Board of Education Policy Committee Members Present:

Sheila Daniels, Chair

Also Present:

Dr. Patricia Charles, Superintendent
Christopher Sugar, Policy Community Member
Jennifer Cannata, Principal Snow School
James Gaudreau, Principal Lawrence School
Elisha De Jesus, Director of Athletics
Mary Emerling, Nurse Supervisor
Monica Belyea, MPHHRD, Wellness Committee Member
Rob Smeroff, PE & Health Department Chair
Ellie Gagnon, Booster Club member and parent
Janet Calabro, Food Services Manager
Kathleen Bengtson, Administrative Assistant

The following policies were reviewed:

#1325 – Advertising and Promotion – POLICY – Our current policy is dated April 13, 2004. Sheila Daniels requested this policy be addressed because she was contacted regarding a MHS Booster Club outside donation and the desire by the Booster Club to understand the policy and work with the Policy Committee on possible revisions to the policy. CABE had sent Kathy a packet containing numerous versions of this policy. It was noted the CABE policy examples were last updated in 2010.

Ellie Gagnon stated that Starbucks donated coffee and cups for the Booster Club’s concession stand. As an act of appreciation, she wanted to put up an appreciation sign, but was told it was against policy. She informed the committee of her desire to look into fence banners, etc. as a means of fund raising, but also to strengthen the school district, community and business bonds. She would like to work with our community, make connections with local businesses to support athletics. Ellie asked if we could adjust the policy and make it more workable. Chris Sugar stated it must be clear there is no contract (i.e. Starbucks, etc.) and Ellie said there was no contract.

Dr. Charles asked whether we can do this for one sponsor and not all businesses. Chris Sugar said we are allowed to promote one business. It is not illegal, as long as all businesses have the same opportunity to advertise. Pat questions whether we should only allow nonfood companies.
Monica Belyea stated we want to be sure we do not conflict with the Wellness policy and that we do not advertise against the policy. Maybe, if we had a policy which is more flexible, similar to public radio, where it is not allowed to advertise, but the schools can thank donors at events.

Ellie noted other businesses support the MPS indirectly, noting four businesses that always help: Mondo's, Illiano's, Tractor Supply, and Ace through discounts from their menu on specified evenings and offering of space outside their places of business for bake sales and car washes. She asked what was the means of thanking them?

Athletic Director, Elisha De Jesus, voiced her reservation around banners on field fences. She stated a possible issue around maintenance of the banners, and who put them up and down as both would need to be done by our custodial or 466 staff due to union issues (if the jobs were taken on by the Booster Club, a grievance situation could arise).

In regard to concerns raised around advertising influencing students, Rob Smernoff stated we have two or three lessons in our health classes concerning signs and how to view them. If we allow signage at the discretion of the building principal or superintendent, he did urge us to only allow signs up during events. If signs were up there for a longer period of time, too many students would see the vendors' signs -- three of four weeks, which is not good for them. Sheila reminded the group that the Wellness Policy states signs cannot be up during any given school day.

Ellie sees this initiative as an opportunity to help the budget challenges, noting if people come to offer financial support, why not allow it. Ultimately, she would like to see the District support a banner program. Ellie said the Booster Club is looking to generate money and increase funds without being dependent upon selling food, that it desires continual income instead of just from concession sales at games.

Dr. Charles would not want to see signs that are in conflict with our wellness policy. Maybe within the booster group, might be acceptable, but we do not want to advertise foods and beverages.

Monica said the food companies must sell their products so kids will make the unhealthy choice. They have billions of dollars for marketing. We need to protect our youth.

Chris feels a banner program opens the door to having “Nascar like” uniforms. As an alternative, he suggested a Booster Wall sign or even two, which could be brought to each event and acknowledge sponsors and donors. At the event, an announcement could be made to look at the Booster Wall and also state the name of the donors. He voiced concern around the interpretation of any donations, noting it needs to be made public those donations were made to the Booster Club and not the Board of Education. Any means of garnering funds should be distinguished that the proceeds go to the Booster Club. The sign should be approved by an administrator.

James Gaudreau stated the PTA will have a banner “sponsored by” during the event and then take it down after the event. This is an example of what the Booster Club could do as noted above.
Minor revisions were made to the current policy:

"Advertising and Promotion"

The Board of Education recognizes that public schools should maintain careful controls on the way in which students are exposed to materials and announcements. *other than those directly related to school-sponsored programs and activities.* Since school districts are public institutions, fully supported by public taxes, the Board has a clear responsibility to protect students and their families from exploitation by private interests including, but not limited to, commercial, cultural, economic, environmental, organizational and political exploitation.

There are situations, however, when it is educationally sound to make students more aware of the social environment and their roles as members of society. In such situations, judicious dissemination of information to students about community activities is warranted. Each situation requires individual consideration and the judgment of responsible school officials must the decisive factor. Caution is to be exercised to prevent exploitation of the system and its students, who represent a large and captive audience.

It is the policy of this Board that the students, the staff, or the facilities of the Middletown Public School District shall not be used to advertise or promote commercial, organizational, cultural, or other non-school interests except that the district may:

1. Use instructional aids furnished by private sources when the advertising content is reasonable in the judgment of the Superintendent.

2. Cooperate, through announcements and distribution of program material, with a town agency or non-profit community organizations that benefit students and their families, when such cooperation will not interfere with the school program.

3. Accept limited advertising on extracurricular activity schedules, and/or programs, and/or via event announcements at the discretion of the principal of the school involved.

4. Permit other exceptions if recommended by the Superintendent and approved by the Board of Education.

5. Allow temporary displays of advertising by community organizations utilizing school district facilities for community benefit outside the official school day, calendar year. All such displays shall be limited to the area being utilized and only for the duration of the activity. All such displays shall be removed prior to the start of school in Fall.

6. Allow advertising for the purchase of photographic services in connection with the class pictures and the services and goods deemed necessary by the principal for the normal student activities of a high school.

It is the responsibility of the Superintendent to evaluate an act on all requests for the acceptance and use of material contributions involving advertising. He/she will have the final say on whether or not to permit the advertisement or promotion. The Superintendent is also authorized
The Policy #1325 was reviewed and revised and the Committee recommended it be brought forward to the next BOE meeting for its first reading.

#5111 – Admission – POLICY – Our current policy is dated November 19, 2013. Kathy checked with CABE and it had not had any updates on this policy. Dr. Charles had questioned whether our district is still correct in requiring a birth certificate for registration of a student. Kathy checked with CABE and that it is correct, the only exception is homeless students.

The Policy #5111 was reviewed and since no changes were required recommended no action be taken.

#5118.1 – Homeless Students POLICY – Dr. Charles spoke to this policy. There have been many legislative changes both in federal and state law. Dr. Charles had met with Ann Perzan who researched this policy and reviewed the information from both CABE and Shipman & Goodwin. She had told Dr. Charles that Berlin School District had just changed its policy and regulation. Ann preferred the policy that referred to implementing the requirements of law with respect to homeless children and youth the federal and/or state law. The wording is as follows:

"In accordance with federal law, it is the policy of the Middletown Board of Education to prohibit discrimination against, segregation of, or stigmatization of, homeless children and youth. The Board authorizes the Administration to establish regulations setting forth procedures necessary to implement the requirements of law with respect to homeless children and youth. In the event of conflict between federal and/or state law and these administrative regulations, the provisions of law shall control." 

The regulations will follow the law and be similar to the Berlin Public School regulations.

The proposed REPLACEMENT Policy #5118.1 was reviewed and the Committee recommended it be brought forward to the next BOE meeting for its first reading.

#6142.101 – Student Nutrition and Physical Activity (School Wellness) - POLICY –

Sheila Daniels asked for this policy to be revisited as a Wellness Committee member, Policy Committee member, feeling this policy required another look, as many questions have come up since the last BOE meeting. She spoke of the efforts of the Wellness Committee, the Policy Committee, numerous meeting discussions of both committees in addition to a meeting of the
Administrators. Also, that 23 people attended a policy committee meeting (largest ever) to discuss the policy. There was consensus of all those people, and then the BOE rejected the policy. The District already has 3 elementary schools not allowing food for birthday celebrations. The Board's decision to allow fruits and vegetables for birthday celebrations, goes against what those schools were already acting on with success and what all other district schools had agreed to embrace. Sheila thanked Monica Belyea for speaking to the issue at the October BOE meeting and noted Monica's request for reconsideration was part of this policy being addressed again.

Monica raised the issue that there are a number of students with fruit and vegetables allergies. She also mentioned a second concern around the issue of cleanliness in preparing and cutting fruits and vegetables, stating that if fruits and vegetables are not washed properly, contamination can occur. This raises the question of who is supervising this preparation. It also brings the initial concern of health issues to the table. Monica noted the following five points to consider:

- Allergies
- Food safety
- Obesity
- Equity
- Healthy

Dr. Charles asked James Gaudreau about the principals’ views - will they be fine with no food for birthdays. He thought 7 out of 8 of the elementary principals will be fine with it.

*The following revisions are proposed to the current policy:*

**“Non-sold Foods and Beverages**

Use of food as a reward or for discipline can convey unintended messages about dietary behaviors and may be associated with the development of inappropriate food choices and patterns. Furthermore, use of food as a reward does not model healthful eating behaviors. Establishing an emotional connection between food and accomplishment encourages poor eating habits. Therefore, food should be discouraged as a reward and should never be used in a punitive manner.

All celebrations, including birthday, will allow fruits and vegetables to be brought in. Non-food recommendations can be found in the Appendix. Fruits and vegetables are allowed to be brought in for other celebrations.

Foods and beverages should not be brought to school by students or other persons for sharing among the class for birthdays, celebrations or other class events. Non-food recommendations can be found in Appendix.
Additionally, food should never be used to reward children for behavior, even fruits and vegetables. It leads to unhealthy food habits. Food should also not be denied to children as a form of punishment.

Food brought in to support curriculum and instruction and special events (example: field day, 5th grade promotions, DARE, etc.) will be under the direction of both the teacher and principal, and nurse consultation if necessary. These events will be limited in number and monitored by the Administration."

The Policy Committee requests the BOE take another look at this policy and reverse the change to the original recommended policy which was prepared with much consideration.

The Policy #6142.101 was reviewed and the Committee recommended it be brought forward to the next BOE meeting as a Revised Policy for its first and final reading.

The next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for November 21, 2017.

/kfb