

**Coventry Board of Education
Coventry, CT
Policy Committee Meeting
Unapproved Minutes of Thursday, October 8, 2009**

Members Present: Kathleen Ryan, Policy Committee Chair
Mary Kortmann, Policy Committee Member

Member Absent: Michael Whitham, Policy Committee Member

Also Present: Dr. Donna Bernard, Superintendent of Schools

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm by Kathleen Ryan.

II. POLICY DISCUSSION/REVIEW

A. Discussion and Recommendation for Revision-Policy Number 5144-Student Discipline

Dr. Bernard said she received many calls regarding the letter sent home to parents explaining the definition of a weapon. She said she will include the definition in her Dispatch, and in handbooks. She said the bus drivers had a meeting, and the topic of children being raised by grandparents and informing the grandparents about the definition of a weapon came up.

Kathleen Ryan said the letter was sent home for information purposes. Dr. Bernard said that the number one reason people are moving to Coventry is because the price is right, they like the woods, and they want to rear kids in a safe place. She said they are moving here from surrounding towns such as Manchester, East Hartford, Vernon and Willimantic.

The committee referred to the Draft Revision (9/18/09) by Shipman and Goodwin of Policy number 5144.

Mary Kortmann asked about starter pistols. She asked about the definition of a “Deadly Weapon” ...”from which a shot may be discharged...” She asked if someone brought in a starter pistol, how clear the policy defines whether it is allowed. There was discussion of broken guns, gun replicas and brass knuckles. The committee decided to add starter pistol to page 4 of 20, #11, after pellet gun.

Mary Kortmann asked about 18-year old students and possession of cigarettes in their cars. She asked why a teacher can have possession of cigarettes in their purse, but an 18-year old student cannot. She said she would like a whole set of clear policies listed for 18-year olds. Dr. Bernard said she would email a list of questions to Kevin regarding clarification of tobacco possession for 18-year olds on campus. Kathleen Ryan said the wording is questioned in #15 on page 4 of 20.

Mary Kortmann also asked about clarification of notification of parents for suspensions, for 18-year olds. She noted on page 8 of 20, V. C. She asked for the change “The parents or guardian of any Coventry student” not “any minor student.” Dr. Bernard said she would have Kimberlee Michaud search the document for “any minor student” and change to “any Coventry student.”

Mary Kortmann questioned the Procedures Governing Suspension. She asked about page 8 of 20, VI. A. 4: when a student’s parents would be notified by telephone. She asked for clarification of rules to follow because of an in-school or school suspension. She asked for clarification of the time in which the parents are notified of the in-school suspension on page 10 of 20, VII. F. M. Kortmann said she has an envelope showing notification over a week after the in-school suspension was served.

Mary Kortmann questioned the reason for suspension involving inappropriate displays of public affection. She said there is no definition in the policy for inappropriate displays of public affection. Dr. Bernard said that high school principals all have the discretion on what inappropriate physical engagement is.

There was a discussion of the Appeals procedure. Dr. Bernard said all students have hearing rights, with the right to explain themselves and to retort. Dr. Bernard said she does not want to put in an Appeals process because it is too unmanageable, and it would not be able to be implemented.

An expulsion case was discussed.

Kathleen Ryan noted page 5 of 20, #23: Throwing snowballs, rocks, sticks and/or similar objects except as specifically authorized by school staff. She questioned the last part of the sentence “as specifically authorized by school staff.” The committee agreed on revising #23 as follows: Throwing unauthorized objects such as snowballs, rocks, sticks and or/similar objects.

Kathleen Ryan also suggested deleting the bold-typed paragraph in the middle of page 6 of 20 saying: “[For boards that...or safety in school.]” The committee agreed on deleting this paragraph.

Kathleen Ryan noted #27 on page 6 of 20: “Possession and/or use of a cellular telephone, radio, walkman, CD player, blackberry, personal data assistant, walkie talkie or similar electronic device on school grounds or at a school-sponsored activity in violation of Board policy and/or administrative regulations regulating the use of such devices.” Mary Kortmann said this part of the policy refers to whatever is in the student’s car. Dr. Bernard said this could only be policed if the administration was quadrupled. Dr. Bernard said the phone-carrying ratio is probably 90%. Dr. Bernard said parents really want their children to carry cell phones. Kathleen Ryan said there is no educational reason why a student should have a cell phone. K. Ryan said if the cell phone is seen, it should be confiscated. She said it is disruptive to the education process. She said they are taking pictures of themselves in inappropriate situations, they are texting each other on test items, taking

pictures of tests and sending it to friends. She said there is no need for cell phones in the schools. There was further discussion of cell phones. Dr. Bernard said if a student is caught twice with a cell phone, the parent is called and the student is picked up by the parent and taken home. M. Kortmann said she cannot believe a student would be expelled for possessing a walkman, cell phone or an iPod.

Dr. Bernard said the policy is not ready to be presented to the Board of Education. She said we need another meeting to work on the policy.

B. Discussion of Policy # 6114- Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness

Mary Kortmann referenced page 2, under Infection Control: “Any student or staff member found to be infected with a communicable disease that bears risk of pandemic/epidemic will not be allowed to attend school until medical clearance is provided by that individual’s primary care physician or other medical personnel indicating that...” She asked if “other medical personnel” would include our school nurse. Dr. Bernard said it would include the school nurse.

III. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle M. Bates, BOE Subcommittee Clerk

Approved