p> <p>D. Zukowski 's two concerns are parent's belief that this will harm their individual child and that the community doesn't feel the policy represents them. D. Zukowski also agrees that is it problematic to restrict to school communities and agrees it should stay as written. She suggests trying</p> <p>D. Cruson biggest concern with the process is how the Superintendent will be able to get a representative sample if the book titles are not known. D. Cruson hopes that the Superintendent would hear viewpoints from both sides before making a decision.</p> <p>A. Uberti said that there are ways for the Superintendent to do that, including consulting with the principal or reaching out to parents, PTA, or members of the community directly.</p> <p>C. Melillo believes the strongest part of this policy is selection criteria.</p> <p>A. Uberti continued by stating she thinks that laying out what some of the informal processes in the regulation will be offer up an opportunity for resolution.</p> <p>A motion was made by T. Higgins to move Policy 6163.1 – Selection of Library Media Resources to the Board of Education for review. D. Zukowski seconded. 2 Ayes, 1 Nay (Cruson). Motion passes.</p> | |
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A motion was made by D. Cruson to move forward Bylaw 9221 – Method of Filling Vacancies, Bylaw 9100 – Organization Meeting of the Board, Policy 6000 – Instruction (Concept and Roles), Policy 6111 – School Calendar, Policy 6156 – Graduation Requirements to the Board of Education for review at a future meeting. T. Higgins seconded. Motion was unanimously approved.

UPDATE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Jessica Galterio, parent, noticed a reality based approach in the two Open Houses that she recently attended. Students are very savvy and she believes that these policies should focus more on the student population as a whole. She continued saying that this policy discusses the sexual nature of some of these books, but there are other topics that are controversial and she wonders what the Board is prepared to do.

Suzanne Hurley, LMS at Middle Gate, is concerned about the process to keep it confidential. She believes that if we are allowing the community to submit request, the community should also be aware of these requests.

Katie Mauro, LMS at SHS, believes that it makes sense to follow the ALA language. She said that the LMS have specifically been asked to promote diversity and believes the language should stay as is.

Andrew San Angelo, LMS at Newtown Middle School, said that if there is no public knowledge of a book challenge and the book stays on the shelf, it can continue to happen over and over again. He also believes that the language “promote diversity” should stay in the policy.

ADJOURNMENT

Dan Cruson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. D. Zukowski seconded. Motion was unanimously approved. Meeting was adjourned at 10:35 a.m.