



POLICY/COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

November 27, 2023

Virtual Meeting - 4:00 p.m.

Committee Members: Jennifer Wolf, Chair
Jodi Bettermann, Michele Mencer, Randall Peach

Administrative Staff: Dr. Jonathan Hart, Superintendent of Schools
Jason Bohm, SBA/Board Secretary

Guest: Lori Perlow (Public Information Officer)

Minutes

1. Communications Planning

- a. With the loss of the Readington News as a free tool to disseminate information that reaches all members of the Readington Community, the committee has been exploring alternative methods to plan and reach constituents of the district. Lori Perlow, is a Public Relations professional and has experience in schools and private sector. She worked for 8 years in a school district in Mercer County handling every aspect of communication and public relations. She now sits on the National Board and her professional mission is to ensure every school district has access to shared services. As a first step, if engaged, Lori would recommend developing a Communication Planning Process, surveying key stakeholders including parents and other community members (targeting community members who do not have children enrolled in school). The second step would be to review the data and then host a series of focus groups. From start to finish, it can take up to six months. The committee is recommending engaging with Lori Perlow in a shared services agreement for the minimum investment allowable, which is \$6,500 per year for the equivalent of 9 full days of work. Board members discussed how to communicate with community members who do not have students enrolled in school. Board members also expressed a desire to build into the plan how to measure success so we can assess if the board and district goals are achieved with this shared service arrangement.

2. Committee Discussion of Communications

- a. Reminder of Goal #5: To continue to improve communications and expand community engagement with all stakeholders. Our efforts will continue our focus on transparency, broadening our efforts beyond our locality, highlighting and celebrating district accomplishments with an emphasis on our sustainability/greening initiatives and developing collaborations with our local governmental entities. Focus on “closing the loop” and communicating the end results. Pursuing a shared services agreement to utilize the services of Lori Perlow will help in achieving this goal.

3. Alert 231

- a. Policy 2270 – Religion in the Schools (Revised)
 - i. The United States Department of Education released updated guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools. The language has been updated to mirror the guidance but there are no material changes.

- b. Policy 3161 - Examination for Cause (Revised)
 - c. Policy 4161 - Examination for Cause (Revised)
 - i. Policy 3161 applies to certificated staff and policy 4161 applies to non-certificated staff. The policy has been updated to read more procedurally to clarify the process and no changes to Readington's current process were made. Case law indicates a Board decision to require an examination has been upheld if challenged when a Board follows these procedures.
 - d. Policy 8500 - Food Services (Revised)
 - i. The 'Working Class Families' Anti-Hunger Act" revised several NJ Statutes and the Act also created new statute sections N.J.S.A.18A:33-10.1; 18A:33-14a; and 18A:33-21b1. As a result, the policies 8540 and 8550 are to be abolished and Policy 8500 is to be revised and incorporates provisions from the abolished policies that are still relevant. Low-income families that previously qualified for reduced lunch, are now eligible for free breakfast and lunch. If a district has above 10% low-income families in one specific school, the district is required to provide breakfast, which Readington already provides. Homeless students receive meals, which Readington already provides. Additionally, students may still receive food even with a negative balance in their account which has been Readington's current practice. In practice, the district will engage with parents to fill out paperwork to qualify for low-income services if eligible to ask parents to pay their outstanding balance. The revised Policy Guide 8500 is mandated and must be adopted by the Board if the district participates in the National School Lunch Program.
4. Abolish Policies (from alert 231)
- a. Policy 8540 -School Nutrition Program
 - b. Policy 8550 -Meal Charges/Outstanding Food Service Bill
5. Advocacy
- a. Pensions and other teacher retention strategies
 - b. Coordination with Central
6. Safe Return Plan: The incorrect plan was shared at the committee meeting and resent to the committee via e-mail. The plan must be updated every six months. Discussion was had to ensure there was inclusion of proper ventilation, which was updated in the last revision. The updates reflect this current year's practices and use of the ESSER/ARP funds such as the clubs being offered at the elementary schools and an in house certified Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) as a district employee for tier 3 mental health counseling.
7. Agenda items: Approve Safe Return Plan; first read of policies 2270, 3161, 4161, 8500; abolish: 8540, 8550
8. Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 26, 2023 at 4pm