

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
ADMINISTRATIVE MINUTES MAY 09, 2023
(APPROVED)

The Board of Education of Anne Arundel County (Board) Policy Committee met at 3:00 p.m. on the above date virtually. Board members present were Gloria Dent, Joanna Tobin, Melissa Ellis, and Zachary McGrath. Staff members present were Grace Wilson, Legislative and Policy Specialist; Masa Conteh, Legislative and Policy Support Specialist; Bob Mosier, Chief Communications Officer; Darren Burns, Board Attorney; Dan Reagan, Director of Internal Audits; and Diane Howell, Executive Assistant to the Board.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mrs. Dent opened the meeting with the approval of the minutes from the April 11, 2023, Committee meeting. The minutes were approved by consensus.

Policies

POLICY IS – DISPLAY OF FLAGS: Ms. Wilson explained that this new policy was requested by a Board member and that the purpose is to provide guidance for the display of flags on Board property and in Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) facilities, including the display of flags for instructional purposes. Specifically, the policy defines a flag as a piece of fabric or similar material, usually rectangular, that is a symbol or a decoration; encourages the display of the Maryland State flag, Anne Arundel County flag, and the Annapolis City flag, wherever appropriate and practicable; and limits the display of flags other than the American, Anne Arundel County, Annapolis City, and Maryland State flags to only those with a *bona fide* educational purpose as determined by the principal of the principal's designee.

Dr. Tobin asked what constitutes a *bona fide* educational purpose per this policy? Ms. Wilson shared that the policy states that the school principal or the principal's designee shall determine what constitutes a *bona fide* educational purpose for the display of flags.

Mr. Mosier clarified that this policy is separate and distinct from Policy IKA – Opening and Patriotic Exercises that was before the Board on first reading on April 26. Policy IKA deals only with the display, care, and custody of the American flag. Ms. Wilson added that Policy IS will apply to all other flags besides the American flag and that Policy IKA and Regulation IKA-RA will continue to govern the display of the American flag and AACPS' opening and patriotic exercises. Mr. Mosier noted that Policy IS would, for example, apply to the display of flags from different countries in a gymnasium that represent the countries of origin of students in the school. Ms. Wilson added that this proposed policy would also apply to the display of flags in a world language or history classroom, depending on the lesson being taught.

Mrs. Dent expressed concern that this policy may be misleading and may stray from the issue of the display of the Maryland and Anne Arundel County flags. She added that the policy may lead to concerns from the community.

Mr. Burns stated that he believes the policy does a good job of addressing the potential community concerns Mrs. Dent anticipates because it has two identifiable standards, one for official governmental

flags and another for flags with a *bona fide* educational purpose. He shared that the decision of what constitutes a *bona fide* educational purpose ties in with the decisions that the principals, assistant principals, and other supervisors make on a regular basis. He believes that by adding the *bona fide* educational purpose as a standard within the policy it gives administrators the best chance of applying a standard that can be defended during an appeal or in a courtroom. Mrs. Ellis added that she feels it is appropriate that the principal or their designee determine what constitutes a *bona fide* educational purpose, as they are the designated leader of the school community and already address community concerns. Dr. Tobin stated that she believes the key to this policy is providing guidelines to principals regarding the grounds on which they make decisions regarding the display of flags.

Mr. Mosier emphasized that this policy would lead to some inconsistencies throughout AACPS schools because each principal may have their own interpretation of what constitutes a *bona fide* educational purpose.

The Committee moved by consensus to bring the policy to the full Board on first reading at the May 24, 2023, meeting.

POLICY JCL – STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS: This policy was adopted on January 18, 2017, and it has been updated for style, formatting, and to add legal references. Ms. Wilson recommended that this policy complete the full policy review process because of the changes in definitions made to the policy. Dr. Tobin agreed that it would be wise to take Policy JCL through the normal review process because even though the changes to the policy are minor, she would like to make sure that the public does not feel that the process was sped up in any way. Mrs. Ellis supported Dr. Tobin’s position and added that she believes that the policy could potentially lead to more questions from the public. The Committee moved by consensus to bring the policy to the full Board on first reading at the May 24, 2023, Board meeting.

FYI Only – Regulation

REGULATION JCL-RA – STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS: This regulation accompanies Policy JCL and was issued on January 18, 2017. The regulation is being updated for style, formatting, and to add legal references. As part of the discussion of this regulation, Board members requested the corresponding regulation be noted when a policy is posted for public comment. Mr. Mosier noted that if the policies and regulations discussed at this committee meeting are sent to the Board for first reading on May 24, 2023, they could be adopted at the Board’s July meeting before the start of the next school year.

Policy and Regulation for Discussion Only

POLICY II – GRADING & REGULATION II-RA – GRADING: This policy and the accompanying regulation were brought to the Committee to solicit feedback at the request of the Superintendent.

Dr. Tobin asked about the portion of the Grading Policy that states that the class rank would not be calculated for the students. Ms. Wilson explained that the change in the class rank portion of the policy is to be effective beginning with AACPS students entering grade 9 in the 2021-2022 school year.

Mrs. Ellis shared that she believes that this regulation will garner much attention from parents and students and because of this she would like to review the changes recommended by staff before this policy is discussed by the Board. Additionally, she shared that she is glad to see the changes proposed to the regulation. As she feels the current grading policy and regulation are not bringing out the best in our students.

Ms. Wilson reviewed the proposed changes to the regulation. She shared that during the COVID-19 pandemic the regulation was revised to allow assignments submitted within one week of the due date to be counted as on time, assignments that were submitted more than one week after the due date were to get a grade of at least 50%, and assignments that were not submitted receive a zero. Ms. Wilson stated that staff is now proposing that a change be made to the regulation that assignments that are submitted within 1 to 10 school days of the due date shall have their maximum grade reduced by 10%, completed assignments submitted more than 11 school days after the due date, but before the end of the marking period, shall receive a grade of 50%, and the completed assignments submitted 11 or more school days after the due date will not receive teacher feedback, but will still receive that 50% minimum grade.

Ms. Wilson discussed the opportunity for mastery provision of the regulation. This is the provision of the grading policy that allows students to redo assignments that they may want to improve their grade on. Currently the regulation allows students to redo between three and five assignments at the discretion of the teacher. Staff recommended there be only three opportunities for mastery to promote consistency among and within schools. Ms. Wilson also reviewed the addition of the final grade change procedures to the regulation. This change to the regulation brings AACPS in compliance with the Code of Maryland Regulations standards regarding changes to final grades.

Ms. Wilson reiterated to the Committee that the reason that Policy II and Regulation II-RA are before them is so that Dr. Bedell can collect their feedback on graded homework. She shared that the current Grading Policy states that homework is a required component for student achievement and that a teacher's evaluation of homework shall be reflected in each student's grade or expected student behavior. For middle and high school students, the regulation outlines what courses homework shall be required in and what courses homework shall be optional in. She shared that there are a variety of ways that other local education agencies address grading.

Mrs. Dent asked if the graded homework portion of the regulation only pertains to high school. Ms. Wilson clarified that the policy implies that it pertains to all levels and that the regulation states that at the elementary level it is to be reflected in an expected student behavior and then denotes which secondary courses graded homework is required in versus which courses homework is optional in.

Mrs. Dent stated that she believes that graded homework is still an equity issue and asks for clarification on the weight of the homework and how the homework is assigned especially if it is at the discretion of the teachers.

Mrs. Ellis clarified a point that she made at the beginning of the meeting stating that she does have opinion on this policy but does not believe that it is the place of this committee to add too

much input as the full Board will need to weigh in. She shared that she is aware of research that indicates there is no value or even negative effects of homework in elementary school and minimal benefits of graded homework at the secondary grade levels. She would like to structure the regulation for homework to only be offered on a beneficial basis for the students.

Dr. Tobin shared that there are two issues that worry her. The first was the equity issue that comes with homework and the second is the value of homework as a tool to teach students time management. She believes that there is a lot to think about while trying to strike the balance of making homework beneficial to students while also not handicapping them in such a way that does not expose them to working, outside of the classroom, without teacher supervision.

Mrs. Ellis added that since there is such a difference between how high schools and colleges are structured, students that have the burden of the same amount of the homework but not the same amount of time to complete it leads to students not having well-balanced lives and ultimately to mental health issues. She believes that these proposed changes to the regulation would feed nicely into the changes that Dr. Bedell wants to see as far as flexibility within the school day.

Dr. Tobin added that she believes that the coming Blueprint changes would structure high schools to be more like colleges in ways that would help prepare students for the transition into higher education and that the current structure is not healthy for students.

Ms. Wilson thanked the Committee for their comments and concerns and shared that she will continue to work with staff to bring Policy II and Regulation II-RA back to the Committee when they feel they have a draft ready.

GOOD OF THE ORDER: Dr. Tobin shared that she received an email from the Annapolis Education Commission asking the Board to review Policy EAA – Eligible Riders. She stated that eligibility for transportation is an ongoing issue for the Annapolis cluster of the County as urban walking routes often cause students to arrive late at school. Since attendance is a factor in how the Maryland State Department of Education evaluates schools, she's requesting the policy be reviewed.

Ms. Wilson assured Dr. Tobin and the rest of the Committee that Policy EAA is on the policy review schedule for the 2023-2024 school year.

ADJOURN: 4:01PM