Committee Chair Jennifer Patterson convened the meeting at 5:30 p.m. and introduced the policies to be reviewed. The Superintendent noted that this is a Committee work session.

1. Draft Policy #434 Social Media – Staff

Superintendent Rath displayed the current draft of the Social Media Policy for Staff (as of April 30, 2014). She outlined the administration’s activities relative to this policy since July 2013: a staff survey in September 2013; a parent survey in November 2013; a meeting with CHS students in January 2014; a meeting with a small group of teachers in May 2014.

The staff survey, regarding ways in which staff communicate with parents, garnered 338 responses. At that point, in September, there was very little reported use of either Twitter or Facebook.

The parent survey, regarding how parents view the uses of technology vis a vis their children, resulted in 610 responses representing more than 1,000 students.

The superintendent held two focus groups: one with students and one with a group of teachers. Both students and staff reported increased use of technology by teachers, including email, web pages, Google docs, blogs, Edmodo and Class Dojo (school-based Facebook-type sites), Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The biggest debate was about whether staff and students would only be able to use “District-approved or District-sponsored social media” or could they use their own personal accounts.

It was noted that social media products and usage change and proliferate rapidly, and that there is a need for guidelines for teachers.

Ms. Patterson agreed that a major question is whether teachers would communicate with students through their own accounts, or only through specific professional
account. In cases where students were also the children of staff, or their children’s friends, there did not seem to be a clear line that was applicable in all cases.

Other questions included whether a list of district-approved social media exists; whether the District has social media sites and tools available to staff during the school day; what filtering issues would need to be reassessed;

Ms. Patterson spoke about the importance of this policy, especially at CHS with new classes on e-commerce, etc. that will necessitate the use of social media. She suggested that the purpose of the policy is to ensure that staff members using social media for instructional and educational purposes do so in a safe and responsible manner. She asked whether the policy is one that applies equally to staff members who choose to use social media and those staff who are obligated to use social media.

There was considerable discussion about how to / whether to control use of social media, restrict use to certain tools, or restrict which accounts can be used for this purpose. Committee members agreed that it would be limiting to require prior approval of social media by the district.

Ms. Patterson suggested that there should be a presumption against staff members using personal social media accounts to communicate with students.

Barb Higgins suggested a procedure whereby a staff member informs their administrator, or perhaps the curriculum facilitator, what he/she is doing. She thought perhaps a form could be developed for this, with the aim heading off a particular use before it becomes an issue.

Kass Ardinger suggested that there should be a log somewhere in the district with a list of approved social media tools, and teachers could indicate that they plan to use a Facebook page, for example. Superintendent Rath expressed concern about maintaining and supervising lists and logs.

Ms. Higgins described her work with the fully online Virtual Learning Academy, which nonetheless significantly controls teacher interactions with students; for example, forbidding teachers from having Facebook “friends” but allowing texting and Skype meetings.

Ms. Patterson noted that while this policy must be developed fairly quickly, the very definition of social media is so general that it might be difficult for a staff member to understand what social media actually consists of. She suggested using examples within the policy itself, while acknowledging that new social media tools will continue to be developed. She also noted that if a social media platform is district-created, there is a presumption that it is acceptable. She wondered whether a process and/or a review committee could be set up as a way to be not too limiting to teachers.

Donna Palley noted that it is difficult to delineate what social media actually is and to determine who would know whether it is appropriate. She suggested that, while staff such as Technology Integrator Amy Gillam may be able to stay abreast of
developments, the administration might not always be ready to respond with immediate judgments about their use.

Ms. Patterson noted that the Board wants to encourage the use of district-sponsored, district-approved social media as a tool. She suggested that the more public the social media platform is, the more questions would need to be asked and the more caution should be advised on the part of the teacher. She said that the more professional (vs. personal) the social media platform and software, the more caution the teacher is likely to have. Ms. Patterson suggested that the policy be fairly simple, encouraging the responsible use of social media for instructional and educational purposes and then establishing general principles. Ms. Palley suggested that the district could include discussion of and training on social media tools as part of professional development and include the Tech Integrators.

Tom Croteau asked if there is a relatively finite list of tools to communicate that could be identified, to which Ms. Gillam responded that such a list would be easy to create but difficult to maintain. He suggested that with this list, the administration could look at facets of these tool that are more difficult to control, and pick them apart to find how each will be used. Ms. Ardinger noted that developing such a list would mean anticipating new technologies all the time, and asked what would not be on that list.

Ms. Patterson asked if was possible for the District to set up a Tech Committee charged with reviewing new requests, with a premise such as “Staff wishing to use ___ social media tool shall seek permission from Tech Committee” and if any problem is not resolvable by tech committee, the issue would come back to the Board.

Melissa Donovan expressed a concern about privacy issues, especially on a platform such as Facebook, and recommended teachers seek ways to communicate with their class that protect students’ privacy. She asked whether the use of social media means the ways in which teachers communicate with parents, or teachers communicate with students. Ms. Higgins suggested that “Class Dojo” is used for internal classroom communication, but that her child’s teacher sends a weekly email to which parents can respond individually.

Ms. Patterson suggested the following language be included: “Staff members shall not use social media to expose student data to unreasonable risk of having their privacy compromised.”

Tech Integrator Amy Gillam suggested that a way of approaching privacy issues is to consider that Facebook would be a tool to communicate general classroom news rather than specific student achievement; and other software would be tools to communicate specific student achievement. The policy could then address the appropriate use of those tools. She noted that considerable work would be required to manage very specific guidelines, and might ultimately discourage teachers from trying new things. She suggested developing guidelines about risk, such as a social media VIP (visual instruction plan).
Ms. Patterson noted that the policy language should include avoiding personal accounts whenever possible. To the extent possible, criteria for social media use should be developed, perhaps by the tech integrators, which varies depending on grade level and many other factors. Use of social media should be considered part of a teacher’s instructional, professional duties, and be treated as professional work space.

Oliver Spencer arrived.

Mr. Croteau suggested language for the “purpose” section of the policy to encourage staff to use technology in a safe, secure, responsible way. He added that parents would be frustrated, for example, if a site wasn’t kept updated, and that it needs to be maintained, and removed eventually.

In response to a question from Ms. Donovan about whether staff would be required to remove internet sites at the end of the year, Ms. Gillam noted that this might be considered part of the upkeep of those sites referred to in the current draft policy.

The committee recommended strengthening language about professional judgment, for example: “District staff shall use the highest standards of professional judgment when using social media to communicate with students.”

The Committee requested that the administration reword and simplify the language of the policy for further review. Much of the detail about social media use would be in the procedures.

2. Draft Policy #672 – Interdisciplinary Credit

Superintendent Rath reviewed the proposed language of this policy.

Concord School District Policy #672 – Interdisciplinary Credit
High school students may earn course credit in one content area required for graduation, and apply said credit in a different content area through the awarding of interdisciplinary credit. Interdisciplinary credit may be counted only once in meeting graduation requirements.
The high school Principal is charged with approving courses for interdisciplinary credit if: (1) the course has been adopted by a faculty team/committee; and (2) the course addresses The objectives for the subject area in which the credit is to be counted.
Adopted _____, 2014
Legal References:
NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed 306.04(a)(14), Earning of Credit
NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed 306.14(f), Awarding of Credit
NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed 306.27(d), Mastery of Required Competencies
NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed 306.27(p), Counting Credits
She noted that a policy regarding interdisciplinary credit is required by NH DOE and that, while the high school already grants interdisciplinary credits, the Board has not had a policy regarding it.

The committee discussed the exact meaning of the language in the first paragraph, and the committee requested that the administration clarify and simplify it. Ms. Ardinger suggested using a specific example to illustrate how the policy would be applied.

3. Policy #754 – School Visitors

This arose last fall when we had some concerns about visitors in schools.

Current language:

Concord School District Policy #754 * - School Visitors
Visitors to a school will report first to the school’s main office.
Adopted 1976; Revised 1983 – * Also Policy #821.1

Superintendent Rath briefly discussed the language regarding visitors in each school handbook:

Abbot-Downing: Non-ADS guests must call ahead and schedule an appointment
Beaver Meadow: Visitors sign and out of office; wear visitor’s badge; the only entrance is the main entrance; controlled access; visitors must be buzzed in
Broken Ground: the only entrance is the main entrance; there is controlled access, visitors must be buzzed in; visitors must sign in stating their purpose
Christa McAuliffe: visitors must enter through the front door; are “buzzed in;” must register at the office and receive visitor identification tag to be worn at all times in the building; no students from other schools are allowed; unexpected parent visits can be disruptive and appointments are encouraged
Mill Brook: visitors must enter through the main entrance; push the buzzer; go directly to the main office
Rundlett: visitors must report to the main office and state the nature and purpose of their visit; sign in; get visitors pass; restrictions on students from other schools, who need prior approval to enter

CHS: Sign in at main office; state purpose; get visitors’ pass; sign out; no student visitors are allowed without permission from administrator and teacher whose class is to be visited

Superintendent Rath summed up the main issues, which include defining who a visitor is; that other district employees in any building should let the Principal and school secretary know they’re there, and why; determining which entrance can/should be used; defining procedures for controlled access (being “buzzed in”).
In general, she noted that all visitors must: report and sign in at each school’s main office; state the nature and purpose of their visit; obtain a visitors’ badge or pass that is to be displayed while they are in the building; sign out at the main office when they’re leaving. Additionally, rules regarding non-school related visitors and/or students from other schools, and parent/guardian meetings with teachers should be included and clarified.

Ms. Donovan suggested adopting a single policy for the entire district, noting that it would be helpful for all schools to have the same rules. Ms. Ardinger agreed, noting that numerous policies throughout the district might be confusing for parents and children as they go from one school to the next.

Mr. Croteau suggested providing individual schools the opportunity to add to a base policy, and Superintendent Rath said that she will draft language that includes all these components.

Mr. Spencer stated that the key to security in any situation is that one has to have habits. He said that while “buzzing-in” works, it implies self-policing, which does not target those people the district may really want to keep out of the schools. He said the goal of school security is to minimize the target.

4. Policy #541.2 – Dress Code

Superintendent Rath reviewed the language of the current dress code policy, noting that the policy applies only to students.

Concord School District Policy #541.2, Dress Code

If a particular style of dress or personal grooming demonstrates that it would be disruptive to the educational process, constitutes a threat to the safety and health of the individual or others, or is in violation of any lawful statute, it would not be permitted in school. Within these limits, the final decision as to attire and grooming shall be the good judgment and responsibility of the individual and his/her parents.

The school staff will encourage all students to dress in a fashion that, in the staff’s judgment, reflects good taste and [IS] appropriate for a school setting. However, if a student wishes to dress in a more individual fashion that still falls within the broad limits stated above and his/her parents agree, we would not deprive him/her the opportunity to attend school.

Adopted June 1971, revised February 1974, February 1976

Superintendent Rath briefly discussed language regarding dress code in each school handbook:

ADS: No specific language

BMS: Dress code for students
BGS: Dress; shoes
CMS: No specific language
MBS: No specific language
RMS: Detailed “regulations”
CHS: Detailed requirements; corrective action and policy review

Mr. Spencer proposed replacing the policy with a new policy requiring a district-wide school uniform. He cited two reasons for the proposal:

1. The cost of a student’s wardrobe really would be cheaper: uniform shirts would typically cost from $13 - $18; shorts would cost from $12 - $15; sweaters would cost up to $50. He said the cost of jeans is currently $80 to $90 per paid, and requiring a uniform would bring costs down, particularly for those at typically lower socioeconomic levels, who would have less trouble purchasing sufficient clothing for their children.

2. Requiring a uniform would also simplify and reduce the clutter in children’s and rooms and lives.

He described some of his research into this area, noting that students could have some choice of khaki shorts, trousers, “skorts,” dresses/rompers, and either short-sleeved shirts or oxford shirts, fleece pullovers, or sweaters. He estimated that to outfit a student for an entire year would cost approximately $150, including four pairs of every item.

Mr. Oliver suggested that most schools around the world and many in the United States now require uniforms. He suggested that uniforms, by reducing the number of variables in dress, can help students focus on areas other than clothing. He said that his informal survey of teachers, administrators and students indicated that 90% are in favor of this change. He suggested that Concord residents might debate giving up freedom of self-expression by kids wearing a uniform, but that in his opinion the pros outweigh the cons.

Ms. Patterson asked if the Board has ever discussed this topic before, to which Superintendent Rath said it has not been discussed from an administrative perspective.

Mr. Spencer said that inappropriate attire at school always becomes an issue in the spring, and that he thought that people are open-minded about the possibility of using uniforms. He suggested conducting a district-wide survey of parents and students, and perhaps inviting the Concord Monitor or The Hippo to survey the public.

Ms. Higgins said that special education research on “how to get ready for learning” would suggest that putting on uniforms would help students focus.

Ms. Ardinger asked how the upfront outlay of money would be managed in a district where 37% of students are in poverty. She suggested that this would have to be addressed at the school district level.
Mr. Spencer acknowledged the need for an initial outlay of funds and suggested keeping the uniform simple; for example, only khaki and blue. He also suggested the resale value of uniforms could offset the initial costs.

Ms. Palley suggested the need to be aware of cultural traditions that would dictate a different type of clothing.

In response to a question from Ms. Ardinger about finding out what families think about this idea, Superintendent Rath agreed a survey would be helpful.

Ms. Patterson said she’d be interested in seeing some research on this idea.

5. Concord School District Policy #540 – Code of Student Conduct

Superintendent Rath noted that possible revisions to this policy arose in the context of William White’s proposal for providing services to students with special education EH needs. That proposal included language about what is appropriate behavior for these students, and the consequences of not following the guidelines. Striving for consistency, the administration thought it worthwhile to examine Policy #540 for discrepancies in specific language. She reviewed excerpts of the language in the current policy:

Concord School District Policy #540 - Code of Student Conduct

The existence of society is predicated upon the willingness of its members to adhere to established behavioral rules. One purpose of education is to prepare young people to participate productively and responsibly in our society. To do so, students must learn what is appropriate behavior and the consequences for inappropriate behavior.

Furthermore, the mission of the Concord School District is to enable every student to acquire and demonstrate the skills, knowledge and attitudes essential to be a responsible world citizen committed to personal, family and community well being. Among other outcomes, graduates of the Concord Schools are expected to be:

- Active self-directed learners who examine options as they initiate and complete tasks;
- Effective collaborators who assume various roles to accomplish group or community goals, using self-knowledge, compromise, cooperation and respect;
- Informed decision makers who consider consequences and make choices which demonstrate intellectual integrity and rigorous evaluation;
- Community participants who understand and practice our democratic traditions and values, including respect for human dignity, honesty and fairness and who accept the consequence for their actions.
To enable every student to achieve these outcomes, we need to provide a productive, healthy and safe school climate in which every member of the school community understands the rights and responsibilities of being a member of that community. A productive, healthy and safe school climate can exist only when behavior expectations are clearly stated; when consequences are consistently applied by the school and parents, working together. The behavior expectations and consequences which follow are intended to create a productive, healthy, and safe school climate.

I. Building and Teacher Expectations

Each school will establish a building discipline plan. Each teacher in each school will develop and implement a classroom discipline plan. These building and classroom plans will state expectations for students in such areas as attendance, promptness, acceptable classroom behaviors, dress, parking, and other issues relevant to a productive learning climate.

II. Student Expectations

III. Consequences

IV. Procedures (Due Process)

She noted that, in the current policy, there is a lengthy list of unacceptable behaviors. Bill White’s approach calls for a consistent, school-wide system; preventive and proactive strategies; the prevention of behavior problems through proactive instruction rather than reactive remediation of problems after they develop; classroom learning environments that foster relationships and sense of community; and a social learning curriculum that teaches self-control, problem-solving, and skills for positive social interactions.

Ms. Patterson suggested that two separate policies might be needed. Ms. Ardinger agreed that policies should have one main goal, and that it might be wise to craft a separate policy on social learning curriculum.

The Committee directed the administration to prepare a draft policy on social learning curriculum as well as proposed changes to existing Policy #540.

The Committee voted to adjourn (motioned by Ms. Ardinger, seconded by Ms. Donovan).

The Committee adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Patterson, Chair

Chris Rath, Recorder