

Bridgeport Board of Education
Board Process Ad Hoc Committee
Meeting Minutes – January 18, 2012

Meeting was called to order by Ms. Bankowski at 5:35 PM

Attendees were Hernan Illingworth, David Norton, Jacqueline Kelleher, John Di Donato, Denise Clemons, Susan Smith, Jim Denton, Kenneth Moales joined the meeting shortly after the start. Also in attendance were several coaches from the high schools and a few Bridgeport High School alumni.

The first order of business was to discuss the Athletic Academic Policy.

Mr. Silverman, Central High's Soccer Coach, presented a position regarding the policy and concerns regarding the amount of time that has been provided for the students to prepare for the increased academic requirements.

Mr. Cadelina, Central High Football Coach expressed concerns regarding the policy with specific concerns around the four core courses in the senior year.

Dameon Francis, 2010 graduate and current student and athlete at New Hampshire University expressed concerns regarding the policy. If the policy was in place when he was attending high school, he would not have been eligible to play football and doesn't feel he would be attending college now.

Mr. Norton asked Mr. Francis if there were academic policies regarding playing sports at UNH and if so, what happens if you do not meet the grade.

Mr. Francis explained that there are tutoring and other study programs offered to help the athletes, but if they don't make the grade, they are still part of the team they just cannot suit up or play.

Mr. Illingworth suggested that Bridgeport possibly have interventions available for athletes so they can also maintain a certain academic level.

Mr. Moales stated that he believes the current policy was unfair and that it was inconsistent with other schools in the state.

Ms. Clemons identified Stamford and Waterbury as having equivalent grade requirements for athletes.

Mr. Lewis, Bassick High School Football Coach stated that interventions are necessary and the policy is too confusing and should be simplified.

Mr. McCollough, Asst. Coach for Bassick High School stated that local universities are willing to have their college students mentor our students to help with the interventions when needed.

Mr. Norton suggested that if we modified the policy to have academic intervention, then students must attend or would not be allowed to play.

Ms. Bankowski requested that Mr. Denton with a team of coaches, parents, and students provide a draft update to the athletic policy. It should provide for consistency as well as the goal to insure all students achieve a solid academic level upon graduation. Ms. Bankowski also suggested that this policy be something that can be extended to other extracurricular activities as to not seem unfair to athletes. Mr. DiDanato requested that Mr. Mulford and at least one principal also be included.

Mr. Denton was ask to notify the Board Process Ad Hoc Committee when he is ready to discuss the proposed policy.

The second order of business was with regard to the recent Bullying Policy.

Mr. Illingworth expressed concern regarding the implementation at each school, specifically consistency. He also expressed concern that it appeared that Ms. Smith was a single person responsible and that there was no accountability at each school.

Much discussion occurred regarding what if the Principal or delegate didn't take an identified issue seriously. It was suggested that an appeal/escalation process be identified so that parents felt they had an avenue to resolve if they were not satisfied with the way a bullying complaint was handled at the school level.

Ms. Smith reminded the committee of the significant change in the new Bullying Policy, specifically that it was from the child's point of view. If the child feels bullied, then by law, the school district is required to follow due process.

It was also recommended that the new process include a requirement that each school provide a monthly report to the Assistant Superintendent and Ms. Smith.

The overall discussion raised the question if the districts should have an additional policy regarding accountability by principals and teachers. Possibly with certain items as identified as "no tolerance" with severe consequences. It was decided that the Board Process Ad Hoc Committee would address this at a future committee meeting and seek input from Mr. Vallas and Dr. Kase.

Mr. Norton motioned to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Illingworth seconded.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:45PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Bankowski
Chairperson, Board Process Ad Hoc Committee