

## **Policy Committee Meeting**

**May 8, 2024**

**Meeting was held via Google Meet**

Attending: Charles Britton, Dawn Davis, Laurel Steinhauser, Tim Lavoy, Meg Scata

Meeting called to order at 1:01 pm

Agenda Approved- no changes

### **ELL Bill of Rights**

The policy Committee reviewed the “English Learners in Connecticut Public Schools published by the CT State Dept. of Education and the RESC Alliance.

Dawn Davis informed the committee about present practices and discussion followed. Due to the new guidelines Portland Schools is considering changes to personnel. Policy Committee will invite personnel to meet and to discuss the policy implications and the future of our ELL program.

### **School Climate Policy**

The policy is under review by Dr. Britton and administrators. It was noted that CABA has numbered the policy 5131.911 Portland policies are numbered as follows; Bullying [5131.911](#), P/R/F School Climate [5131.914](#). Meg will look into the differences and clarify before the next meeting.

The review will continue over the summer and will be brought back at a future board meeting.

**CABA Policy Updates** We reviewed policies provided by CABA.

### **Suicide Prevention P 5141.5 and Regulation**

We will adopt the CABA policy and have a 1<sup>st</sup> read in September. The policy will cover k – 12 grades and school personnel will be given professional development for use of a CSDE approved Risk Assessment tool. Dawn Davis will work out the details of deadline for implementation, the approved assessment tool, and the professional development training for designated personnel. We noted that the new 988 suicide prevention number will be included.

### **Play based Learning Policy**

We discussed the legislation language and required changes. There are on-going trainings for play based learning. It was noted that this is free play time in addition to recess and physical education. There is more information needed before we create or adopt a policy.

### **Inclusion and Diversity of Educators Policy**

Policy is not required. Portland Schools has submitted our Educator Diversity Plan to the state as required and have no need of a policy at this time.

### **Code of Ethic Policy**

Discussion took place as to what this is and if we require this. This code is the *Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies Section 10145d400*. All certified teachers adhere to the code. The policy committee decided to add this to our policies to strengthen the district response to inappropriate behavior, commentary, or social media postings

### **Public Complaints P 1312**

We will do a cross walk to the CABA suggested policy and the present district policy. We will add this to the agenda for the June 12, 2024, meeting. We will also look at the **P6163.1 Selection of School Library Material** to ensure consistency when there are public complaints.

## **Community Relations**

### **Public Complaints**

The Board of Education welcomes comments and suggestions for improvement from the citizens whom it serves. Constructive criticism of the schools is welcome whenever it is motivated by a sincere desire to improve the quality of the educational program or to allow the schools to do their tasks more effectively. However, the Board has confidence in its professional staff and desires to support their actions in order that they be free from unnecessary, spiteful or negative criticism and complaint. Therefore, whenever a complaint is made directly to the Board as a whole or to a Board member as an individual, it will promptly be referred to the school administration for study and possible solution.

Since individual Board members have no authority to resolve complaints, other than by formal Board action, Board members shall refer persons making complaints about the schools to the most immediate level at which the problems can be resolved and, as may be necessary, through lines of organization to the Superintendent of Schools. The Board expects that the administration will develop a procedure for receiving complaints courteously and that it will take steps to make a proper reply to the complainant. Follow-up shall be in the form of a written memorandum to the Board members.

Anonymous complaints provide no avenue for response or redress of the complaint. Therefore, it is the policy of the Board that such complaints will not be pursued. An unsigned complaint will not be read or acted upon at any meeting of the Board and anonymous telephone complaints will not be brought to the Board by any individual Board member, administrator or other District employee. The administration will not act on any anonymous complaint.

Parents should be made aware of the proper channels of communication and appeal. Complaints for which specific resolution procedures are provided shall be directed through those channels. The decision of the Principal regarding a student must include notice to the parents of the next step of appeal. Any appeal from the decision of the Superintendent to the Board shall be in writing and signed.

Complaints should be resolved at the lowest possible level of authority. If the complaint cannot be resolved at the building level, either party is encouraged to bring the matter to the attention of the Superintendent of Schools.

If all other remedies have been exhausted and a complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved, the complaint may be appealed to the Board of Education. No appeal will be heard by the Board and no charges or accusations against an employee will be investigated unless the accusations are reduced to writing, signed by the party making the complaint, and presented to the Board through the Superintendent.

The Board will not consider or act upon complaints that have not been explored at the appropriate level or complaints for which specific resolution procedures have been established that do not include Board review. If the Board decides to hear the complaint, the Board shall make a decision which shall be sent to all interested parties. The Board's decision is final.

Upon receipt of a written petition signed by one percent of the voters or fifty voters, whichever is greater, the Board of Education shall hold a public hearing on any question specified in the petition within three weeks of receipt of the petition.

### **Challenged Material**

A procedure for processing and responding to criticism of approved materials shall be established and followed. This procedure shall include a formal, signed complaint of standard format and an appointed committee to re evaluate the material in question.

In all cases, the decision to retain or reject shall be made on the basis of whether the material represents life in its true proportions, whether circumstances are realistically dealt with, and whether the material has literary or social value. Factual material shall be included in all instructional material collections.

(cf. 1220 - Citizens' Advisory Committees)

(cf. [5145.2](#) Freedom of Speech/Expression)

(cf. [6144](#) Controversial Issues)

(cf. 6161 Equipment, Books, Materials: Provision/Selection)

Legal Reference: Keyishian v. Board of Regents 385 U.S. 589, 603 (1967)

President's Council, District 25 v. Community School Board No. 25 457 F.2d 289 (1972), cert. denied 409 U.S. 998 (1976)

Minarcini v. Strongsville City School District, 541 F. 2d 577 (6th Cir. 1976).

Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District No. 26 v. Pico, 457 U.S. 853 (1982).

Academic Freedom Policy (adopted by Connecticut State Board of Education, 9/9/81).

Connecticut General Statutes

[10](#) 238 Petition for hearing by board of education.

**Policy adopted: April 27, 2004**

**Policy reviewed and approved: January 3, 2017**

PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Portland, Connecticut

**R1312**

### **Community Relations**

#### **Public Complaints**

The Superintendent and all building or unit administrators shall maintain a log of all written and signed public complaints received, the results of any study or investigation undertaken, and the

particular action or disposition rendered. These records shall be deemed personal working files and not subject to public disclosure except that the Superintendent may review all such files at any time. The Superintendent's own records shall be reviewable by the Board chair. Heresay and rumor shall not be considered a complaint unless directed by an identifiable complainant.

Administrators shall use understanding in dealing with the public, but nothing contained herein shall imply that any staff member is compelled to subject him/herself to inappropriate or unrestrained forms of insult, upbraiding, or other like abuse. Complainants are to be advised of their right to appeal decisions and actions to the Superintendent whose determinations may in turn be reviewed by the Board.

The Board may request a disinterested third party to act as a moderator to help it reach a mutually satisfactory solution. After the Board's decision, the usual appeal route pertains.

Any parent, guardian, or other person who insults or abuses any teacher or other employee on school property or in the presence of students may be prosecuted by the district under the provisions of law.

### **Request for Re-Evaluation of Instructional Materials**

The following procedure shall be followed whenever there is a request for the evaluation of instructional material other than textbooks:

1. The Superintendent shall establish an ad hoc review committee broadly representative of:
  - A. Teachers competent in the area of the content covered by the material.
  - B. Administrators, directors, and supervisors appropriate to the level and/or subject for which material is used.
  - C. A media specialist who shall serve on the review committee.
  - D. Parents when appropriate, as determined by the Superintendent.
2. Objections to materials and requests for re-evaluation must be presented in writing on the proper form. Request for Re-Evaluation of Materials forms are available in the office of the Superintendent.
3. Initial action on a written request on the proper form shall be taken no later than fifteen school days after receipt of the request.
4. A written report from the review committee shall be submitted to the Superintendent. The Superintendent shall then communicate his or her decision to the person requesting the re-evaluation.
5. Should the decision of the Superintendent not satisfy the person requesting the re-evaluation, the Board of Education may hold a special hearing to review the Superintendent's decision.
6. Once instructional material has been re-evaluated the material cannot be subject to further review without special approval by the Board of Education. Challenged instructional materials shall remain in use in the schools pending a final decision by the Board of Education.

(cf. 1220 Citizens, Advisory Committees)

(cf. [5145.2](#) Freedom of Speech/Expression)

(cf. [6144](#) Controversial Issues)

(cf. 6161 Equipment, Books, Materials: Provision/Selection)

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*Minarcini v. Strongsville City School District*, 541 F. 2d 577 (6th Cir. 1976).

*Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853 (1982).

Academic Freedom Policy (adopted by Connecticut State Board of Education, 9/9/81).

Connecticut General Statutes

[10-238](#) Petition for hearing by board of education

**Regulation approved: September 16, 1997**

**Regulation reviewed and approved: January 3, 2017**

PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Portland, Connecticut

## **Instruction**

### **Selection of School Library Material**

#### **Definition**

The Portland Board of Education supports the essential role school libraries provide in the district's schools ensuring access to a wide range of print and/or non-print materials for all students. In addition, the Board values the role of the school library media specialist professionals in supporting reading engagement and skills development and the overall enhancement of the learning process. School libraries exist to support teaching and learning in all grades, to encourage the development of critical thinking skills, to help foster a love of reading and learning and to provide access to informational and recreational materials for their school communities.

The Portland Board of Education embraces the Library Bill of Rights, as adopted by the American Library Association, which specifies the responsibility of the school library is to:

1. Provide materials that will enrich and support the curriculum, taking into consideration the varied interests, abilities, and maturity levels of the students served.
2. Provide materials that will stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and ethical standards.
3. Provide background information that will enable students to make intelligent judgments in their daily lives.
4. Provide materials on opposing sides of controversial issues to enable young citizens to develop critical reading and thinking skills.
5. Provide materials representative of the many religious, ethnic, and cultural groups and their contributions to our American heritage.
6. Place principle above personal opinion and reason above prejudice in the selection of materials in order to assure a comprehensive collection appropriate for the users of the library.

For the purpose of this policy, school library materials will be defined as educational and recreational print, non-print, audio-visual, and other resources accessible in school libraries.

Within the framework of constitutional protection, it is the responsibility of the professional staff to select and use materials to support the educational program. The Board acknowledges the role of the district's professional staff to consider and evaluate library materials on the basis of their utility in meeting instructional, informational, and other user needs in the diverse school community.

#### **Criteria for Selection of Materials**

1. Needs of the individual student, based on knowledge of students and requests of professional staff, parents and students;
2. Needs of the individual school, based on knowledge of the curriculum and requests from professional staff;
3. Provision of a wide range of materials with various levels of difficulty and a diversity of appeal through the presentation of different points of view;
4. Consistency with the Vision of the Graduate, Portland Equity Statement, philosophy and goals of the school and its programs;
5. Representation of diverse points of view, backgrounds and experiences;
6. Consideration of age, interests, abilities, social development, and maturity levels.

Recommendations for purchase may be made to the school library media specialist by administrators, teachers, students, district personnel, and community members. The purchase of materials is subject to the approval of the appropriate administrator.

Donated resources shall meet the criteria outlined above and may be accepted at the discretion of the library media specialist and district administrators.

For any concerns or complaints related to selected library/media materials, please refer to Policy [1312](#).

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

[10-18a](#) Contents of textbooks and other general instructional materials.

[10-229](#) Change of textbooks

Connecticut State Board of Education: Free to Learn a Policy on Academic Freedom Public Education

American Library Association: Library Bill of Rights Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019. Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996

**Policy adopted: September 19, 2023**

PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Portland, CT