Concord School Board  
Communications Committee  
November 4, 2015

Committee: Communications
Date: November 4, 2015
Committee members present: Jennifer Patterson, Chair, Tom Croteau, Jim Richards, Kass Ardinger,
Other Board member present: Alana Kimball
Administrators present: Superintendent Terri Forsten; Assistant Superintendent Donna Palley

The meeting was called to order at 5:36 p.m.

The focus of the meeting was a review of the overall organization of the Board’s policies and discussion of three new policies. Ms. Forsten noted that the New Hampshire School Boards Association (NHSBA) uses a different organizational system than Concord’s. She also noted that some of Concord’s policies are in the system twice – in two different locations. Ms. Patterson indicated that this was intentional – they are in different sections with different numbers, but they are identical policies. This might get confusing if amendments were made to one without realizing there was another identical one. Mr. Richard suggested that it might be more logical to have an index that would direct a person to find what they need.

Ms. Forsten shared a one-page overview comparing the two approaches to organizing the policy manual. There are many similarities, though some differences. NHSBA organizes its model policies into 12 sections: A-L. Concord’s policies are organized into eight sections, numbered in the 100s to the 800s. Concord’s manual combines policies in the areas of support services and facilities, but the NHSBA suggests separating these. NHSBA has sections titled Negotiations, Foundations and Basic Commitments, and Education Agency Relations, while Concord has none of these. The Committee will review these sections and make sure the required policies are in our manual.

Several members suggested that since the NHSBA provides model policies for the district, it might make sense to align our policies to conform to their organizational system. Ms. Forsten suggested a review, with potential realignment, of one section. This would allow the group to see what was involved with this change. The Committee could focus first on reviewing priority and required policies to make sure those are included in our manual. Ms. Patterson indicates that this work won’t take precedence over work on the budget, but could be accomplished during quieter times. Superintendent Forsten will begin working on this and bring it to the Committee.
The Committee considered proposed Policy #592, which was reviewed at the last committee meeting. No revisions have been made since then. Superintendent Forsten sought input from several principals to understand how challenging this policy would be for teachers. The principals did not believe this policy would have a limiting effect on classroom practices, as teachers were using only questionnaires or surveys that were directly related to academics, and the statute specifically references surveys that are “not related to a student’s academics.” District staff will be able to administer a survey within the definition of the statute that is non-academic; for example, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, but parents will have the option to opt out on behalf of their student. Committee members had questions about teacher surveys that might relate to controversial topics and would like more information from teachers about possible consequences of adopting this policy. They would like to see some surveys that students are asked to complete.

The Committee considered Policy #532, a new policy related to daily physical activity for staff and students. This policy is a response to changes in the new Minimum Standards for Public School Approval, that requires a policy related to physical activity. Mr. Richards noted that physical activity is good for staff, students and even School Board members, either before, during or after school. He particularly agreed with the last line of the policy, ‘Encourage physical activity recess periods.’ He has witnessed teachers taking away a student’s recess period as a consequence for misbehavior and does not approve of this practice.

Ms. Patterson suggested that the Board might make recommendations for physical activity for students, but not for staff. It was noted that the students at the middle school do not have recess. Concord School District students do not have physical education classes every day, and while this would be ideal, it would also be expensive. Several Board members noted the variety of opportunities for after-school physical activity, including many sports teams that do not cut students. Several Committee members asked to what extent health and physical activity are integrated across our curriculum. The Committee would like additional information from the administration about the nature of physical activity in the district and the consequences of adopting this policy. They would also welcome input from the community on this topic.

Superintendent Forsten introduced proposed changes to School Board Policy #713, Anti-Idling, Indoor Air Quality. This recommendation came from the NHSBA and adds the following statement to the current policy:

8. In addition to addressing methods eliminating emissions, building principals are directed to annually investigate air quality in their respective school buildings using a checklist provided by the New Hampshire Department of Education.

Committee members expressed some concern about giving a cumbersome task to the principals, and asked about the nature of the checklist, where the information goes, and whether this should be a job for the Director of Facilities. Superintendent Forsten noted that this is a mandatory process, and that the checklist is very thorough. Ms.
Patterson indicated that there would be first and second readings of this policy, with additional opportunities for discussion. She suggested that the statement be changed to read:

8. In addition to addressing methods eliminating emissions, the Director of Facilities is directed to annually investigate air quality in each school building using a checklist provided by the New Hampshire Department of Education.

The Committee voted 4-0 to recommend Policy #713 Anti-Idling, Indoor Air Quality, with the revision proposed, to the full Board (moved by Ms. Patterson, seconded by Ms. Ardinger).

The Committee examined proposed revisions to Policy #530 Student Wellness. The addition of the following paragraph is required by the Minimum Standards for Public School Approval:

The Superintendent or his/her designee is responsible for implementing developmentally appropriate opportunities to learn food preparation skills that support nationally recognized research-based nutrition standards. The Superintendent or his/her designee is responsible for providing annual communication information about the policy and procedure and related curricula to the school community.

Committee members asked for additional information about the expectations for this section of the Standards, as well as an understanding of our current curriculum in this area. Superintendent Forsten will investigate this further and bring additional information to the Committee.

Jennifer Patterson made a motion to move into non-public session at 6:36 p.m. under RSA 91-A:3 II (a) “The dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him or her …”

The Committee voted 4-0 by roll call vote to move into non-public session at 6:36 p.m. under RSA 91-A:3 II (a) (motioned by Ms. Patterson, seconded by Mr. Richards) to discuss “The dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him or her …”

The Committee came out of the non-public session at 6:53 p.m.

The Committee voted 4-0 by roll call vote to come out of non-public session at 6:36 p.m. under RSA 91-A:3 II (a) (motioned by Ms. Patterson, seconded by Tom Croteau).

The Committee voted to seal the minutes of the non-public session.

The Committee by roll call voted 4-0 to seal the minutes under RSA 91-A:3 II (a) “The dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or
the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him or her ...” (motioned by Ms. Patterson, seconded by Mr. Richards).

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.