

**Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford**

**The Legislation and Policy Development Committee
Wednesday, May 4, 2022, 8:30 a.m.**

Committee Members

Malia K. Sieve, Chair
Karen Dubois-Walton, Donald F. Harris, Bonnie E. Burr, Robert J. Trefry
Martha Paluch Prou and Elwood Exley, Jr.

**Minutes
(Approved June 1, 2022)**

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the Board of Education Legislation and Policy Development Committee met in person on May 4, 2022.

I. Call to Order

Committee Chair Malia K. Sieve called the meeting to order at 8:30. Also present were Committee Members Karen DuBois-Walton, Elwood Exley, Jr., and Robert Trefry. In addition, the following were in attendance: Michael McKeon, Director of Legal and Governmental Affairs; Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer; Keith Norton, Chief Strategic Planning Officer; John Frassinelli, Division Director – School Health, Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education; Chlo-Anne Bobrowski, Education Manager; Laura Anastasio, Attorney, Legal and Governmental Affairs Office; and Kari Sullivan, Education Consultant. Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer joined the meeting while it was in progress.

The Committee was also joined by the following representatives of the West Hartford Public Schools to discuss the status of West Hartford’s Racial Imbalance Plan: Dr. Andrew Morrow, Assistant Superintendent; Mr. Paul Vicinus, Jr., Assistant Superintendent; Dr. Roszena Haskins, Director of Equity Advancement; and Juan Melian, Principal of Charter Oak International Academy.

Presenters:

John Frassinelli, Division Director
Kari Sullivan, Education Consultant
Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer
Laura Anastasio, Attorney, Legal and Governmental Affairs Office, CSDE
The Above-Listed Representatives of the West Hartford Public Schools

II. Review and Discussion: Definition of “Absence” in Context of Remote Instruction

Ms. Sieve opened the meeting by noting that although there was a quorum of Committee members present, there was not a quorum of *voting* members. Thus, although the meeting would go forward, there could be no votes, and approval of the April 6, 2022, Committee meeting minutes was therefore tabled until the June 1, 2022, meeting.

Mr. Frassinelli began a presentation on proposed language pertaining to attendance and absenteeism in the context of remote instruction. The development of this language had been mandated by the Connecticut legislature. Mr. Frassinelli’s presentation focused on four separate criteria for determining attendance in a remote setting. In response to Ms. Sieve’s question whether multiple criteria would need to be satisfied to qualify as attendance, Mr. Frassinelli stated that

compliance with one criterion would be sufficient. Attorney McKeon asked whether under the fourth criterion a student would be deemed in attendance simply by spending the requisite time doing homework; Mr. Frassinelli responded that this criterion addressed time spent remotely on actual classwork, a point Ms. Sullivan further elucidated.

Mr. Exley raised student mental health days, specifically whether there was a standard students had to satisfy in order to avail themselves of them. Mr. Frassinelli explained that there is no standard as every student qualifies simply by virtue of being a student. In response to Mr. Exley's further question, Mr. Frassinelli noted that the CSDE had previously issued a memorandum, recommending that districts advise parents of such days. Ms. Sieve stated that in her experience, not every district did so. Ms. Sullivan opined that the taking of mental health days provided districts with a good opportunity to check in with students to see how they are doing.

Ms. Sieve reiterated that as the Committee did not have a quorum of voting members present, a vote to refer this proposed language to the full State Board of Education would have to be tabled until the June 1, 2022, meeting.

Ms. Sieve then asked the representatives from the West Hartford Public Schools to present. Following Dr. Morrow's preliminary statement, Ms. Sieve congratulated West Hartford on Charter Oak International Academy's having fallen below the 25% racial imbalance threshold but expressed concern about the other schools -- specifically Braeburn, Bugbee, and Duffy Elementary Schools -- that have recently exceeded the 15% impending racial imbalance threshold. Dr. DuBois-Walton similarly questioned Dr. Morrow about Braeburn, Bugbee, and Duffy. Dr. Morrow noted that attendance is currently governed by location but that there is a redistricting survey. Dr. DuBois-Walton asked about simply redrafting the attendance zones.

Attorney Anastasio observed that West Hartford had been on the racial imbalance list since 1999 and asked what the West Hartford Board of Education was doing to draw students from outside individual school attendance zones. West Hartford's representatives responded that a lottery system had been discussed, but that the Board was not in favor of it. Attorney McKeon cited the close geographic proximity between elementary schools with significant variances in minority student populations and suggested limited reconfigurations of attendance zones.

Ms. Sieve stated that it appeared the diversity of the Town of West Hartford was what drove the diversity at schools rather than actual, affirmative steps. Questions were then raised about Open Choice, attendance zone reconfiguration, and open enrollment, the latter two of which options did not appear to be in the West Hartford Board's immediate plans.

Ms. Sieve thanked the representatives from West Hartford for meeting with the Committee and asked that they return in one year, or May 2023.

V. Adjournment

The Committee adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

The Connecticut State Department of Education is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer