

Wednesday, April 9, 2025

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & PERSONNEL
COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF
EDUCATION, held April 9, 2025, at Bridgeport City
Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. Present were members chair Willie Medina and member Joseph Sokolovic. Board members Maritiza Estremera Jimenez* and Albert Benejan Grajales were present. Committee member Jennifer Perez* joined subsequently as noted. Board member Andre Woodson* joined subsequently as noted.

(*remote participation)

Mr. Medina said the city had gone through a lot of trauma in the last few days. He asked for a moment of silence of the Dominican community, the Wilbur Cross community (who lost a first grader), and Dyshan Best.

The next agenda item was on approval of policies on drug and tobacco, P5131.1.

Albert Sackey, assistant superintendent, said he did further research based on Mr. Sokolovic's questions. He said all the draft policies are based on state statutes and are written with those statutes in mind.

He said we should be mindful about changing too much of the wording in the policy because the language is intended to address the state statutes. He said anything that requires clarity or are new policies have to be incorporated into professional development with staff.

Dr. Sackey said the two policies that went for the first read at the full board had minor tweaks suggested and sent for discussion at this committee.

Mr. Medina requested that new language being added be put underlined and removed language have a line through it.

Dr. Sackey said nothing has been added on the alcohol and tobacco policies.

In response to a question, Dr. Sackey said we engaged CABE in the policy review under the prior superintendent and before state intervention. He said he would like to engage further with attorneys, but the use of “illegal” was because it involved students, who are mostly under the age of 21.

Mr. Woodson* joined the meeting.

Ms. Estremera Jimenez asked the policies to be translated into Spanish and Portuguese for bilingual parents. Mr. Medina said he would pursue that. Dr.

Sackey said Haitian Creole would be added to the translation list.

In response to a question, Dr. Sackey said he believed we are obligated to translate the policies into the dominant languages in the district. Mr. Sokolovic said we should make that a standard. Dr. Sackey said we are looking to update pretty much all of our policies.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *“to the full board alcohol use, drugs and tobacco, including performance-enhancing substances, P5131.6.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the nondiscrimination policy and notice, P0521(a).

Dr. Sackey said we should be mindful of revising language on this one as well. He recommended it go back to the full board for a second read.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *“to the full board nondiscrimination policy and notice, P0521(a).”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina and unanimously approved.

Mr. Medina said the next agenda items were from 28 recommended policies by CAGE and state mandates.

Mr. Sokolovic moved “*to change the agenda order recognizing 2-F as next on the list, restorative practices, P5144.12(a).*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina and unanimously approved.

Dr. Sackey said this is a required policy that we do not currently have. He said the policy talks about the purpose of the restorative approach to discipline and policy guidelines to address challenging behaviors that are nonviolent or criminal in nature. The four main goals of the restorative approach were listed and described by Dr. Sackey. There are definitions in the policy as well.

Mr. Sokolovic noted titles should be used on all policies, not names.

Cheryl Faga, director of SEL and student services, described restorative practices as based on relationship building. She described how it is implemented, including repairing relationships and reentering classrooms. She said the code of conduct and student handbook already includes this. She said the policy calls for a district yearly review.

Dr. Sackey said it was written with state statute in mind.

In response to a question, Dr. Sackey said the agenda item had a typo, and it should cover the entire

P5144.12, not just (a). He said the entire thing was in the portal.

Mr. Sokolovic said we have been using restorative practices for close to a decade, and we're not just discovering it. Mr. Medina and Dr. Sackey agreed. Mr. Medina said this is required policy for all boards by July 2025. Mr. Sokolovic said we led the state on this issue.

In response to a question, Dr. Faga said it is in the code of conduct and there will be professional development around it.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *"to the full board restorative practices, P5144.12 in its entirety."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina.

Mr. Sokolovic removed his motion; Mr. Medina removed his second.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *"restorative practices, P5144.12 in its entirety to the full board with the recommendation that we waive the first read and the second read for immediate implementation."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the FAFSA completion program, P6148.

Dr. Sackey said we've had a big push on the FAFSA challenge, but there is currently no district policy. He said Dr. Faga has been working with the high schools' teams on increasing the number of students completing it. He said the policy addresses the importance of completing the FAFSA and discussed Public Act 23-204, which calls for all students graduating in 2025 to complete a FAFSA unless they have a signed waiver from a parent or a student who is eighteen or older.

Dr. Faga we've been working on this since September with a task force that meets monthly, which includes nonprofit organizations and three high schools. She described an event in January to encourage the effort and a student raffle for donated items.

Mr. Sokolovic asked about protections for students and parents who overstayed their visas in the waiver process. Dr. Sackey said something would have to be added on that. He said there is latitude and flexibility on the waiver process. Dr. Faga said she can speak to the committee about this because there are forms that can be used for undocumented students.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *"to approve the FAFSA completion program policy P6148, waiving the first and second read for immediate implementation."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the policy for gifted and talented students, P6172.1.

Dr. Sackey said this is also a mandated policy. He said the district does not currently have a gifted and talented policy in the district. Public Act 29-199 requires boards to develop policy for the equitable identification of gifted and talented students.

Dr. Sackey said the policy has definitions. He said students are not only gifted academically, but also through the arts. He said the policy talks about ways to support students and the identification process. He said CAFE provided two versions; he requested the second version be considered.

Mr. Sokolovic said we've had a gifted and talented program in the district for some time. He said he views them as another special needs group that's not been serviced properly. He noted the budget for the program is miniscule. Dr. Sackey said we've been doing it since it is best practice, but this would put it into policy.

Ms. Hughes said we're doing a program overhaul with the gifted and talented.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *"to push to the full board, waiving the first and second read, gifted and talented students, Policy P6172.1, version 2, as presented this*

evening by Dr. Sackey.” The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on preschool special education, P6171.2.

Dr. Sackey said this is another mandated policy. The board does not currently have a preschool special education policy, although there are procedures that are used.

Dr. Sackey said the policy explains the reverse mainstreaming model and breaks down procedures that need to be put in place.

Mr. Sokolovic said it sounded like the Skane School model with mostly disabled students and a few mainstream students. Dr. Sackey said the policy calls for more mainstream students to be role models.

Mr. Sokolovic said it was important to point out that this is another one that we have been doing, it’s just not codified on paper. Dr. Sackey said there may be possibility of some additional costs.

Mr. Sokolovic moved “*to approve preschool special education policy number 6171.2 as presented by Dr. Sackey, with the waiver of the first and second read for immediate implementation.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on duty-free lunch, P4113.12.

Dr. Sackey said it is another mandated policy. Collective bargaining agreements address duty-free lunch, but there is not currently a district policy. He said the policy states teachers and all certified staff will have a minimum of a thirty-minute, uninterrupted lunch period.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *“to approve duty-free policy P4113.12 as presented by Dr. Sackey, with the waiver of first read and a second read, for immediate implementation, especially since we’re already doing it already for the past few years through our contractual obligations.”*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was physical exercise and discipline, P5144.4.

Dr. Sackey said this is another mandated policy. He said it focuses on encouraging students to have a healthy attitude towards exercise, and not using the loss of recess as a disciplinary action unless a student poses a danger to themselves or others. It addresses how often recess can be restricted during the course of the week.

Mr. Sokolovic said he believed this is another one we've been practicing, and Bridgeport is a leader in this area; it's just not on paper. Dr. Sackey said the code of conduct calls for other means to address negative behavior.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *"to approve the physical exercise and discipline policy P5144.4 as presented by Dr. Sackey this evening, with the wavier of the first and second read, for immediate implementation."*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on health education program, P6142.10.

Dr. Sackey said this is another mandated policy that focuses on health education as an important part of a student's experience. It also includes educating students on nutrition and providing nutritious food-choice options. The version to be chosen is up for discussion, he said. Dr. Sackey suggested version one.

Mr. Sokolovic asked whatever happened to the president's health initiative. He said in some semesters high school students do not have gym. Dr. Sackey said in high school there are certain mandated hours that are needed in a year.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *“to approve the health education program policy, P6142.10, Version 1, as presented by Dr Sackey for immediate approval with the wavier of the first and second read.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on establishing a timetable to adopt all mandated policies for full board approval.

Mr. Medina said we have done 12 of the 28. He said we’re going to be proactive and hold special meetings if necessary. He noted they are state mandates.

There was a discussion of the timing of reviewing and presenting policies going forward. Dr. Sackey said he was going to work as quickly as he can. He said he might be able to have fifteen done by the end of spring break.

Mr. Sokolovic said he didn’t think the board would do a deep dive in the policies with the work being done at the committee.

There was further discussion of a proposed timeline.

Ms. Perez* joined the meeting.

Mr. Medina said the goal was to complete the committee’s work by June 6th. There was further discussion of the scheduling.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *“to approve the completion of the mandated policy at the committee level to bring to the full board prior to June 6th.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina and approved by a 2-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Sokolovic and Medina. Ms. Perez was opposed.

In response to a question, Ms. Hughes said the TAG applications are already out, but she did not know the deadline. She said three schools have TAG: Marin, Batalla, and Winthrop. It is being considered to move the programs to three different schools next year.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod