

Wednesday, November 8, 2017

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STUDENTS & FAMILIES COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held November 8, 2017, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:40 p.m. Present were members Chair Annette Segarra-Negron and Joe Larcheveque. Board member Maria Pereira was in attendance.

Supt. Dr. Aresta Johnson was present.

Ms. Larcheveque moved to approve the committee's minutes of September 13, 2017. The motion was seconded by Ms. Segarra-Negron. The motion was unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was review and discussion of magnet school policy changes.

Christine Morrone said she sent to the committee the recommended changes by the parents and the building principals.

Ms. Morrone said the parents' recommendation was that there should be no entrance criteria for Grades K to 3 and there would be criteria for entering Classical Studies, Geraldine Claytor, High Horizons, Multicultural and Park City for Grades 4 to 8.

Ms. Pereira said she agreed with no entrance criteria for Grades K to 3. She noted there can be no entrance criteria for Discovery because it gets federal dollars.

Ms. Pereira noted the provisions about the need to have a conduct/effort grade of 1 or 2. A parent named Felicia from Classical Studies was recognized. She said her daughter had a lot of behavior trouble at Tisdale, but excellent grades and perfect attendance. However, her daughter was told she could not enter 1st grade at

Classical Studies because of behavior. Following her entrance to Classical she has not had one behavioral issue.

Ms. Segarra-Negron said the conduct/effort grade only applies to 4 to 8 under the current draft. Ms. Pereira said the problem experienced by Felicia was the previous district policy implemented by Classical Studies.

Requirements for continued enrolment were discussed from the draft. Ms. Morrone said any supports as called for the policy would be individualized to the student's needs, such as academic supports through SRBI, an IEP or PPT.

Mr. Larcheveque and Ms. Segarra-Negron said the committee's discussion regarding continued enrollment at the last meeting suggested mirroring the entrance requirements for K to 3 and 4 to 8.

Supt. Johnson suggested adding "a documented academic plan" to define the level of support needed for students.

Ms. Morrone noted that students who fail two or more core academic courses for the year will be considered for reassignment to their district school once all behavioral and academic supports have been implemented.

There was a discussion of the timing of the permitted reassignment on a case by case basis at the principal's discretion after a mandatory conference. Ms. Pereira said a student in her neighborhood was kicked out of High Horizons school 26 days before the year ended. She said that is not student-centered or good for the child. She urged the deadline be the end of the second marking period. She added that principals need to figure out a way to deal with such a child after the second marking period.

Ms. Segarra-Negron said the language about a case-by-case decision was used because some Class 1 and 2 type offenses are harsh.

Dr. Johnson said to minimize disruption a child should stay until the end of a marking period unless it is an egregious case.

Ms. Morrone said the draft calls for the transfer of a student to coincide with marking periods for other than a Type 3 offense. The committee members and Ms. Pereira said they agreed.

Dr. Johnson said she was not in favor of a transfer near the end of any marking period.

Mr. Larcheveque said if the cutoff date was as early as the second marking period there might be a chance a child would be sent back to their neighborhood school without first trying to resolve the student's issues.

Ms. Pereira said the committee never got any data back on how often children are sent back to their neighborhood schools from magnet schools. Ms. Morrone said she believed the number was in the area of five to seven students per school each year.

Supt. Johnson left the meeting.

A parent from Multicultural Magnet said last year five kids were sent back to their neighborhood schools.

Tammy Boyle, a Bridgeport Military Academy parent, said the school had been told by the district that the school cannot send students who have problems back to neighborhood schools. Ms. Pereira said that was because of the use of federal dollars.

Ms. Morrone noted the new provision that Bridgeport Military Academy students are required to attend and successfully complete the summer orientation camp.

In the provisions for admission to Central Magnet there is new language requiring an SBAC total score of 5 or an average score above the 40th percentile in reading and math on the district benchmark assessment administered in Grade 8.

The requirements for continuing enrolment in Central Magnet will include the addition of any reassignment to coincide with marking period.

In response to a question, Ms. Morrone said Dr. Anekwe was consulted on the provisions related to Central Magnet.

Ms. Pereira said the language should be added that a documented academic plan will put in place to support a student's effort to succeed.

Ms. Pereira said due to federal funds she did not believe students could be removed from Fairchild Wheeler, BMA and Discovery. If that is the case, she suggested the previous language be used.

Ms. Morrone said she believed the only reason a student could be asked to leave those schools were for behavioral reasons, not academic.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Christiana Otuwa said she will obtain the answer to question.

Diana Draper, a parent from High Horizons, was recognized. She asked if the committee has removed any retention requirements in terms of academic requirements for behavior for Grades K-3. Ms. Segarra-Negron said this was the case. The provisions applied to grade 4 to 8. Ms. Draper added that she did not agree with that approach, noting that while kindergartens are young, but students in 3rd grade are capable of being held to these standards.

Ms. Segarra-Negron said that Ms. Draper and other parents spoke up about this at the last committee meeting. She said she appreciated the parents coming to the meetings and giving their opinions.

Mr. Larcheveque moved that Item 4 on sibling policies be considered next. The motion was seconded by Ms. Segarra-Negron and unanimously approved.

It was noted there was no sibling policy at Central Magnet.

There was a discussion of the phrasing of the introductory sentence of the sibling policy.

The committee said the sibling entrance criteria will include a grade of C or better in core academic subjects for Grades 4 o 8.

Regarding the lottery for magnet school entrance, Ms. Pereira noted that twins or triplets could only submit one application to the lottery, meaning one application per family.

Ms. Pereira said she wanted to emphasize that the lottery has not generally be held in public. This has been changed in the current draft. She said it should not be done in a back room. She said she had seen instances where the lottery is not authentic.

There was a discussion of the venue for the lottery. Ms. Pereira suggested the Klein Memorial; Mr. Larcheveque suggested a high school gym. Ms. Segarra-Negron said in the early 1990s it was done in public. It was noted that the lottery is done by computer.

The board members indicated that they had heard complaints about people using influence to cut the line into magnet schools.

The next agenda item was the controlled transfer policy:

Ms. Pereira said a controlled transfer doesn't cost the district anything because bus transportation is not provided and there is no need for additional staff because the student can only be transferred if there is space in the school.

Ms. Morrone said the district does hundreds of controlled transfers each year.

Assistant Superintendent Janet Brown-Clayton noted the policy would not apply to magnet schools. The board members agreed to add that to the language.

The board members noted the only criteria now for controlled transfers is if there is room in the school.

Regarding capacity in high school, Ms. Morrone said it's not as clear-cut because of the multiple classes students take.

The board members said the policy should call for Grade 9 to 12 controlled transfers to be determined on a case-by-case by the central office administration.

Ms. Pereira said a child lost a controlled transfer because she changed a screen saver on a Chrome Book as one of three strikes at end of the year.

Ms. Morrone said at the last meeting the committee discussed that the letter sent to the parent will reference the Code of Conduct violation.

Following discussion, the board members said the appeal process for controlled transfers would apply to both a denial of a controlled transfer and a revocation of the controlled transfer. Ms. Morrone said clarifying language will be added to the draft.

Mr. Larcheveque suggested the board aim to get this on the agenda for the meeting of November 26th. Ms. Pereira noted the policy requiring two readings could be suspended by a two-thirds vote of the board.

Ms. Segarra-Negron moved the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Larcheveque and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod