WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES
March 17, 2014
Harriet North Meeting Room

The Policy Committee of the Board of Education held a meeting in the Harriet North Meeting Room of the City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, Connecticut on March 17, 2014. The meeting was called to order by Robert Guthrie, Chairman of the Policy Committee at 6:04 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

POLICY COMMITTEE
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:
Robert Guthrie, Chairman
Betsy Davis
Patricia Libero
Rosa Richardson

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:
Rosemary Russo

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:
Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools
Anne Druzolowski, Assistant Superintendent
David Cappetta, Director of Finance

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:

Chairman Robert Guthrie called the meeting to order at 6:04 and stated for the purpose of the policies I will turn the meeting over to Superintendent Cavallaro.

Superintendent Cavallaro stated that these are two required policies that the Board is required to adopt. Donna Kosiorowski, the head nurse for our school district, has spent a lot of time working on the Homebound and Hospitalized Instruction Policy and can answer any questions you may have. Jim Turcio, Pupil Services, who you met at our last board meeting will talk about the Seclusion and Restraint Regulations.

Donna said we received the introduction for the Homebound Policy from CABE and the rest is from the State Regulations. Neil stated the Seclusion and Restraint Regulations
were written with our attorneys, based on our needs, and is also a required policy. If you are happy with these we can add them to our agenda tonight.

Donna said our Homebound Policy is really part of a larger document on special education. Donna likes this because it required physicians to have discussions with them about homebound; is it necessary and can we accommodate the student in school. One of the primary changes was that the child used to have to be absent three weeks or longer and we reduced that to 10 days and even that is a pretty extensive amount of time to be absent. It can be sooner than 10 days if the school system can bring that together. Donna likes this because we have a lot of kids with chronic health problems that don’t miss five or ten days of school in a row but by the end of the school year they are missing a significant amount of time. This may be our kids with sickle cell and our kids on chemo who are missing one day a week of school and this policy does account for them too. It says if the child is required to be absent from school for short repeated periods of time so this makes sense. Under Requirements of the individualized education program it says if the child doesn’t have special education you don’t have to make them special ed for purposes of homebound you just maintain their regular program. All of the requirements are excellent and if we have a concern about a child and the parent won’t let us talk to the physician we have the right not to provide homebound until we can talk to a physician. If it is a legitimate homebound they shouldn’t have a problem with us talking to them. It is still no less than an hour for younger kids and if a child can tolerate more time we can provide it and no less than two hours for the older kids. This is pretty self-explanatory. Donna asked if there were any questions.

Pat Libero asked if kids at the high school with special ed inclusion classes who are on homebound have all the subject courses and do they have special ed teachers for this or doesn’t it matter. Donna said her understanding is that if you have a child who is a special ed student you really try to get a special education teacher. Jim Turcio said we try to get a special education teacher and do it in conjunction with all subject areas and work with the classroom teacher and this hasn’t changed.

Bob Guthrie asked Neil if he had any comments or concerns about the policy. No, Neil would ask the board to move forward with this policy. Bob said the number will be 6173. Neil explained that when the board passes a policy or prior to passing a policy we contact CABE and they give it a policy number and they insert it in the correct section of the book and we are now on line so as soon as we get it back we will put in on line and make it part of our policy and notify schools and who it pertains to that it will be on line. Bob said it is much easier than keeping track of those two big notebooks. Neil said it sure is. Bob said we will now move on the Seclusion and Restraint Regulations. The board gave thanks.

Jim Turcio said last school year we started looking at some of our policies and making sure we covered everything. There was a lot of involvement with seclusion and restraint around the state so our attorneys started working with us and looking at our policies and what we were doing. The state has always had a form and required us to monitor and track information and submit it to the state. We trained two of our BCA’s Board Certified
Behavioral Analysts to be trainers for our PMT Physical Management Training which is restraint training. We really didn’t have any policies regarding seclusion and restraint so we worked with our attorney’s for several months to put the language in place. We then looked at what we needed to do to move forward and what was the procedure to put in place because once we adopt a policy the staff has to be trained with a PMT. We specifically wanted to make sure a higher percentage of our staff in the district trained specifically paraprofessionals, social workers, psychologists, administrators, and nurses because there is a requirement for each one of them as part of the restraint component. We had spent the end of last school year into the summer and the beginning of the school year and we trained about 60 paraprofessionals on their first day back and we now have a schedule with the two trainers that every three weeks we either do an initial training or recertification. We are confident we have staff available for any type of restraint. We probably have about 90% of the staff trained and we have a plan for going forward. Initial certification has been done and re-certifications are once a year and we have created a data base and are tracking all of our staff. Initial training is about six hours long and recertification is about two hours. The least restrictive component is adhered to but there are some children that need to be escorted to a different area or depending on the situation need to be held in a safe manner. Nurses come in and physically observe and make sure the students are safe either during or after the event. Everything is documented and sent up to our office and we keep track of it. With all of this we now have the policy that matches what we are doing and we are monitoring to make sure everybody stays in compliance.

Neil said he believes the key to this whole thing is getting everyone trained and keeping on a regular pattern to continue making sure people get certified and recertified and as we hire new school personnel they are trained and prepared to go into the classrooms.

Pat Libero asked who is being trained all the staff or just special ed and paras. All of the paraprofessionals, all the social workers, all the psychologists, each principal has been offered training and we have asked them to identify key staff in their building so a lot of regular education teachers have been trained. Pat asked if Special Education teachers are being trained. Yes as appropriate with more in the elementary schools. We constantly ask principals if they have anybody that wants to be trained. We also want people to have de-escalation strategies because that is always our hope but we also want staff to be supported if a teacher needs additional help.

Pat Libero said it is very upsetting to see a kid restrained and out of control. Do we have anything in place for teachers who haven’t been trained to know why what you are doing is appropriate? We have two schools where we are dealing with that right now so we go into the schools as a team and tell the principals we are available to talk to anyone. We try and talk about this from the safety perspective.

Betsy Davis asked how do you get a child to a safe place and what is that save place? You see on the news about panic rooms; where do you take the kids? Most of the safe areas are within the classrooms. Sometimes it is a regular education classroom and we don’t want to be holding a child in front of 20 or 30 other students unless we have to.
because it is a real safety risk. We identify areas in each building. For example if something happens at a certain time we know this room is free so we try and minimize the amount of time to transport a student to a safe, secure area. We utilize a behaviorist to do the assessment of the building. We may redesign a classroom or a lab and it is all individualized by the student. Jim’s biggest emphasize is that 75% of the time should be on de-escalation. If people are aware of a child’s behavior and see them starting to get upset they will know and kind of help and say let’s go to the office and deliver something. We use that a lot for our strategy because it works for a lot of our kids. If we can remove them before we have to go to a physical hold that is what we try and do.

Bob Guthrie said just like the other homebound policy we are consistent with state statute, CABE and our legal staff. Correct. This was written by us and our attorneys and we have sent it to CABE to look at and we had some minor tweaks and now everything is in compliance with what CABE was looking for. The state form is imbedded in here that we have been reporting on for years. There were no further questions. The board gave thanks.

Bob Guthrie asked for a motion to add both the Homebound Policy 6173 and the Seclusion and Restraint Policy 5144.1(a) to tonight’s agenda
Rosa Richardson made the motion
Pat Libero seconded the motion
Discussion: None
All board members present were in favor
Both policies will be added to tonight’s agenda. Bob Guthrie asked if there was anything else that needed to come before them.

Rosa Richardson said she opened discussion at the previous board meeting regarding the closing of schools specifically at the time of primaries. After discussions with Neil he had made some very valid points so Rosa took some time to create a resolution or a policy that would prohibit the schools use during class time (the hours the school is technical open). It would not affect any youth organizations or groups who come in after school for gym time or girl scouts.

She also left it open so that if an organization wants to present a request to the Superintendent they could put a proposal together and give it to the Superintendent for review and possible approval.

She is also of the opinion that the Board of Education should not assume any costs incurred by an event taking place during school hours so part of that policy would include any costs being given to the organization involved.

Bob asked if there was any discussion. There was none and he said at this point because this is not an action item on the agenda we should have the policy committee accept this and have the policy committee work with the Superintendent to review this and see whether this can come before the board during the meeting in April or the first meeting in May. Neil said we will first call CABE tomorrow and see if there is anything similar out
there that would be something we could use as a worksheet because there may be a policy out there that meets our needs and we can tailor it or add or delete things. We can then go from there. Neil is sure that with all the issues of safety and security something like this has come up from somewhere around the state. If a policy like this were to be passed we would have a date far enough away where there would be time to make the right adjustments because the city will need a backup plan if the idea is to eliminate voting on a primary day so we don’t have to close the schools suddenly. Neil thinks that this would serve notice to the city that they have five months to a year in advance where we expect you to have this resolved. We work very well with the city and have put plans in place and have had the cooperation of the police department because there is a consensus that when safety is a big security and you are allowing people to come in and out of the buildings all day the building is not as safe and secure as it should be.

Pat Libero asked if this was something we should work with the Registrar’s Office with; who determines the voting places. Neil said they would and we started looking at this when Dorinda Borer was on the board and a very big advocate last session. There needs to be a certain amount of public relations involved once you make the official switch. We made the schools as safe and secure as we could. We moved the polling place for the election that was held a couple of weeks ago at Mackrille where there were many different ways to get into the building to the gym which had its own entrance and exit.

Bob asked if Rosa was comfortable with Neil’s suggestion to have CABE become involved and send us material to look at and Rosa said absolutely.

Bob asked if there were any further discussions relating to policies at this time and there were none.

Chairman Guthrie asked for a motion to adjourn.
Rosa Richardson made the motion
Betsy Davis seconded the motion
The meeting adjourned at 6:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou C. Amendola
Board Secretary