**Providence Public School District**

**797 Westminster Street**

**Providence, RI 02903**

**POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, January 3, 2024**

1. **Convene Meeting**
   1. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Carolina Roberts Santana at 5:30 PM – Carolina Roberts-Santana – Let’s call this meeting to order and Happy New Year to everyone. This is the first Policy Committee Meeting of 2024, the last of the School Board Year and my last one so it’s very exciting
   2. **MSV – Akin, Roberts-Santana**

**Board Members in Attendance: Toni Akin, Travis Escobar and Carolina Roberts Santana**

**Also in Attendance:** Janet Pichardo, James Scott, Andrea Gustafson, Aubrey Johnson and Martha DeMelendez

**This Meeting is Livestreamed on Youtube.com – Providence School Board**

**Policy Committee 1-3-2024**

1. **Approve Agenda**
   1. Approval of Agenda as Presented

**Carolina Roberts-Santana** – **Do I have a Motion to Approve the Agenda as Presented?**

**MSV** – **Akin, Escobar** (3-0) **MOTION APPROVED**

1. **Consent Agenda**
   1. Approval of Consent Agenda
   2. Approval of Minutes 12-6-2023

Recommendation to approve Consent Agenda and Minutes as Presented

**Carolina Roberts- Santana – Do I have a Motion to Approve the Minutes?**

**MSV** – **Escobar, Akin** (3-0) **MOTION APPROVED**

1. **Policy & Planning** 
   1. **Summer School Draft Policy**

**Andrea Gustafson** – I am Andrea the School Board Policy Advisor and today we have a Summer School Draft Policy and this was in the audit we were going to do a couple of sessions ago and we were given the advice to update our policies and this one was a pretty easy one to update and we corroborated with the previous Director of Summer School Learning and we just made some cosmetic changes and added the language to go more with our current policy and added a couple of definitions and we also added that there will also be a Summer Graduation Ceremony and all of the original changes from the original policy are in yellow and everything else was in the previous one.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana** – The one thing I do not see and I always like to see, is when the policy is updated? So I appreciate for example that since it was 20 years since it was last updated and it says in 2023 the policy is revised and it would be important for new committee members to know that as well. To actually have it written into the document that says this policy will be reviewed every three (3) years. To have it actually written into the document. Yes, the last review for this is 2003.

**Travis Escobar** – Yes, I agree.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana** – Any questions from the other members regarding the policy?

**Toni Akin** – I actually have a couple of questions if you don’t mind. Is there a fee structure in place? It is my assumption that any fees were overturned in 2014 decision to guarantee free and equal public education be provided to all children in the State of Rhode Island. What type of fee structure would be considered?

**Andrea Gustafson** – So at the moment we don’t have a fee structure and so the reason we put that is to kind of give leeway in the future in case it happens. So right now, we really don’t have a mechanism and it is just there in case there came a time where we needed to.

**Toni Akin** – Thank you.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana** – I would like that sentence to be rephrased in case a fee structure gets put in place and in the occasion where a fee structure is established, because in the case where the fee structure would be established and I could go back into the document to make the change. It would say, “provisions shall be made for partial fee waivers”. I agree with Toni that this seems as if there was.

**Travis Escobar** – But there has never been a fee put in place for the Summer School Program.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana** – I think there should be a sentence that says that the

Providence School authorizes an appropriate fee structure for someone who is

attending from out of District and what Toni mentioned about that review with

no structure and I’m wondering if this is lingering from 2003 and we should just

strike the whole thing.

**Travis Escobar** – I think we should strike this and I don’t think we should adopt a

potential fee for credit recovery.

**Andrea Gustafson** – I think that the rationale behind keeping was for kids not in

Providence Public School District and who are coming in from other districts or

perhaps charters and that is the reason why we kept it.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana –** Personally, I think it would be a nightmare for us to

figure that out.

**Travis Escobar** – Are there non-providence students who partake in our summer

program for credit recovery?

**Andrea Gustafson** – Not credit recovery.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana** – Usually they are subsidized by the city.

**Travis Escobar** – Just to be clear, I think for credit recovery purposes there should be no fee associated with that.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana** – I got what you are saying and you are saying it should be clear if it’s for enrichment versus credit recovery. Guys remember this is policy and we have regulations hopefully following that afterwards and maybe made clearer. Alright, so we do have some changes and if you could send those to the full board meeting, it would be appreciated.

Do we have a Motion regarding this policy?

**A Motion was made to pass this policy to Full Board for 1st Read**

**MSV – Escobar, Akin (3-0) MOTION APPROVED**

* 1. **Parent Involvement Policy**

**Janet Pichardo** – Hello and thank you for giving me the opportunity to review this policy which is 9 years old. I wanted to start off by saying that I am Janet Pichardo and I am the Executive Director of Family Engagement and I was actually part of what we initialed the drafting of this policy way back in 2004 and as you can see we have only reviewed this policy 3 or 4 times. There have not been a lot of changes but what we did was, just so you know, we did request feedback from stakeholders and from the student support office within the district and also Andrea helped us look at the policy and also PAC Members that were also involved in the process of getting us here today and also a representative from the Equity and Belonging Office. We also wanted to make sure that the policy was updated based on current policies and equitable in such a way that it would be equitable for all families. We also added some definitions of Title I and we also had updated some language including on page 2 where we talk about the PAC (Parent Advisory Council) just adding the accommodation for the language and our services. We also had someone from the social emotional learning team who also added some information with regard to the District’s responsibility. We also have new language here with regards to the families so that they could also be partners. On page 5 we expanded a little more on the Parent Involvement Policy and also the School Compact which also requires documents like Title I that all schools should review and advise if necessary and that is a process that schools are going through right now. Then finally on page 6, some of the legal references were updated. We felt it was time, 9 years later, and as you mentioned earlier there is no stipulation or indication as to when it will be reviewed again, at least by the School Board. It does say that it has to be reviewed by parents and other stakeholders so we were using different tools to be able to gather feedback. Do you have any questions for me?

**Carolina Roberts-Santana** – Yes. Is there a reason why it’s not in the format from the school department? As we involve the community and have people be more aware of our policies, I think the presentation would be all the same. I think this is great but I just want to make sure that it is in the draft format of all school policies. It looks great but I would still like that language, even if it says, it’s going to be reviewed. Does it say it anywhere that it will be reviewed? I think clarity on when it will be reviewed by the Board and by your office is important because one of the things that I have found is we are operating on a lot of things that are very old and things are not happening and we are asking why they are not happening and it’s because no one had looked at this in 10 years. Now 10 years have passed and family structure is different and this is how we refer to them now. I think it is important to outline somewhere as the same process as the other ones when it will be reviewed.

**Travis Escobar** – May I suggest this? We are going to be doing the By Laws changes and I think it is important the Policy Committee should review policies every 3 years for every policy and we should also be including them in the By Laws because I think then it will cover every single policy. Things could change and things could happen even if it’s the Policy Committee saying that it’s still applicable and we don’t have to do anything with it.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana** – I would honestly still do it on both documents because we do have a policy procedure document that stipulates that every policy needs to be reviewed every 3 or 5 years and we were not doing that.

**Travis Escobar** – It could be both because on the format we have history so there could be a section that says must be reviewed.

**Toni Akin** – I like the format as well but I love the shared responsibility on high student achievement and on page 5 particularly the 3rd bullet down which refers to social media. Does this pertain to monitoring or restricting the students access to social media or actually watching along with the student’s social media?

**Janet Pichardo** – I would say it’s more monitoring especially right now where it’s being talked about so much but more on how to educate parents on how to approach the crisis we are dealing with right now when it comes to social media. But more how do we support parents to be educated and how to approach the crisis is what they are calling it right now in terms of things on social media. Are you asking me to make social media more clear?

**Toni Akin** – Correct. If that would be the case, I would want some verbiage that would include monitoring and restricting or watching the students to make sure it’s applicable to their age group or their interest of study or what have you. Just some clarification or expansion on that bullet item, I think it would be a good idea.

**Aubrey Johnson –** Can I add to that? So I think if we are going to talk about that maybe put in there adding that schools provide an informational session. I know when I was involved we would have an online informational for parents. A lot of parents don’t know what is going on, they don’t know how kids access things. I know this is Parent Involvement so if we put a stipulation in there that schools are required or recommended to have a night when parents could come in, ask questions and get information they would have better awareness. There’s a lot of programs online too that will provide schools with that information.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana –** That’s what we talked about months ago about the

difference between policies and the regulations where regulations are very

precise and the policy is more like overarching. Do you guys envision having regulations come before the policy to be more specific?

**Janet Pichardo –** So this one does and it does have regulations so we now have to go in and now update it.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana –** I think those suggestions would say recommend schools to engage parents in a social media training. I think that something like that could be very clearly outlined in the regulation.

**Janet Pichardo –** So if you look at page 4 it says what the school staff responsibility is and what the district’s responsibility is as well so on page 4 number 4 by the 6. So 5 actually mentions afford parent opportunities for regular meetings or events in which parents can formulate suggestions and participate as appropriate but provide also number and 6 provide the parents multiple opportunities to meet with administrators and teachers to provide information and some feedback. Then it says other topics at the very bottom so that one is more school responsibilities but when you go to the district which is page number 3. If you look at page 4 and 5, this is probably where it answers some of that so number 5, building the capacity of parents, skills of knowledge to assist parents to working with their children to reinforce learning at home through sessions and workshops on topics such as academic content. As you see, we list a few things here but we don’t list this of social media.

**Toni Akin –** Yes, because of the critical nature of it I would agree with that so to expand on that as well.

**James Scott –** Can I jump in on that? We do have a separate social media policy as well.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana –** It’s for staff and teachers not for students. I would look at the regulations because they are old, we might have opportunities to be more specific there. Again, policies are like our dream of how we want the district to operate and then the regulations tell us how to do that and we definitely want to make sure, we follow those regulations.

**Aubrey Johnson –** I think wherever possible it should be as specific as possible because a lot of times the administration will bypass things. A lot of times the bare minimum is getting done and the bare minimum is very vague and that is what you are going to get. I also have a question. When it comes to policy, all policy, how are you ensuring that all schools are reading and admins aware of the changes? How does that get to schools?

**James Scott –** They generally go through the bulletins and we have Transformation Officers that communicate things out to the schools and there’s a nuts and bolts packet which is given to them every August and it goes over procedures and protocols so there is plenty communication going on.

**Janet Pichardo –** Specifically under this policy we are required through Title I to make sure that once it is modified and even if it’s not modified we are supposed to make sure that there is easy access for them to review policy but that is a good question.

**Travis Escobar –** That is a good question and I always imagine that this was implemented through the district. Policies are passed, the Superintendent team recognizes that and there is implementation that goes on that follows them to the schools.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana –** The is the reason why regulations are important because those are the ones that we could hold people accountable to, right? So regulations are supposed to stipulate that these policies are going to be shared orderly or announced that it has a process on how it’s going to be monitored, implemented and so all those steps are supposed to be in regulations. So right now we have a lot of policies with very few regulations. The past 4 months we worked on a lot of policies like the grading policy and other things to move things from policy to making sure that people have those steps to follow. I agree with you that just having this is not enough and now tell me how do I take this and make it operationalize it and that is what the regulation is supposed help with. It should be a step by step document that should include who am I, what do I do and when do I do it and why do I do it type of document.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana – Do we have a motion to move this policy to full board?**

**A Motion was made to pass this policy to Full Board for 1st Read**

**MSV – Escobar, Akin (3-0) MOTION APPROVED**

* 1. **ECAC Bids/Grounds & Property Management**

**Andrea Gustafson –** So the next two (2) policies we are kind of starting that process that was discussed earlier to review the old ones and nothing has really changed and this is what we are doing right now and we are just looking for your approval to put that 2024 on it and I would put it in the new format when it comes to you again.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana –** Do we have other building, grounds and property management policy? Can this be combined with something else?

**Andrea Gustafson –** Yes, there is actually one (1).

**James Scott –** Andrea, is this one of the ones we were moving to eliminate because it’s redundant?

**Andrea Gustafson –** We were going to eliminate it and there is also a building, grounds and maintenance that is literally one (1) sentence and it discusses an extensive maintenance program to fully maintain the students premise physical plant.

**Toni Akin –** How is the loss quantified in case there is vandalism, accidental

damage to property? Does the district go out to get quote from vendors or

estimates? How is that developed for reimbursement?

**James Scott –** Generally that depends on the size of what you are talking about.

Most things will be fixed by ABM.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana –** So for this one? Did we look at what other district’s

have? This is one of those again, look at that last sentence. It says appropriate

regulation shall be established because this says nothing. The regulation should

kind of define what is vandalism? This doesn’t define that. I presently don’t feel

comfortable just slapping a 2024 on it because it really doesn’t function for

anything.

**James Scott –** I think we should hold it and ask these questions to our Head Chief

Operations Officer.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana –** I agree with that, so do we have a motion to table?

**A Motion was made to Table this item for next meeting**

**MSV – Escobar, Akin (3-0) MOTION APPROVED**

* 1. **EF Food Service**

**Carolina Roberts-Santana-** The next item is Food Services

**Travis Escobar –** So the same situation this is the same policy with changes. Is there any other policy that covers nutrition? The Health & Wellness, right? So is there anything that could be combined or is this a redundant policy?

**Andrea Gustafson –** We could just eliminate it but the district is in the position to say let’s eliminate but you guys didn’t want to eliminate it.

**Travis Escobar –** Maybe we should pull up what we have for nutrition.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana –** For this one I would just reference the Health & Wellness. I would probably keep it for now because I don’t know that the Health & Wellness talks about free or reduced lunch prices. I think that Health & Wellness focuses specifically on making sure we feed our kids and this is more like a regulation for that policy. So you said Charlie said not to eliminate it.

**Toni Akin –** I totally agree with that and that should be expanded upon in terms of such a school lunch program and there also breakfast in classroom programs and it’s more expansive than just lunch. Free or reduced price meals should be made available to pupils within the available funding formula but I think we need to look closer to that and talk about hopefully having free meals for all students in Rhode Island. I think we need to table this to get some more findings on that as well.

**Carolina Roberts-Santana –** I would say let’s try to see how we can reference Health & Wellness or vice versa and I also think we should table this one.

**Travis Escobar –** Yes. We should look into the Wellness Policy and there is plenty there, so motion to table.

**A Motion was made to Table this item for next meeting**

**MSV – Escobar, Akin (3-0) MOTION APPROVED**

1. **Adjourn**
   1. Adjourn Meeting – 6:13 PM

**A Motion was made at this time to adjourn the meeting**

**MSV – Escobar, Akin (3-0) MOTION APPROVED**