NATICK PUBLIC SCHOOLS
School Committee Meeting
May 19, 2022
1:00 PM
MEETING CANCELLED - Virtual Meeting - Policy Subcommittee Meeting

Posted Date: Tuesday, May 17. 2022 @11:20AM

MEETING CANCELLED - Policy Subcommittee Meeting - 1:00 Open Meeting To Access Virtual Meeting: Join Zoom Meeting https://us06web.zoom.us/j/2038566119?pwd=TmtsdXgxenQ0YXRLN1FIcHVpd3hEZz09 Meeting ID: 203 856 6119 Passcode: 987179 One tap mobile +13126266799,,2038566119# US (Chicago) +16465588656,,2038566119# US (New York) Dial by your location +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago) +1 646 558 8656 US (New York) +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC) +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston) +1 720 707 2699 US (Denver) +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma) Meeting ID: 203 856 6119 Find your local number: https://us06web.zoom.us/u/keAEm9sL If any member of the public, attending the meeting virtually, wishes to take advantage of public speak, they should email the Policy Subcommittee Chair, Donna McKenzie (dmckenzie@natickps.org), one hour prior to the start of the meeting. Your email should include your name, address and your request to be called upon during the public speak portion of the agenda. The Policy Subcommittee Chair will then announce your name and you will be unmuted and prompted to turn on your video for your opportunity to share your remarks. Per our public speak policy, each speaker will have up to 3 minutes.

Posted In Accordance with Provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Sections 18-25

OPEN SESSION

PUBLIC SPEAK
Public Speak is scheduled for a period of fifteen minutes. Each speaker will be permitted a maximum of three minutes during which time they can speak about topics within the scope of responsibility of the School Committee. All remarks will be addressed through the School Committee Chair.

Subcommittee Meeting Item

1. Equity Policy Review
2. Review Harassment and Discrimination Policies Including Title IX
3. Calendar, Religious Holidays and Homework Policy
4. Additional Review and Next Steps on Policies Updated by Superintendent
5. Approval of Minutes

Agenda items will be addressed in an order determined by the chair. Times are approximate.

ITEM TITLE: Equity Policy Review
DATE: 4/28/2022
ITEM TYPE: Discussion
ITEM SUMMARY:
BACKGROUND INFORMATION:
RECOMMENDATION:

ATTACHMENTS:

Description	File Name	Type
Letter from Waugh reviewing policies	Review_of__Policies_4.22.2022_1296014_1.PDF	Cover Memo
equal access and evaluation of bias	equal_access_and_evaluation_of_bias.pdf	Cover Memo

Andrew J. Waugh
awaugh@mhtl.com

April 22, 2022

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Dr. Anna Nolin
Superintendent of Schools
Natick Public Schools
13 East Central Street
Natick, MA 01760

Re: Review of Committee policies and other policy questions

Dear Dr. Nolin:

I am writing in response to your request that I respond to several questions related to our recent review of several draft School Committee policies, based on template policies provided by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees. Please forward this respond to the School Committee members on the policy review committee for their review. On behalf of the policy review committee, you pose the following questions: 1) In our review of the draft policies, why did we combine Policy AC and AC-R instead of maintaining them as separate policies; 2) whether the School Committee should adopt a separate equity policy and, if the equity language is not included as policy, alternative locations where it would be appropriate to include it; 3) whether the School Committee can adopt a racism policy separate and apart from its non-discrimination policy.

1. Combining Policy AC and AC-R instead of maintaining them as separate policies. Multiple attorneys in my office reviewed the policies that were forwarded to me and the consensus was that Policy AC and AC-R (Non-Discrimination Policy) should be combined into one single policy. The reasoning behind this is to avoid having policies that may be similar but with slightly different language, thereby leading the administrator attempting to implement the policies to be unclear on which policy to follow. This would allow whoever is charged with conducting investigations to be able to review one policy and then implement the language in it promptly without any confusion as to procedural or substantive issues created by multiple policies.

2. Should the School Committee adopt a separate equity policy. The district should take care to ensure that any policy it adopts does not conflict with or duplicate existing policies. Having said that, another client of ours adopted a policy titled Equal Access and Evaluation of Bias in advance of a Coordinated Program Review, which addressed reviewing problems to

ensure equity. I've attached a copy of the policy for your review and consideration. The goal of the policy would be to proactively identify potential issues versus a non-discrimination policy that is more about reacting to a complaint once it is filed. Alternatively, if the Committee does not like the attached language but wants to signal its commitment to equity, it could do so in a vision statement that is included prior to the policy book, or in a statement on the School District's website. The Committee should be aware, however, that if they publish a statement of intent in either of the above-referenced locations, if there is a claim of a violation of its anti-discrimination policy, the alleged victim may cite to the statement language if their allegations are not sufficient to show a violation of the anti-discrimination policy.

3. Should the School Committee adopt a racism policy separate and apart from its anti-discrimination policy. In my opinion, the Committee's anti-discrimination policy is sufficient and covers racist behavior, so the addition of a racism policy would be duplicative. For the reasons I have already stated, there is a risk that multiple policies on the same topic may differ slightly, thereby creating different standards and/or expectations and making it more difficult for the administrator implementing the policy to follow it faithfully. The sexual harassment policy is different as it also addresses potential Title IX violations, so its inclusion as a separate policy is necessary.

If you have any questions concerning my responses, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,

Andrew J. Waugh

Enclosure

EQUAL ACCESS AND EVALUATION OF BIAS

Overview

The district evaluates all aspects of its K-12 program annually to ensure that all students, regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, limited English proficiency, sexual orientation, disability, or housing status, have equal access to all programs, including athletics and other extracurricular activities. It makes such changes as are indicated by the evaluation.

Evaluation of programs shall be directed by the Superintendent. Among other things, these evaluations may employ various testing programs, surveys, outside research agencies, teacher and parent information, and information about attendance and dropout rates of the district. It shall be the responsibility of the Superintendent to report periodically to the Natick School Committee on program evaluations and the progress the District is making in the attainment of its educational goals.

Evaluation of Bias

The district ensures that individual teachers in the district review all educational materials for simplistic and demeaning generalizations, lacking intellectual merit, on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin and sexual orientation. Appropriate activities, discussions and/or supplementary materials are used to provide balance and context for any such stereotypes depicted in such materials.

The district is required to ensure that *individual* teachers in the district review *all* educational materials for simplistic and demeaning generalizations, lacking intellectual merit on the basis of race, color, disability, age, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin and sexual orientation. This goes beyond a typical review of standard curriculum materials. Teachers must review all educational materials they bring into the classroom, whether it be a news article, picture book, advertisement, etc. on an ongoing basis. The review shall include consideration of achievement results for all student populations, educational equity, curriculum breadth and depth, and congruence of instructional strategies and assessments with district content standards. If a teacher does discover bias in a certain material he/she must also then develop appropriate activities, lead discussions or provide additional material to provide balance and context.

All staff will receive bias training information in annual Civil Rights training. Materials will include a sample checklist for teachers to use when bringing educational materials into the classroom and for reviewing long-standing curriculum.

In the case that a student or parent/guardian believes that any curricula or supplementary material is inappropriate for a school setting, the district encourages families to share their perspective so that together teachers and parents/guardians can make sense of the situation, look at it from

different lenses, and establish a resolution focusing on providing balance and context for any stereotypes depicted in materials.

Title VI: 42 U.S.C. 2000d; 34 CFR 100.3(b)(2); EEOA: 20 U.S.C. 1703(f); Section 504: 29 U.S.C. 794; 34 CFR 104.4(b)(4); Title II: 42 U.S.C. 12132; 28 CFR 35.130(b)(3); NCLB: Title III, Part A, Sec. 3121(c)(1)(C); Title X, Part C, Sec. 722(g)(1)(J)(i), 722(g)(7); Mass. Const. amend. art. 114; M.G.L. c. 71A, s. 7; c. 76, s. 5; 603 CMR 26.07(1),(4) as amended by Chapter 199 of the Acts of 2011.

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ITEM TITLE:	Review Harassment and Discrimination Policies Including Title IX
DATE:	4/28/2022
ITEM TYPE:	Discussion
ITEM SUMMARY:	
BACKGROUND INFORMATION:	
RECOMMENDATION:	

ITEM TITLE: Calendar, Religious Holidays and Homework Policy
DATE: 4/28/2022
ITEM TYPE: Discussion
ITEM SUMMARY:
BACKGROUND INFORMATION:
RECOMMENDATION:

ATTACHMENTS:

Description	File Name	Type
Proposal Religious Holidays	Proposal_Religious_Holidays_and_Homework.pdf	Cover Memo

DRAFT Proposal

Including a statement about Religious Holidays in the Student Handbook

Rationale:

- Dr. Nolin initiated a desire for our committee to ensure that our school calendar reflects our commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - We have worked hard to research and understand how to address this in Natick.
- We've communicated clearly to students and families that while we are committed to making some kind of change to our calendar, the target date for that decision is the 2023-2024 school year.
- Families indicated that homework and tests continue to be held on major holidays and asked us to consider making a "first step" change to the coming school year.
- Looking at Westborough/Brookline example that we have been using as a template this year and I don't believe that they are official School Committee Policies - I may be wrong but I can't find them in their policy manuals.
- The link shared with our committee at a meeting in December of 2020 shows Westborough's as a calendar decision made by the School Committee.
- As such, this document serves as a way to step back from an official calendar policy, and into the first ask parents of students in especially minority religious communities are asking we consider: finding a way to make a promise to our students and families that that we will honor cultural and religious observances while also supporting our faculty and staff and their desire to grow in awareness and knowledge of the diversity of our students.

Proposal: Add the following item to our Student Handbook page 37 - **under Teacher Responsibility:**

"Refrain from administering a test, project completion or assign homework due on or the day after a significant* Religious Holiday within a student's religious/cultural tradition. If the holiday falls on a Saturday, it is strongly encouraged for work to be due or tests administered on the following Tuesday."

*Significant Religious Holiday identified by the Natick Public School Committee are as follows

January:
Christmas (Orthodox)
Lunar New Year

April:
Good Friday and Easter (Roman)
Good Friday and Easter (Orthodox)
Eid-Al-Fitr

DRAFT/Proposal

Passover (First and Last day) (Wednesday April 5th, Thursday April 13th, 2023)

September:
Rosh Hasanah
Yom Kipur*

November:
Diwali

December:
Christmas
Kwanzaa
*Religious Holidays often vary from year to year because most follow a lunar calendar. The School District will be responsible for providing teachers and staff with a calendar listing the specific dates of the significant religious holidays within that school year in August every year.

Athletics and Fine Arts:
Our athletic and fine arts programs are also sensitive to these issues. Coaches and fine arts instructors are advised of and sensitive to the religious and cultural needs of their students and families. There will be no athletic or fine arts consequence for missing games/performances and/or practices due to religious observances.

Summary:
This proposal is a slight adjustment and perhaps a stronger clarification of what our administration has already asked of our teachers. By placing it in the student handbook, we make it clear to families what the expectations of staff are and the district will support the staff in a growing awareness of these holidays.

This does not suggest that no Homework or tests can be administered on these days - but for students who celebrate the specific holiday - he/she/they would be exempt. This would provide students with potentially 1-4 days of sensitivity around a religious Holiday celebration.

I understand there is some concern that we have not built enough stakeholder buy-in, especially with the teachers, but I argue that the professional development focus on DEI awareness this year and the already stated expectation from principals, this foundation for this kind of adjustment in our homework policy has been laid.

***** IF WE WANT TO TAKE IT FURTHER *****

We have received recommendations by religious leaders and families within the district to include other important Holidays in our sensitivity training and outreach. If we did wanted to add another layer of holidays, these are the ones that have been suggested:

February:
Ash Wednesday (Roman) (Fr. Hines)

March:
Orthodox (Othordox)
Holi* (including this at the Recommendation of Dr. Preeta Banerjee)
Purim (including this at the recommendation of Farrah Rubenstein)

May:
Shavuot (First and Last) (including this at the recommendation of Farrah Rubenstein)

September:
Sukkot

October:
Navratri and Durga Puja* (including this at the Recommendation of Dr. Preeta Banerjee)

****
Student Handbook - Page 37
Homework Policy
The Natick Public School System believes that homework contributes to the understanding of the curriculum and reinforces learning. Homework is a meaningful extension of daily classroom activities. Homework provides for practice of skills and application of principles based upon work begun in the classroom. It enriches school experiences and promotes a permanent interest in learning. It stimulates individual initiative, personal responsibility, and self-direction. Due to the differences in age levels, learning styles, and modes of instruction in the elementary and the secondary schools, homework expectations will necessarily differ.

Teacher Responsibilities:
1. Assign homework that is meaningful and useful;
2. Allow time for students' questions to clarify directions;
3. Respond to each assignment by a grade and/or a comment within a reasonable length of time;
4. Provide opportunities for both short-term and long-term assignments;
5. Monitor long-term assignments in order to avoid last-minute student efforts;
6. Limit assigning homework over school vacations;
7. Inform parents of their role in supervising homework;
8. Communicate with pupil and parent when problems arise.
9. Refrain from administering a test, project completion or assign homework due for a student on or the day after a significant* Religious Holiday within that student's religious/cultural tradition. If the holiday falls on a Saturday, it is encouraged for work to be due on the following Tuesday.

DRAFT/Proposal

Bolded item is the proposal I am suggesting that we add

Respectfully submitted by Catherine Brunell
April 26, 2022

DRAFT/Proposal

ITEM TITLE:	Additional Review and Next Steps on Policies Updated by Superintendent
DATE:	4/28/2022
ITEM TYPE:	Discussion
ITEM SUMMARY:	
BACKGROUND INFORMATION:	
RECOMMENDATION:	

ITEM TITLE:	Approval of Minutes
DATE:	5/19/2022
ITEM TYPE:	Action
ITEM SUMMARY:	
BACKGROUND INFORMATION:	
RECOMMENDATION:	