

Thursday, September 3, 2020

MINUTES OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held September 3, 2020, at Bridgeport Regional Vocational Aquaculture School and by video call, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:13 p.m.

Committee members present were Chair Hernan Illingworth and John Weldon. Board members Sybil Allen and Albert Benejan were present

Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present.

Mr. Weldon moved approval of the minutes of the meeting of August 17, 2020. The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on Policy 5158. Carli Rocha-Reaes, coordinator of school counseling, said this applies to students with complaints and mediations related to disabilities under Section 504. The prior policy was from 2012, but needs to be updated to reflect current procedures as posted on the district website. She said she will be the 504 coordinator for the district going forward.

Ms. Roca Perez said the mediation procedures have been added to the policy, along with updated contact information and a section for adding Ms. Altro-Dixon as the person to contact for an employee with a disability.

Mr. Weldon moved *“to refer the revised policy to the full board for their review and approval.”* The motion was

seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on control transfer policy 5116-A.

Supt. Testani said the district had historically been very liberal in granting controlled transfers. He said control transfers are for one year and should be revisited each year, but children end up staying in schools for several years, and along with siblings being transferred into a school it impacts kindergarten classes and other schools. This has led to certain schools being overcrowded and some schools being under-enrolled.

The superintendent said he was proposing simple language to revise the policy to reflect the requirement that space and program is available and the transfer is for a demonstrable need. He said many times there is not a need for a control transfer, but just a desire. He said redistricting is being looked at because of overcrowding at some schools.

Supt. Testani said the language of the proposal will allow the student to stay in a school for the last year of a K-6 school, K-8 school or high school even if the family moves.

The superintendent said he was not looking for approval tonight, but just to begin the conversation. He said it was important to do this simultaneously with redistricting.

In response to a question, the superintendent said Tisdale and Johnson Schools had received a lot of control transfers. Because of overcrowding families who move into those neighborhoods sometimes have difficulties registering their child in the local school.

Mr. Illingworth said as a parent he understood the need for a

control transfer. He said this was a great starting point to have a conversation to come up with something fair and manageable.

Supt. Testani said the policy should be that the parent will express what the need is and the administration will evaluate it on based on what they put forth, rather than listing reasons to allow a transfer which the parent can mold to fit a reason on the list. He said it was found that the control transfers are heavily weighted towards three or four schools, and the need to transfer goes away when a different school is offered to the parents.

Mr. Weldon said he understood the need for designees of the superintendent to work on the requests, but he suggested the superintendent be the final set of eyes looking at each request.

The superintendent said perhaps a parent might have to list several choices for the transfer, and if one school is very crowded one of the other choices can be accommodated.

Mr. Benejan said he was in support of making changes.

The superintendent said data management was looking into software that would be able to track the transfers better.

Mr. Illingworth said we should not rush into this, but it was a great conversation to have.

Mr. Weldon moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Martinez seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

*Approved by the committee on October 5, 2020*