

EASTON, REDDING, REGION 9 JOINT BOARDS OF EDUCATION  
MEETING

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October 24, 2023 – 7:00 p.m.

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Easton: Hicks, deJesus, Parker, Stinson, Wible, and Young

Redding: Parkin, Belfatto, Gibbons, Hoffman, Oulton, Sadana, Shanahan

Region 9: Graziano, Johnston, Lehberger, O'Brien, Thompson

Administration: McKinnon, D'Agostino, Scrofani, Katz

Others: Board Attorney Gwen Zittoun of Shipman & Goodwin, no members of the public and staff, the Recording Secretary and the Videographer

CALL TO ORDER

C. Graziano called the Region 9 Board of Education Regular meeting to order at 7:12 p.m.

C. Parkin called the Redding Board of Education Regular meeting to order at 7:12 p.m.

J. Stinson called the Easton Board of Education Regular meeting to order at 7:12 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

C. Graziano wanted to acknowledge that this is S. Lehberger's last tri-board meeting. She is thanked for her years of service to all the districts.

C. Parkin echoed the comments as there is significant turnover happening in the Redding board, so he thanked J Belfatto. S. Oulton, and M. Hoffman for their years of service. He thanked both the region 9 and Easton boards for their collaboration in the tri-board meetings.

D. Wible thanked J. Stinson for his time on the board as well as his contributions to Easton students through Robotics.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: POLICY UPDATE FROM SHIPMAN & GOODWIN

Board attorney G. Zittoun as a member of the Shipman & Goodwin team that operates the model policy project gave an update. There are currently 5-6 attorneys currently focused on this project, and 132 policies that are added as needed based on legislative changes. Policies are accessible to model policy subscribers which all three boards are. Most of the policies come along with administrative regulation, then the boards are responsible for implementing those regulations and policies. Policies are in accordance with state and federal law. Changes (based on law) are explained in a memo that gets sent out to subscribers (3 to 4 times a year). Boards are updated more frequently if there have been significant changes they would need to address. One positive of the Shipman & Goodwin Policy Manual is that it automated, so boards will get legal updates automatically. Further, the mandatory policies are provided

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assistance can be provided, but those wouldn't necessarily be included in the base set of policies. Policies are only updated if specifically asked.

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jason McKinnon outlined the current system, where there are new Shipman policies and legacy policies (had for years that are owned in manual). There needs to be movement in implementing legislative updates, making revisions to policies from last year, and reviewing ~~new policies coming out in October~~

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Dr. McKinnon presented five policy recommendations. 1. Adopt all current Shipman & Goodwin Policies as written. 2. Repeal all existing policies. 3. Rehabilitate previous policies as needed. 4. Amend Policy committee charge. 4a. The Policy Committee shall work with the administration and counsel to ensure the Board's policies are in compliance with the law and district goals. 5. The Policy Committee will meet at least 3 times a year (October, January, and May) in order to work on different actions necessary for individual policies. The October meeting could be used to consider new and revised policies. This would give the board time to become knowledgeable with the content and give adequate public notice. The January meeting could consist of a second read and adopting new policies, with a first read of the legacy policies. The May meeting would consist of a second read of the legacy policies, with a first read of revised policies to be read again at the October meeting. At some point, there won't be a need to review legacy policies because it will be established which ones the board will commit to.

C. Parkin suggested 'legacy' be replaced with 'bespoke' because it will include things that are being rehabilitated as specific to the districts and future policies that can be adopted. C. Sadana asked if there is risk with eliminating all the bespoke policies. G. Zittou replied that if the suggested process is followed then adopting all the current model policies will ensure the board's legal compliance. C. Parkin replied that there is risk in losing policies that are locally customary, but that the ones that are important and need to be reinstated will rise to the surface immediately after the repealing process. The risk is that there are current policies that give conflicting information to the administration from the boards. D. Wible inquired about which specific policies are on the website and which are continuing versus being repealed, which C. Parkin said it will be a consideration by the new official boards that review the policies. Dr. McKinnon suggested the recommendations serve as the new framework to use.

Dr. McKinnon said the goal is to have one policy manual, but with policies specific to the regions. G. Zittoun made the point that it's important to have policies in place rather than be concerned about two policies that cover the same thing. For example, it's important to have a student discipline process in place rather than having to work through two policies that talk about student discipline. C. Parkin noted that policies regarding Business, Finance, and Transportation were not changed specifically. If a policy is adopted, it should fit the nature of the community rather than just be off the shelf. J. Stinson mentioned it's important for everyone to be on the same page when it comes to getting the administration's okay in adopting new policy.

Dr. McKinnon said that it would be easier to adopt the Shipman policies and repeal the legacy policies at the same time. C. Parkin said that May being the second read will allow for ideal timing regarding negotiating any potential policy gaps, because it can be handled over the summer. Dr. McKinnon said that he will clean up the model that presents the timeline for processes regarding policy review, rehab, repeal, etc. and send it out to everyone.

## DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: STUDENT TRANSPORTATION CONTRACT

Dr. McKinnon and M. D'Agostino will present on the student transportation contract.

Dr. McKinnon reported that the current contract for student transportation was signed on November 7th, 2018 as a five year agreement set to end this year. There are 28 type-one buses, 5 type-two, and 8 vans. All are new as of 2020. Pricing was originally based on 41 routes, 46 buses, and a 2% increase year over year. There are two options to consider.

Option A: Develop an RFP & Bid New Contract

Option B: Extend Current Contract for 2-3 Years

The recommendation is that the boards authorize the administration to discuss contract extension with First Student and present terms to the Transportation Committee in January. Those terms can be considered (renew contract or go back to bid) and make a recommendation at the January 30th tri-board meeting. This will allow some preliminary information during the budget deliberation so the budget can be presented more accurately.

M. D'Agostino presented the information that people are riding the bus again, and there are even requests from principals about adding late buses for students to be able to participate in after-school activities. The current company: First Student does a good job, has a solid administration, and charging the administration with gathering empirical data and cost projection would help the ER9 Transportation Committee moving forward.

C. Parkin said that the newly appointed members of the Joint Transportation Committee will have to meet in December and January to provide feedback to the administration which will inform their official recommendation to the three boards at the January 30th meeting. T. Johnston asked what kind of empirical data they're looking for and the future cost asked of First Student. C. Parkin mentioned that the administration can lean on counsel to advise on appropriate rates. K. Thompson asked if this goes to the May meeting will that still be enough time to make a final decision. C. Parkin said that is how it's been done but there will be a need to be a budget placeholder in effect.

## DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

Dr. McKinnon and Katherine Matz, Director of Special Education presented the Special Education Strategic Plan.

Dr. McKinnon explained that the district wide strategic plan has five priorities, and priority four is meeting the needs of all learners. In Spring 2022, an outside consultant was brought in to conduct focus groups with staff, paraprofessionals, teachers, administrators, and parents on how to make special education better. That data was taken and from it, five main areas, action steps, priorities were created.

The five priorities are: leadership and systems; communication and family engagement; learning environment and special programs; operations; and, promote high expectations. With priority one, there are seven action steps and then sub-actions. For example, the first step was to conduct a search for a Director of Special Education, which has been successfully completed. 1.3 is increasing the distributed leadership over special education students; this would increase the engagement of principals and assistant principals with students and families. Further, an IEP coordinator would be hired to facilitate PPTs.

Director Matz presented priority two which would include plans like increasing and improving communication between the special education administration and all the involved stakeholders. It is a high priority of the special education team to empower parents so they feel they are a partner and understand what happened in the PPT meetings. Parents can give feedback about their engagement in the project. Each parent gets a case manager. It is all about embracing a vision of working together.

All the priorities and key actions call be found here: <https://er9strategicplan.org/special-education#block-95bfafa1c3d86ddd9a2c>

Board members asked questions like if there was still an overage of 70% as the threshold of 4 ½ was met for state reimbursement. K. Matz replied that the formula is recalculated every year. J. Parker explained that the threshold is 4 ½ x the student cost, but if there are outplaced students then there is a student cost way over that 4 ½ which the state reimburses. Sometimes it's 70% to 75%. Both K. Matz and C. Parkin mentioned that the 70% hasn't been fully funded as of yet.

K. Thompson mentioned that every parent would likely want to be a strategic priority for their child. Dr. McKinnon said the commitments in the strategic plan are being accomplished, and there is alignment between the two plans. C. Parkin clarified a previous point that high need students and special education students are cross sections of the population, and looking at it through both lenses will help the students. K. O'Brien asked about the cost associated with transportation of special education students, if it's included or separate in the transportation budget. K. Matz said one of the components of the special education plan is the specific transportation costs for special education students. C. Graziano asked who the IEP coordinator covers if it's one school or all the districts. K. Matz replied that the IEP coordinator spends one day per week in each building, and if there is a specific need in a particular location, they will go there. Dr. McKinnon said the goal with the strategic plan is to lay out the direction for the future, and identify what needs to be worked on now and in the future.

#### BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

None

#### ADJOURNMENT

C. Graziano made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Hearing no objections, C. Parkin and J. Parker deemed the meeting adjourned.

**Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education meeting be adjourned. (O'Brien). Approved. Unanimous.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Submitted by Karen O'Brien  
Secretary, Region 9 Board of Education  
Recorded by Liadan O'Connor