

DRAFT MINUTES

SAU 39 POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2022

BRICK SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROOM

**PRESENT: SCSD Board Members:** John Glover, Anna Goulet-Zimmerman; **ASD Board Members:** Josh Conklin (Secretary), Victoria Parisi; **MVSD Board Members:** Sarah Lawrence (Chair), Jessica Hinckley; **Assistant Superintendent:** Steve Chamberlin, Christine Landwehrle; **Administrative Assistant:** Abby Wallace; **Public:** Steve Coughlan (Minute-taker).

**Chair Sarah Lawrence – Call to order at 9:03 AM.**

Chair Sarah Lawrence introduced Steve Coughlan as a former member of the policy committee and now member of the public, volunteering to assist the committee. She requested the Steve Coughlan explain how G (Personnel) Policies work at Souhegan versus the other districts. He explained that because the Souhegan District does not have Collective Bargaining Agreements, much of what is covered in ASD and MVSD CBAs instead is contained in SCSD G Policies, so there are many more G Policies at Souhegan than anywhere else. These are sometimes referred to as “PPC Policies”, because Souhegan has a policy that any changes to Personnel Policies must be reviewed by the Personnel Policy Committee (PPC). While there are many PPC Policies, the most notable ones are those that cover compensation and working conditions. These are reviewed frequently, and because the salary schedules are fixed in policy, there are recurring reviews and amendments, which look a lot like negotiations, in PPC. The latest negotiation covered four years of salary schedules, and is due to be renegotiated soon.

PPC has a tradition of reviewing all PPC policies on a regular (every 5-7 years) basis. The last review was around 2019, and at that time the members of PPC read every policy out loud, and Carrie James, former HR Director, brought many updates to policies to reflect current laws and practices, and all the G policies were updated as necessary to comply with law, practice, and commonly agreed concerns revealed by the walk-through.

Because there are so many G policies at Souhegan, and they do not (due to the historic independence from alignment with the NHSBA numbering scheme and the SAU Policy Committee harmonization system) align neatly with the current NHSBA topics, titles, and numbers. Steve Coughlan recommended that the Policy Committee carve out the SCSD G Policies that exist only at Souhegan and allow the traditional PPC processes to maintain them without Policy Committee involvement, and the Policy Committee just focus on the G Policies that are common across all districts and the SAU.

Christine Landwehrle added that when she and Abby created the memo for the SAU Board of what G Policies would be reviewed, they omitted the NHSBA G Policies that only Souhegan had, but didn't exist in Amherst or Mont Vernon.

Sarah Lawrence stated that when she assigned the G policies to committee member, she based the assignments on whether they were Souhegan only or ASD/MVSD policies. She then asked if the committee agreed with Steve Coughlan's recommendation to take the SCSD G policies that are unique to it off the table. She noted that many of the SCSD G Policies only show an adoption date that is quite old. Steve Coughlan stated that the PPC process did not include placing a “Reviewed on date” note on

the policies, and it was not the practice to re-adopt after review if there were no changes. Anna Goulet-Zimmerman inquired how one could know which policies were reviewed, and Steve Coughlan referred her to the book of PPC minutes, maintained by the PPC Secretary, formerly Shirley Markwith, and currently Donna Corcoran.

John Glover asked what amended G policies the NHSBA was recommending as part of the Spring 2022 Update, and Sarah Lawrence stated that they were in the Trello sheet already. Christine Landwehrle noted that when she did her review, there were NHSBA optional G policies that were numbered the same as SCSD G policies but did not match as to subject matter. Abby Wallace said she had put highlights and notations in the spreadsheet they used to denote the status of policies like that, and Sarah Lawrence said she had also reviewed that information, noted the ones that she felt the Policy Committee should take up, and was pretty confident the tagging of common vs. SCSD policies was correct. She will do another review after the meeting and email the assigned committee members to confirm for individual policies.

Sarah Lawrence reminded the Committee that the NHSBA Spring Update is out, and the policies are in the Trello Board. There are nine policies, a couple are G, and there is one withdrawal. She noted that withdrawn policies are placed in the Trello Board so there's a record the Committee has seen and acted on them. She asked the Committee if they wanted to add the Spring Updates to the end of this process, and the committee agreed.

**Policy GCAA, Highly Qualified Teachers:** Josh Conklin noted that it was being withdrawn by the NHSBA. Since it doesn't exist in any district, no action is required.

**Policy GCA, Professional Staff Positions:** Josh Conklin stated that it doesn't exist in any district, and the consensus in the Trello comments from administration and committee members is that it is not necessary. Christine Landwehrle stated that it concerns teacher qualifications.

**Policy GADA, Employment References and Verification:** Josh Conklin reviewed its status. Adopted in all districts in 2021, and the model hasn't changed since then. The only action needed is to add a "Reviewed May, 2022" note at the bottom. No other action required. Consensus noted.

**Policy GBI, Staff Participation in Political Activities:** Josh Conklin stated that this optional and doesn't exist in any district in SAU39. He recommended that it was not needed, and should not be adopted. Trello comments agreed, and the consensus was also in agreement.

**Policy IHCD/LEB, Advanced Coursework:** Josh Conklin noted that Christine Landwehrle had recently commented in the Trello board on this. Christine Landwehrle stated that the first paragraph added a philosophy statement around access to all coursework which seems to conflict with another part which allows for concerns from counselors about appropriate placements for students. She spoke about the SAU practice of have pretty open access, but there are exceptions where students do not meet the prerequisites (usually science/math related concerns) or there are significant concerns about a student's ability to succeed in a course (considering the effect on a student if they should be overwhelmed and fail). This has been read to apply for both high school and middle school students, although the content is mostly targeted at high school AP and Concurrent Enrollment courses. The original version was approved a few years ago only in SCSD. There was some confusion whether it was approved everywhere but there was technical problem so that it looked like it was only in Souhegan. Abby

Wallace stated that was resolved, and Josh Conklin verified it was accessible as an approved policy in all districts. Anna Goulet-Zimmerman noted that the adopted language states it's for high schools in the text. Christine Landwehrle stated that she was concerned about this in ASD because of the advanced math process that doesn't constrain students from entering the advanced course that covers a year and half of material in a year unless they are deemed capable of keeping up (there are alternative pathways for students to enter that program later if they meet certain milestones). Anna Goulet-Zimmerman suggested language to allow for any student on the recommendation of their counselor. Steve Chamberlin stated that in ASD there is a gate for students, but there is an appeal process for those denied access. This policy removes all gates at the HS level. Victoria Parisi feels that MS students should have opportunities to take advanced coursework. Steve Chamberlin stated that students who need a personalized pathway are currently being sent to VLACS. Christine Landwehrle stated that the practice is to customize plans for any student that is interested in alternative coursework, advanced or not.

Committee discussed whether to rescind the existing policy in MVSD and ASD, and then whether a more carefully crafted policy for K-8 needs to be adopted. Sarah Lawrence noted that there is updated IHBB Gifted and Talented Students policy to be considered as part of the Spring Update. Anna Goulet-Zimmerman suggested amending the existing language from "recommended by his/her counselor" to "verified by their counselor", which makes it less a judgmental/permission gate. Christine Landwehrle suggested that we need two different policies, the current one for HS students which is consistent with the College Board's and our philosophy of minimal/no gates for students wishing to pursue advanced coursework, and another one that sets forth our philosophy on K-8 advanced work, that we want to support like the individual academic needs of all students as best we can and that we would come up with alternate programs to support any advanced coursework, and then we can even include language about things like advanced courses and recommendations from counselors. Sarah Lawrence proposed putting an explanation of why the Policy Committee is making recommendations around this policy in the SAU packet so that board members can understand the deeper context of the proposal.

Josh Conklin moved to recommend rescinding IHCD/LEB in ASD and MVSD. Jessica Hinkley seconded. John Glover stated that he didn't think he should participate in the ASD/MVSD discussion. Sarah Lawrence stated that as a committee member, his input was welcome, as committee members have larger contexts and experience in policies, and all members contribute to the consensus discussion. Unanimously approved.

John Glover requested that the Trello cards include all the existing policies as well as the model language, to make comparison easier.

Anna Goulet-Zimmerman suggested amending the language for SCSD from recommended to verified. Some confusion then ensued over the NHSBA revision notes, and whether the current adopted version was indeed up to date. The existing policy was adopted in November 2020. John Glover proposed comparing the current NHSBA template to the 2020 adopted language to be sure they agree. Anna Goulet-Zimmerman and John Glover will review the language for the next meeting to make sure it's correct.

Abby Wallace requested that working drafts be left in Word format, because multiple trips between PDF for reading and Word for editing causes formatting problems.

**Policy IGE, Parental Objections:** Josh Conklin prefers the existing policy to the model. He thinks it better lays out the process for parents. His recommendation is to leave it alone, particularly since there is pending Parental Bill of Rights legislation that might require significant changes in the near future. Christine Landwehrle concurred, and noted that there's helpful guidance for school principals in the existing policy. Josh Conklin moved to recommend not make any changes to existing policies at this time. Jessica Hinkley seconded, approved unanimously. Abby Wallace will mark the existing policies as reviewed. John Glover asked if they were verified as being identical in all districts, and Josh Conklin confirmed he had checked that. John Glover asked if the language conformed to the standards that have been applied recently (gender-neutral language, clear, consistent, and appropriate usage of District/Board/School/Administrators, etc. Josh Conklin stated he had not thought to look for that. Josh Conklin volunteered to do that review.

John Glover proposed that the Committee send a summary of the policies that had been reviewed and recommended by the committee, so that there wasn't a giant batch of all the policies at once to go through at the end of the process. Sarah Lawrence thought that was good idea. He also volunteered to make a language guide "legend" to cover the "normal" language harmonizations that were implemented over the last two years of reviews, for the benefit of new members. The committee agreed that the motion for IGE should stand, and Josh Conklin will make the style edits in the next week.

**Policy EBCF, Pandemic Epidemic Emergencies:** Jessica Hinkley stated that it doesn't exist in any district today. The model hasn't been revised by NHSBA since 2007. Christine Landwehrle noted that it was Optional, and other policies we have seem to cover the subject well. Jessica Hinkley noted that it was a little antiquated. Steve Chamberlin stated that he prefers not to have any Optional policies. Steve Coughlan reviewed the NHSBA Policy "levels" (P/R/O), and concurred with Steve Chamberlin in recommending not to adopt O policies unless there is a compelling reason. Jessica Hinkley moved to recommend not adopting this policy. John Glover seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.

**Policy EBCG, Communicable and Infectious Diseases:** Jessica Hinkley noted that the committee had started this last season, and held off because it was waiting for legal review of referenced policy JLCG, Exclusion of Students from School for Illness, plus comments from the school nurses. Legal recommendations have come in, and the nurses have provided some comments. She recommends adopting using the recommended language from the nurses, and rescinding GBGAA, which is specific to HIV/AIDS (only exists in MVSD and SCSD), and this broader policy covers that. John Glover had also made an earlier recommendation to broaden the list of specific diseases to allow for unknown future diseases.

The school nurses no longer use the required bleach solution for cleanup, but rather another formula approved by the Director of Facilities. Jessica Hinkley did not do a review for language, but is ready to do that.

Decision was deferred until the related JLCG policy is discussed.

**Policy JLCG, Exclusion of Students from School for Illness:** this is the policy that the attorneys have reviewed and recommended some language changes for. The language still needs to be updated for gender. There was confusion about excluding a student who is a hazard to themselves or others, and whether that was applicable just for physical illness or also for mental health concerns. Christine

Landwehrle stated that the current practice is for students who evoke concerns about their mental health and potential to be a threat to themselves and others are evaluated by the in-school mental health experts, and if appropriate, sent to an emergency room for evaluation, thus excluding them until they are cleared to return. Christine Landwehrle stated that the language referring to compliance with IDEA resolves concerns raised by Meg Beauchamp. She also noted that the language about being a hazard to self or others is important to retain. John Glover argued that this policy overlaps others regarding exclusions, and would like to see this policy's concepts integrated into other existing policies, or make a list in this policy that references all the other reasons a student can be excluded from school, with pointers to the relevant policies.

Discussion about whether this policy is needed at all. It's recommended, not required. Steve Chamberlin believes that the administration can as deemed necessary without a policy that can't foresee all circumstances. Christine Landwehrle believes having a board policy backs up the administrators when they need to act. Sarah Lawrence suggested bringing this dilemma to the board for an opinion about whether it's desired or not. Jessica Hinkley noted that there's an RSA that gives explicit permission. Steve Chamberlin noted that the nurses know the laws well. Christine Landwehrle stated that as long as there's an RSA, that's enough. Jessica Hinkley agreed that if there's a law, we don't need a policy. The law only covers exclusion, and has nothing to say about criteria for returning. Adam Steel had made an earlier comment about liking this policy because it adds return criteria. Consensus stated that once a student is no longer a hazard, the RSA doesn't apply, and the student can return. Sarah Lawrence summarized that everything in JLCG is covered in RSA, and it's really more of a procedure than a policy. Consensus to not recommend JLCG.

Discussion returned to **Policy EBCG**, Jessica Hinkley stated that she would update the language for next time and the committee can review it.

**Policy JLCJA, Sports Injuries:** Jessica Hinkley stated that it's required by law, and it does not exist in any district. Christine Landwehrle would like to meet with the nurses and Athletic Director over the summer to review the proposed procedures. It's not clear from the model what parts are required by law, and which parts can be customized to local practices. She noted it should be adopted by the start of the school year. Noted that there is a separate Concussions policy that already exists. Christine Landwehrle will work with the nurses and AD and bring it back to the committee.

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 25, 9AM at the Brick School.**

**Meeting adjourned by Chair Lawrence at 10:30 AM.**