

Easton, Redding & Region 9 Boards of Education  
Wellness Committee  
Special Meeting December 18, 2014 1:00 p.m.  
JBHS Library Room

**Attendance**

In attendance were: Donna Albano, David Breyer, Claudia Downey, Daniel Geraghty, Elizabeth Giglio, David Kennedy, Molly Basak-Smith, Colleen McLeod, Stephanie Pierson Ugol, Jeff Parker, and Laura Ponzio.

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 1:03 by Committee Chair Mrs. Stephanie Pierson Ugol.

**II. Review of the Minutes – November 12, 2014**

Ms. Laura Ponzio moved to accept the minutes; it was seconded by Mr. Breyer.

**III. Public Comment**

None at this time.

**IV. Committee Member Comment**

None at this time.

**V. Discussion and Possible Action**

**A. Review of Policy Comments**

Stephanie Pierson Ugol, Assistant Superintendent and Wellness Committee Chair and Laura Ponzio, the ER9 Business Manager, solicited community input on the draft Wellness Policy that had been modified at the November 12, 2014 meeting. Those comments and suggestions were shared with the Committee and the policy was reviewed. Changes were made to the draft policy to increase the specificity and accuracy of the document, yet allow enough flexibility to allow for state and federal regulation changes.

Cafeteria lunch practices were reviewed and the committee discussed possible opportunities for parents to receive more information regarding meal purchasing options. Parents may place restrictions on what their children are able to purchase by modifying the lunch card purchase profile. The committee discussed ways of sharing this information with parents. The committee also discussed the current wording of the policy that states ER9 School Districts "shall meet or exceed nutritional guidelines". A parent suggested this be changed to "will work to exceed nutritional guidelines." Committee discussion indicated that exceeding guidelines does not necessarily result in overall meals being more nutritious, therefore no change will be made to the policy at this time.

A parent suggested that all committee members "be required to experience and eat at our cafeterias at least once during the term of this policy and collect feedback from the students." Mr. Kennedy offered to provide lunch for one of the Wellness Committee meetings so that members could enjoy the foods that are served to the students in the ER9 schools. Currently, Mr. Kennedy does collect feedback from the students, especially at the high school level, through surveys; at the elementary and middle school levels, he receives feedback from the Leads as an indication of what students like or don't like.

A parent commented about grants received by Westport schools for health initiatives, and inquired about grants available to Easton. David Kennedy, Director of Dining Services for ER9, said that Chartwells gives \$2000/year to a school in the ER9 district to be spent for such initiatives. Ms. Ponzio and Ms. Basak-Smith said that they would check on the availability of any other grants.

On page (b), under Daily Physical Education and Standards-Based Sequential Physical Education, paragraph 2, the first bullet point will be changed from “provide physical education instructional periods for a period of time up to one hundred fifty (150) minutes per week for elementary students” to “provide physical education instructional periods for a minimum of 80 minutes per week for elementary students.” This change was the result of input questioning the use of “up to” wording, which could result in no time for physical education.

One parent was concerned about the fact that middle school students have only 5-10 minutes for recess, and suggested that all middle school students should have 20 minutes of recess daily to burn off some of their energy and have something to look forward to. The Committee is not ready at this time to recommend a change to the policy, but building administrators will consider changes in the future based on staffing and financial resource availability.

Under Incorporating Physical Activity into the Classroom on page (c), a parent suggested changing the wording of the sentence “classrooms shall incorporate, where possible, appropriate, short breaks that include physical movement” to classrooms shall incorporate, where reasonable, appropriate, short breaks . . .” The draft policy will incorporate the new wording.

A parent asks if it would be possible to have opportunities for stretching or yoga type movement on days when indoor recess is necessary. As discussed by the Committee, the issue becomes having a trained person(s) available for that type of activity for safety reasons. The gym is usually not available as it is in use for scheduled classes or is being prepped for the upcoming class.

On page (d), under Nutrition Education and Wellness Promotion, the fourth bullet point was found to be too specific and was amended to: “Nutrition education focuses on skills including but not limited to reading food labels and menu planning.” The fifth bullet which read: “Families will be requested to pack lunches and snacks that meet district nutrition standards and will be provided with written guidance on how to accomplish this” was deleted from the policy as it was seen as “policing” parents' choices for their children. The last bullet: “The food service management company will market healthy foods according to district guidelines and government regulations” prompted one parent to question the sale of poptarts, chips, and frozen yogurt. Mr. Kennedy explained that all foods, including snacks, conform to the state and federal regulations. An effort will be made to make more parents aware of their ability to restrict their student's choices; Ms. Ponzio indicated that the information is currently in the handbook and she will also be publishing it in the newsletter that will go out in the New Year.

Mr. Kennedy went on to explain that government regulations with school lunch programs drives what foods can be offered. Financial considerations are important in the decision-making. A district makes a decision for all schools in that district. Mr. Kennedy explained that some towns have decided not to participate in the National School Lunch Program at the high school level.

These towns have lost all reimbursements for their high school as well as commodities they would have received.

On page (e) under Foods, all the bullet points will be deleted as the information is quite specific and would not allow for any changes that might be made by the state and federal governments.

Under Beverages on page (f), all the bullet points will be deleted as again the information is specific and doesn't allow any flexibility for changes made by the state and federal agencies.

Some parents had concerns regarding menu planning and the use of local farms for produce. Mr. Kennedy pointed out that the concern with procuring any food items is safety of the students. There are many rules and regulations that must be followed in order for the school to be able to purchase produce from a particular farm. The process for a farm to get the approval is time-consuming and costly, and many small farms are not interested in pursuing it. There are currently many CT, NY, and MA products that are used in ER9 that come from approved farms.

Another issue under menu planning is that of allergies. The school nurse is the first person who should be contacted by the parent about the allergy. The nurse can coordinate the care between the student and the food service. The food service has a list of all the ingredients used in the products that they serve so a parent can check for compatibility. Mr. Kennedy indicated that sometime next year, Chartwells will be using an informational program called "Nutri-Slice" where a parent would be able to go online to the Chartwells menus, and click on a particular item and get all the nutritional information about that item.

On page (g) under Vending Machines and Other Sources of Food/Snacks the second sentence in the first paragraph will be amended as follows: "All vending machines accessible to students will dispense water." The reference to 100% fruit juices was deleted.

On page (h), under Other School-Based Activities to Promote Student Wellness, a parent asked about the training of the lunch aides, and whether they provide any guidance to students in the cafeteria. The lunch aides are trained in safety procedures specific to the cafeteria setting. Their primary role is to monitor a safe eating environment and promote respectful lunchtime behaviors. They are not trained or educated in nutrition, and are not expected to offer nutritional guidance.

On page (h) in regards to drinking water, JRMS parent commented on the taste of the drinking water in the school. Having palatable water is important if students are to avail themselves of the free, accessible water. Ms. Pierson Ugol will look into how often water is checked for potability at JRMS.

One parent indicated that in the policy section Measuring and Evaluating under Monitoring on page (j), the phrase "to the extent possible" a registered dietician should be included in the Wellness Committee membership; the parent felt that the dietician should always be present. Committee discussion indicated that members attend the meetings based on availability, and that it would be difficult to mandate attendance. However, a registered dietician will have the opportunity to provide input to any suggested revisions to the Wellness Policy.

Nutrition education takes place in the schools and is part of the health and wellness curriculum. The committee reviewed examples of state standards and ER9 curriculum unit examples. The

health curriculum is currently being revised with essential questions and enduring understandings providing a framework for the lessons. The individual lessons are designed to impart knowledge and skills to students so they will make informed decisions. Within each lesson, there is flexibility to allow for incidental learning based on the questions or experiences of the students in that classroom. If a child were to ask about the term “fair trade”, for example, the teacher could capitalize on the question and discuss that concept with the class.

The Wellness Policy will continue to be reviewed in conjunction with policy revision practices in ER9. The changes made to the policy today will be incorporated into a new draft. This draft will be presented to the Tri-Board Policy Committee for comments and discussion. It will then go to the three Boards – Easton, Redding, and Region 9 for a first reading, then a second reading with discussion, editing, and revision, and a final decision on the policy.

**VI. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**VII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 pm. The next meeting will be March 27, 2014 from 1:00 to 3:00.

Respectfully Submitted,

Claudia L. Downey