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Policies and Procedures Minutes 09/14/2010

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Arlington School Committee Subcommittee on Policies and Procedures

School Committee Room

Approved Meeting Minutes 9/14/10

5:45p.m. called to order

In Attendance: Judson Pierce, Chair, Leba Heigham and Cindy Starks – Members

Professional Staff - Assistant Superintendent Wallis Raemer

Motion by Ms. Heigham to approve 8/26/10 minutes, seconded by Mr. Pierce, passed 2-0(LH, JP with Ms. Starks abstaining)

Public Participation:

Mr. Michael Levy, parent and concerned citizen, presented on developing a bullying policy that takes into account children with special needs. Mr. Levy cited a survey of parents of children with special needs in which 43 % reported that their children were bullied in school. A similar survey of children with autism reported that 90% were victims of bullying. Mr. Levy suggested that any policy will need to focus on the position of disabled children and their families. Just as important if not more so is the education of the community at all levels. If you know people you're not as likely to bully them. Mr. Levy stated that we'll never eliminate it completely but the more we promulgate a good understanding in our community the better off we will all be.

Mr. Levy suggested that we should begin by asking the question "how do we create a culture where bullying will not find its roots. Where it is an exception rather than a feared expectation."

Mr. Levy referenced page 6, Section C of the DESE model plan, in that the authors of the law were thinking of kids with disabilities in the crafting of the law. Mr. Levy suggested that there should be a presumption that the IEP will include a discussion of the skills and education that the student will need to manage bullying. Numbers of reported bullying are probably on the low side, they're probably higher. Mr. Levy noted that children with ADHD are actually extremely vulnerable to bullying. If a student is on an IEP, according to Mr. Levy, then they're vulnerable to bullying and we should look at what can make them less vulnerable. There are likely populations that are not as susceptible we can say we're choosing not to do this but it should be an explicit choice.

The Assistant Superintendent pointed out that we are looking at the suggested PLAN of DESE. The

POLICY we're looking to adopt as a place holder is the one out of Somerville and with the assumption that it will be tweaked as we go.

Mr. Levy recommended that we need to maximize the opportunity to identify the kids when they are the target and perform an proper investigation after a report has been made. Mr. Levy also noted a possible problem when a child may not come forward.

Ms. Heigham noted that all of our staff are mandated reporters. As an example Ms. Heigham suggested that if a student was drawing something inappropriate in class or displaying unusual physical responses these things require some investigation on the part of the administrators. In addition a parent who says my child has become fearful of going to school this prompts an investigation as well.

Mr. Levy asked that we do our best to make sure we're training people explicitly and that we extend this training to the parents of those children b/c they're more likely to be the reporters if they know what they're supposed to look for.

Ms. Starks noted that in Lexington she gave every student a booklet about red flags, things to look for, and how reports are properly made.

The Assistant Superintendent noted that the APS has a plan to do a form on this subject and stated that it is also on our emergency preparedness plan on our website. The Assistant Superintendent stated that Ms. Cindy Bouvier has already scheduled an educational symposium on the topic of bullying for our community as well. The Somerville policy talks a lot about reporting and will get us closer to where we need to go because it mandates that one has to report any suspected abuses.

Mr. Levy stated that despite our best efforts so far bullying continues. He noted that this is a new state law so the jury is still out. As you're working out the details of the policy know that the populations the protections rely on ability of kids who self report but there are many who don't have the ability to self report and there are things to be done to enable parents to help kids who can't self report determine when they have actually become victims.

Ms. Raemer noted that p. 12 of the DESE model plan talks about the education of parents. Newton has understanding our differences-more looking at people with disabilities of all kinds (medical developmental etc..). Dallin had a curriculum for a while. These curricula should also be looked at. This should be in the plan.

Cindy Bouvier is leading the plan convention which is due by the end of December

Ms. Starks stated that she wants to make sure there is public input in the plan process.

Ms. Heigham noted that what makes sense is for Ms. Raemer and Ms. Bouvier to present the framework of how it will be done.

Ms. Starks suggested that it would be good if there is a special education parent on the plan team.

Ms. Heigham noted that there should be representatives from multiple groups.

The Assistant Superintendent noted that the Somerville policy has already been vetted.

It was decided that our next Policies and Procedures Subcommittee meeting will occur on Monday 9/20 from 6:30p.m.-7:00p.m. for the purposes of making a recommendation on a bullying policy to the full School Committee at its 9/28 meeting.

Next there was a discussion concerning Open Enrollment. A parent, Melissa Murray, spoke and informed the subcommittee that she had filed a timely application that was approved. However, then the classes filled up over summer.

The Assistant Superintendent noted that there are presently four 3 elementary school students in this predicament

Ms. Heigham suggested that the number in the open enrollment policy should reflect average class size at the moment not an artificial number of 21 and that one of its goals should be about balancing the district

Ms. Heigham made a Motion to temporarily suspend policy JCA – Open Enrollment and Move that the School Committee temporarily suspend File JCA, Policy Open Enrollment so the Assistant Superintendent, at her discretion, may grant Open Enrollment requests, appropriately filed, in order to relieve class size in the sending school and/or to support more equitable class size in the district while not adversely affecting the receiving school only in September 2010.

The motion passed unanimously.

New business:

Ms. Heigham noted that the Budget Subcommittee will be asking the Policies and Procedures Subcommittee to review policies DI and DBJ.

Ms. Raemer discussed waivers for school facility rental fees. There are 2 questions: 1 do we want to consider waiver of rental fees for anybody and 2) should these waiver requests come to us first and then we could recommend yes or no to the full School Committee.

Ms. Starks suggested that this sounds more like a monetary decision that either the business office or budget subcommittee should look at first, and then take a recommendation to the full School Committee.

Ms. Heigham suggested that we need to decide where this waiver request first goes to (either policies

and procedures or budget subcommittee)

Mr. Pierce made a motion to adjourn at 7:10p.m. which was seconded by Ms. Heigham and passed unanimously.