

Connecticut State Board of Education Hartford

The Legislation and Policy Development Committee
Wednesday, September 7, 2022, 8:30 a.m.

Committee Members

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

Minutes

Approved November 2, 2022

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the Board of Education Legislation and Policy Development Committee met in person on September 7, 2022.

I. Call to Order

Committee Chair Malia K. Sieve called the meeting to order. Also present were Committee Members Karen DuBois-Walton, Donald F. Harris, Martha Paluch Prou, Elwood Exley, Jr., and Valli Pendyala. In addition, the following individuals were in attendance: Board Vice-Chair Erin Benham; Michael McKeon, Director of Legal and Governmental Affairs; Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer; John Frassinelli, Director of School Health, Nutrition, and Family Services; Chlo-Ann Bobrowski, Education Manager; Kari Sullivan, Education Consultant; Sonya Efanayi, Secretary.

Presenter:

John Frassinelli, Director of School Health, Nutrition, and Family Services, CSDE

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

Ms. Sieve opened the meeting by noting that Mr. Frassinelli, Ms. Bobrowski, and Ms. Sullivan had presented on this issue at the Committee’s May 4, 2022, meeting, but as there had not been a quorum of *voting* Committee members present, the Committee was unable to vote on referring this matter to the full Board for its consideration. Consequently, Mr. Frassinelli, Ms. Bobrowski, and Ms. Sullivan had returned to provide the Committee with a brief update and overview of that May 4, 2022, presentation. Mr. Frassinelli noted that there had been some changes to the definition of attendance in the context of remote instruction based upon a recent modification of the expulsion and suspension statutes. Ms. Paluch Prou asked what constituted a legal school day, and Mr. Frassinelli explained that so long as the student is engaged with school activities for at least one-half day, then the student would be deemed to be in attendance. Mr. Harris requested further clarification as to the parameters of a half day, which Mr. Frassinelli clarified.

Following the close of discussion, Mr. Harris moved, and Ms. Paluch Prou seconded, to refer this revised CSDE delineation as to what was deemed an absence and, conversely, what constituted attendance on a particular school day. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Review and Discussion: Fairfield Board of Education’s Proposed Updated Racial Imbalance Plan

Attorney McKeon reviewed with the Committee the proposed update to the Fairfield Board of Education’s racial imbalance plan. Noting the Fairfield Board’s proposed plan included equity training, Mr. Harris asked whether it was going to be conducted by an individual who was

versed in such training. Ms. Benham raised this same concern as did Mr. Exley. Ms. Benham observed with respect to the timeline in the draft update that Fairfield appeared to be once again pushing off the implementation of a plan.

The Committee then discussed whether Fairfield would come back before the Committee or meet with the full Board. It was noted that Fairfield had hired a new Superintendent of Schools, who would not be starting until November 1, 2022. Nonetheless, the Committee was of the mind that the new Superintendent be invited to attend the October 2022 LPDC meeting given that he would soon thereafter be responsible for the day-to-day oversight and implementation of the racial imbalance plan. Although a formal vote was not taken, the Committee's inclination was to have Fairfield come before it in October and then meet with the full Board in November 2022.

In further discussing the substance of Fairfield's proposed plan, Ms. Sieve was glad that there was more detail in the district's plan, but expressed disappointment at yet further delay in the plan's implementation. Dr. Dubois-Walton was interested in obtaining further information regarding the community-engagement aspect of the proposed plan, specifically its substance and the community's response. Dr. Dubois-Walton also expressed concern at the fact that the academic indicia had decreased, and Ms. Benham noted that the achievement scores had dropped precipitously. Given this, a significant focus of the Board's conversation with Fairfield would be whether there existed a link between the racial imbalance and the decreased academic performance. Mr. Exley suggested that the Committee not focus exclusively on the negative aspects of the proposed update to Fairfield's racial imbalance plan.

IV. Discussion: 2022-2023 Policies, Goals, Areas of Focus and Process

The discussion turned to potential goals and areas of focus for the Committee going forward, with the Committee members encouraged to suggest ideas. Ms. Sieve noted that the State Board is in the process of working on its new, five-year plan and suggested a clarification of the Committee's role in that process. Mr. Exley asked about equitable funding for school districts and to that end suggested the possibility of exploring a statewide tax instead of using local municipal property taxes. Dr. Dubois-Walton discussed more closely considering Open Choice issues. Dr. Dubois-Walton also noted the possible need to update the State Board's bylaws in order to eliminate references to Pre-K programs, which now lie within the jurisdiction of the Office of Early Childhood, and she raised a question as to how many children were "lost" academically during the pandemic and the means by which they can be reengaged. Dr. Dubois-Walton also asked about CSDE efforts to encourage diversity in teacher recruitment and training. Mr. Exley raised the issue of possibly eliminating the Praxis examination. Ms. Sieve inquired about the status of CSDE guidance pertaining to transgender students and also asked about whether the Black and Puerto Rican Studies course should be incorporated into mandatory United States History courses. Ms. Parisi noted that the CSDE is working on newer standards that would incorporate the BIPOC curricula

V. Adjournment

The Committee adjourned at 9:30 a.m.