

**Oak Park and River Forest High School
201 North Scoville Avenue
Oak Park, IL 60302**

**POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
May 8, 2007**

A Policy Committee meeting was held on Tuesday, May 8, 2007, in the Board Room of the Oak Park and River Forest High School. Dr. Millard called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. Committee members present were Jacques A. Conway, Valerie J. Fisher, Dr. Barry S. Greenwald, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Yasmin A. Ranney, and John P. Rigas. Also present were Susan J. Bridge, Superintendent/Principal; Jason Edgecombe, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Cheryl L. Witham, Chief Financial Officer; Jack Lanenga, Assistant Superintendent for Operations; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors included James Zuehl, Franczek & Sullivan; Kay Foran, Director of Community Relations and Communications; James Paul Hunter, F.S.E.C. Chair; Paul Noble, faculty member; Dr. Ralph H. Lee, John C. Allen, IV, and Sharon Patchak-Layman, Board of Education members-elect; Terry Burke, Pat Nassano, Meg Reynolds, Carole Morey, Wyanetta Johnson, and Burcy Hines, community members; and Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal*.

Acceptance of April 19, 2007 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

Mr. Edgecombe made an apology to the Policy Committee members for an administrative error. In November, the Policy Committee recommended that the Board of Education approve Policy 20, Board of Education, for first reading at its regular November meeting. Proposed changes to the policy reflected new legislation concerning the seating of Board of Education officers, the election, the oath of office, etc. After it was approved for first reading, it was appropriately distributed to the various parent and school groups for their review and input. In December, the Policy Committee recommended that the Board of Education approve the policy for second reading and action at its regular December meeting with noted changes. The Board of Education did amend Policy 20 at its December meeting. The amended policy was sent to appropriate individuals. It was not, however, updated on the website. The version of Policy 20 still on the website was dated April 2006, not December 2006. At that same November Board of Education meeting, the meeting dates for the 2007 calendar year were approved, including the regular May Board of Education meeting to be May 15, 2007.

In April of 2007, Policy 20 was again presented for first reading relative to the Board of Education's procedures regarding textbook and curriculum materials. Historically, the Board of Education had reviewed textbooks. Some current Board of Education members wanted to go to a more standard step of only approving the recommendations of the superintendent. That is reason for it being presented for second reading at this meeting.

He wanted to assure everyone that there was nothing underhanded about the changes made to the policy in December. The seating of new Board of Education members cannot take place before the Election Authority of Cook County canvasses the vote, which was scheduled to happen later that day and Board of Education members take the oath. School boards have 28 days after the election to seat the new members. Per the Policy, the Board of Education was scheduled to seat the new Board of Education members at the May 15 organizational meeting. Many boards were following this same practice. The confusion regarding Policy 20 the last several days was due to the Policy Book not being updated on the website.

Consideration of Policies for First Reading

Policy 5127, Alternative Credit.

It was the consensus of the Policy Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve Policy 5127, Alternative Credit, for first reading, at its regular May Board of Education meeting, as presented.

The proposed amendments concern:

- 1) The timing of when seniors must complete correspondence courses—May 1 of the senior year;
- 2) High school approval of correspondence courses for incoming freshmen for graduation credit. A conversation is to be had with parents and students so that they know if the course is viable for graduation purposes. Dr. Millard wanted to parents and students receive written approval of the courses.

Mr. Rigas noted that this brought to mind other areas such as the consumer education issue. He suggested offering that test four times per year because offering the test two times per year was limiting. Often the dates it is offered coincide with other activities with which students are involved. Ms. Hill stated that the State of Illinois is the entity that sets the dates. The computer proficiency test is offered once per semester. Faculty members should be aware of those dates.

Dr. Millard asked when the established deadline is for the blue card. Ms. Hill stated that the Special Education Division announces the date each semester.

Policy 5152, Prohibition of Electronic and Cellular Paging Devices

It was the consensus of the Policy Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education members approve Policy 5152, Electronic Cellular Devices, for first reading at its regular May Board of Education, as presented.

Much discussion ensued regarding the reason for amending this policy. Some Committee members supported amending the policy to make it an enforceable. Mr. Perna noted that the Deans of Discipline and the Joint Committee on Student Behavior had collaborated

on the proposed changes, but B.A.T. had yet to review these changes. A portion of the policy change included the following language: "Students will be expected to turn off all cellular telephones and electronic paging devices while on school property or in attendance at school sponsored events. When brought onto school property they are to be kept in the student's assigned locker for the entirety of the school day and are not to be turned on until the student has exited the building." If students do not conform to this proposed policy, the consequences will be more severe. By making the consequences more severe, the hope is to change the behavior.

Dr. Millard asked that something be added to the policy prohibiting the use of text messaging. She felt that allowing cell phones in school would increase discipline issues. Dr. Bridge concurred. Dr. Bridge believed that if these changes were implemented, it would put an additional burden, an unnecessary burden on the discipline system. Many articles are now being written about how school districts are moving in the opposite direction and banning cell phones. Changing the policy would put a major responsibility on every adult to do something in a climate where there is respect for individualism. Everyone in the building must be consistent. If not, it will be ineffective. Ms. Ranney concurred and was concerned about a backlash. Dr. Bridge stated that there would need to be a campaign to educate parents about the school's need to restrict cell phone use from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Parents should not call, text, or expect a call from their children during those hours. Students can use the telephones in the classroom or the nurses' office, if necessary. Dr. Millard supported Dr. Bridge suggestions about forging a parent campaign so that they understand the concerns are within the school.

Ms. Fernandez stated that at the beginning of every school year, students must sign off on the *Code of Conduct*. She asked how this change would be communicated to the parents and to the students. She was informed that this could be communicated via: 1) providing a contract which the student would take home and returned signed; 2) highlighting the policy changes at class meetings at the beginning of the school year; and 3) presenting this information by the deans of discipline during freshman study halls. Ms. Fernandez did not know of any parent who would object to this policy and she felt it was a good compromise.

Dr. Millard asked if it were legal on the second infraction to hold the cell phone before returning it to parents for a certain amount of days. She was informed that it was legal. It would make the parent upset that the student had abused the rules.

Mr. Hunter added that parents would be surprised at how just how often classes were interrupted because of parents calling their students; it is difficult for the students as well. While it is a profound problem in the school, the community disagrees. The faculty is prepared to enforce any policy the Board of Education approves.

Mr. Rigas pointed out that the last sentence of the second to last paragraph dealt with bullying and intimidating. He questioned its placement because the school already has a policy on that. He felt it was being redundant in some respects and limiting. Mr. Zuehl felt that was a technical issue and it could be handled by referencing the other policy.

While District 97 has a cell phone policy that allows cell phones in school, they cannot be in the “on” position. Ms. Hines stated that cell phones have to be turned “off” in Chicago Public Schools. If they are not, they are confiscated for that day and the parents have to pick them up. They may be worn or seen, but they must be in the “off” position. Ms. Hines said that it was not worth overloading the discipline system. It is a punishment to the parents not the students.

After further discussion, it was the consensus of the majority of the committee members to bring the policy for first reading. Mr. Conway stated that he would prefer not to supervise outside of the building during lunchtime. If the phones were confiscated, he wanted to see 1) what systems were in place for safekeeping, 2) who is responsible for returning the phones to parents, 3) how they are kept logged and kept, and 4) how the right person would get the right phone returned. The Committee also wanted to review the consequences and where the efforts should be pointed. Mr. Edgecombe suggested developing a procedural page later to address some of the above issues. Mr. Rigas stated that the policy itself does not address the consequences. The consequences are a separate discussion because they go to the *Code of Conduct*. Mr. Edgecombe stated that there would be a summary of the policy in the student handbook.

Ms. Fernandez asked if additional man-hours would be required to implement this policy. Mr. Perna stated that security is in the hallways and they are visible; it will take the entire staff to uphold the policy as written. Currently there are staff members who will take phone and then return at the end of the period or tell the student to put it away. If the policy is approved as stated, everyone will have a clear idea as to what is necessary. When asked if this policy would apply to staff as well, Mr. Edgecombe responded that this policy is for student conduct, not adult conduct.

Policy 20, Board of Education

It was the consensus of the Policy Committee members to delay Policy 20, Board of Education, for second reading to allow the new Policy Committee members the opportunity to have input. Mr. Edgecombe noted that he had referenced earlier in the meeting that the presentation of this policy was for minor changes: 1) eliminating the term “superintendent/principal,” and 2) recognizing that the Board of Education would approve textbooks based on the recommendations of the superintendent. Again, some community members had compared the policy posted on the website with the proposed changes and felt that policy change procedures had not been followed. This was not the case.

Several community members then challenged the Board of Education for not following its policy by not installing the new Board of Education members immediately after Cook County canvassed the vote, as they perceived the policy stated. The committee members referenced Item II regarding the election process. The policy reads as follows:

“The term of office for a Board of Education member begins immediately after:

- A. The election authority canvasses the votes and declares the winner(s); this occurs within 21 days after the consolidated election held on the first Tuesday in April in odd-numbered years. If, however, that date conflicts with the celebration of Passover, the consolidated election is postponed to the first Tuesday following the last day of Passover;
- B. The successful candidate takes the oath of office as provided in the next session.”

The Board of Education was following its procedures and installing the new Board of Education members at its organizational meeting on May 15 as previously planned in November 2006 and was consistent with past practice. New Board of Education members are seated after both A and B of the above are satisfied, but both events do not have to happen at the same meeting.

Ms. Burke stated that the people were stunned at the low level of superintendents applying for this job and she wondered if one of the reasons were that the Board of Education had problems. Some people were disappointed with the caliber of superintendent candidates and assumed this was just another incident of why qualified people failed to be interested in the position Ms. Reynolds felt it was a matter of public trust issue.

Policy 3450, Investment of School District Funds

It was the consensus of the Policy Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve Policy 3450, Investment of School District Funds, for second reading and action at its regular May Board of Education meeting, as presented.

Ms. Witham noted that this policy was being amended because of the dissolution of the Township Treasurer's office. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked what types of checks and balances would be put in place? Would there be an independent group to verify or to ensure that there is a complete separation of the checks and balances. Which financial institutions would be used? Which investment vehicles would be available? She was concerned that the money might be put into an institution that did not have sufficient FDIC insurance and additional insurance would have to be purchased. Mr. Rigas responded that the amount of FDIC insurance available is the same at every institution. The school will have to pay for additional insurance or spread its dollars over 40 plus institutions. That would be unacceptable. The banks selected were bid out and approved by the Board. The high school has internal controls and auditors who are better than anyone is at following the procedures of the policy. O.P.R.F.H.S. has also employed the services of PMA, an investment advisory firm to do a good portion of the investments for school districts throughout the State of Illinois. Monthly reports can be given at the Finance Committee. Ms. Witham added that the Township Treasurer's Office never reviewed its investments with its Board.

Ms. Witham was thanked for her due diligence in this matter.

Adjournment

The Policy Committee adjourned at 9:32 a.m.