

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
ADMINISTRATIVE MINUTES MARCH 2, 2021

The Board of Education Policy Committee met at 3:30 p.m. on the above date via teleconference. Board members present were Joanna Tobin, Chair; Melissa Ellis and Drake Smith. Staff members present were Jeanette Ortiz, Legislative and Policy Counsel; Bob Mosier Chief Communications Officer; Maneka Monk, Senior Manager of Communications; Nikki Burns, Legislative and Policy Specialist; Walter Federowicz, Internal Audit; Darren Burns, Board Counsel; and Diane Howell, Executive Assistant to the Board. Also present were staff members Ryan Voegtlin, Director of Student Services and Shirley Jackson-Avery, Coordinator of School Counseling Prek-8. The CAC representative was Martin Egna.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Dr. Tobin opened the meeting with approval of the minutes to the February 2, 2021, committee meeting. Ms. Howell noted the omission of Darren Burns, Board Counsel as having been in attendance from the minutes. The minutes were approve as amended.

Policy Introduction

JO – Students and Gender Identity: Ms. Ortiz introduced this proposed policy to the Committee and gave background information related to the formulation of this policy. Ms. Ortiz noted that the proposed policy encompasses and codifies guidelines currently in practice by Anne Arundel county public Schools (AACPS). Mr. Voegtlin reiterated that noting in this policy is new but added that the development of this policy and its accompanying regulation makes it clear that AACPS guidelines are important.

Mr. Smith asked if a support statement for student organizations could be added. Ms. Ortiz will develop language to add. Mr. Smith also asked about student names, pronouns that correspond with the day to day, especially in the virtual setting. Mr. Voegtlin responded that that they work closely with Student Support Services to identify students with a preferred name and that technology has been working to keep a student's preferred name on virtual platforms. Ms. Ellis suggested a checklist to which Ms. Ortiz responded that one exists and is used. Ms. Ellis expressed reservations about moving this policy forward if there are regulatory concerns. Mr. Egna agreed with Ms. Ellis and suggested open dialogue and allowing for all voices to be heard to ensure more discussion. Mr. Egna also provided feedback from the Citizen Advisory Committee, emphasizing the importance of transparency and community feedback, and taking our time.

Ms. Ortiz will speak with Dr. Arlotto regarding the concerns raised about the possibility of posting the regulation for feedback. She reiterated that the regulations come from the guidelines. The guidelines were created and recently revised with stakeholder input. Mr. Mosier stated that students were also involved. Ms. Ortiz indicated that she will be sure to provide background information such as the guidelines if the policy moves forward for public comment.

Mr. Burns emphasized the importance of being slow and methodical while developing the policy and regulation. He added that “nothing prohibits the committee from adding to the policy even if some of the language comes from regulation. In an era where state/local gov. support these efforts, you might as well include things that may be concerning to the public. Don't be afraid of the process or commentary.” He suggested the Committee take the time to get input and be sure everyone is comfortable with the policy before it goes to the full Board. Ms. Ortiz agreed and responded that it has always been her practice to not rush and take her time when developing or revising any policy or regulation. She reminded the Committee that the policy was before them per their vote to have it presented in the March meeting.

Dr. Tobin asked whether language could be added to recognize who is covered under this policy in more specific terms. Ms. Ellis seconded. Ms. Ortiz will develop language to add without excluding students. Dr. Tobin suggested the addition of clarifying language to section C, subsection 2, language regarding “educational programs.” Ms. Ortiz will review to identify clarifying language here.

FYI Only - Regulation

JQ-RA – Students and Gender Identity: Ms. Ortiz reviewed the regulation since it is a new policy. She explained that the regulation was derived from language contained in the current AACPS Students and Gender Identity: Guidelines for Support which was most recently updated July 1, 2019. Mr. Smith had questions about attire. Ms. Ortiz and Mr. Voegtlin clarified and will review for potential clarifying language in the regulation. Ms. Ortiz will make the discussed revisions.

Dr. Tobin suggested bringing the policy back before the Committee at its April 6, 2021 meeting. Ms. Ortiz requested that any additional feedback from the Committee or members of the public be sent to her prior to the April meeting.

Good of the Order

Good of the Order: None

Adjourn: 5:23PM