Board of Education Policy Committee Member Present:

Cheryl A. P. McClellan, Chair
Edward Ford

Also Present:

Marco Gaylord, Chief of Operations and Communication
Kathleen Bengtson, Administrative Assistant
Kim Gauthier, Resident/MPA Student
Colleen Weiner, MHS Principal
Mike Skott, Director of Technology
Denise Beaudry, Keigwin Nurse
Nancy Kowalski, WWMS Nurse
Rosa Vargas, MHS Nurse

Meeting was called to order at 8:30 A.M.

The following policies and bylaws were reviewed:

#5114 – Suspension & Expulsion – Kathy brought this policy forward as it had a mandated legislative change. Our current policy is based on the Shipman Goodwin law firm’s model, and is a little different than CABE’s policy. A discussion was held and it was suggested that since we use that law firm with our expulsions, it would be more consistent to use their version of the policy. Cheryl McClellan will make an appointment to discuss it with Dr. Conner and see what he prefers. It should be determined what the cost would be in this scenario.

The Policy Committee requested this Policy #5114 be brought back to the Policy Committee at its next meeting for further discussion.

#5131.82 – Use of Private Technology Devices by Students – The Policy Committee had a long discussion on Cell Phones.
Denise Beaudry, Keigwin Nurse, stated cell phones are a big distraction. Students are always calling parents to pick them up even before they even get to see the nurse.

Nancy Kowalski, WWMS Nurse, stated their students are told to keep their cell phones in their locker. Last year, students were supposed to only use during lunch time. All day they were on the phone. This year is much better.

Rosa Vargas, MHS Nurse, said Middletown High School has no policy to lock up phones. Students are using them all the time and it is a huge distraction - constantly bullying, listening to music, texting, videoing - big impedance to their education. If there is a fight they are videoing it and sharing it contacting their parents. Kids turning to parents for every little problem. We are not helping them grow. The students are addicted to their phone and need to constantly touch it. Any type of restriction would be an improvement.

Colleen Weiner stated she had sent out a notice to parents that cell phones not helping. The students are using their phones to call Uber to deliver food, etc. They are posting to social media constantly.

Cheryl McClellan stated she feels cell phones do not fit in with our education system. If parents need to talk to their child, they can call the school and have the secretary contact child.

Kim Gauthier, Resident/MPA Student, is a substitute teacher, teaching in various schools in New Britain. Their policy is no phones period. Kids are really good about it. Parents are a huge part of the problem. One phone is available in the office for kids to use. Their policy is working quite well. She feels the students get nothing out of class if they have phones. No use of cell phones is needed.

Marco Gaylord stated as we are now one-to-one (each student has their own Chromebook) there is no need for them to have their cell phones during the school day, cell phones are not needed to look up information. As the students progress up the grades, they will be accustomed to not using their phones during the day and that should make a big difference.

Edward Ford agreed and said it was very distracting and took away from instructional time, along with all the drama that comes with it. Students are losing the capacity to interact with each other.

Kathy Bengtson stated that she believes we do not need to change our policy and it presently states: “Use of technology devices and accessories that impair students’ ability to see or hear directions or instructions are prohibited unless approved by administration”. She recommends we use a regulation to determine how we regulate the use of cell phones. Mike Skott agreed.

Marco Gaylord stated he would like to check with the elementary school principals to get their input.

Cheryl McClellan asked how do we this? It is our role to dial back and make it easier for students to learn. She will ask Dr. Conner what he prefers. Maybe have conversations with
parents to have students “in the moment with their education”. Want to help parents navigate their students’ education. It is important that students learn how to communicate now and in the future, with co-workers, bosses, peers, etc.

The Policy Committee requested this Policy #5131.82 be brought back to the Policy Committee at its next meeting for further discussion.

#6146 – Graduation Requirements  Ralph D’Amato had asked Kathy to put this policy on the agenda, as the present policy only added up to 24 credits, when 25 is the requirement. Colleen Weiner said the State of Connecticut will require 25 credits to graduate in 2023, but there is much confusion as to what will comprise each credit. In certain State directives, the required total credits don’t add up. Ms. Weiner and other Administrators are working on many detailed models. Also, in determining the type of credits, there is a financial issue that must be addressed to determine if the budget will be affected. She will need to double check with the State to determine and make sure we can issue the proposed credits.

The Policy Committee agreed Colleen Weiner will ask for a further review of this policy when they have determined what credits should be issued in the graduating year of 2023.

#6162.51 – Surveys of Students (Student Privacy) Kathy brought this policy forward as it is a mandated policy, which has not been updated since 2006. Michelle Gohagon and other administrators were not available. The written policy options were distributed for review.

The Policy Committee requested this Policy #6162.51 be brought back to the Policy Committee at its next meeting for further discussion.

Ms. McClellan stated that the upcoming October meeting will be her last policy meeting, as she will not be running for another term on the Board of Education.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:00 A.M.

The next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 15, 2019 at 8:30 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Bengtson
Administrative Assistant