

Board Special Meeting



2445 – 3rd Avenue South, Seattle WA 98134

Working Group: Program changes - process, communication, decision-making
Thursday, April 28, 2016, 5:00-6:30pm
Board Office Conference Room, John Stanford Center

Minutes

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:03pm.

Directors Peters, Harris, Geary, Pinkham, and Burke. Director Patu arrived at 5:28pm.

This meeting was staffed by Superintendent Nyland, Deputy Superintendent Stephen Nielsen, General Counsel Noel Treat, and Director of Policy, Board Relations and Special Projects Erinn Bennett.

Working Group: Program changes – process, communication, decision-making

Director Peters provided an overview of tonight's agenda and direction for the conversation. She noted the attachments to the Board Action Report (BAR) showed suggestions made by both her and staff.

Stephen Nielsen thanked the Board and Dir. Peters for putting a great deal of effort into addressing policy concerns and assisting in providing more clarity in these processes. Directors discussed the need to align policy on decision making procedures that heavily impact families. Directors indicated the importance of oversight in the process.

Director Peters discussed the revisions within her attachment to the BAR. She indicated the revisions made were based on the feedback from the work session held on March 23rd. She further highlighted the changes made within Policy H01.00 to closures of sites and schools. Directors discussed the addition of language to the policy and the removal of language that would no longer apply. Directors indicated that the policy should provide the right amount of oversight that would not interfere with the duties of staff but would still allow the Board to be well informed and provide input on decisions that impact a large portion of the student body.

Directors discussed Policy F21.00. Director Peters pointed out the changes to this policy, noting that some language was removed because it no longer applied. She noted the changes were an attempt to bring oversight to bigger decisions that effect large populations and student services and programs.

Director Harris requested more uniformity in language throughout the document to avoid any potential confusion and asked to include language on "sites" in both policies. She further pointed to lessons that could be learned from the Middle College experience. Directors further discussed the distinction between the two policies and the differences between "services" and "programs". Directors suggested a glossary of definitions for clarity and consistency. Directors concurred that the policy should include informing the Board on transitioning schools to service programs. Michael Tolley provided clarification on incidents when schools merge.

Staff and Directors further discussed language within Board policies and including a framework for procedures that consider underserved populations in the decision-making process of closures. Staff and Directors discussed the legal requirements in these decisions.

Directors and staff discussed definitions and consistency in both policies and procedures. There was further discussion on formatting and placement of definitions within the documents and when Board oversight would be required. Staff and Board members discussed the effects of closures on assignment plans and the process that the District takes to ensure there is an equitable balance across the schools. Directors requested clarification on equitable funding of services and programs and how closures or reallocations of funds in the process of adding programs affect the “big picture” of the district. Directors expressed the need to understand how funding or closing one program will affect other populations throughout the district. They continued to discuss the timing of Board oversight in these types of decisions and the need to be transparent in the process and provide information to the communities in a consistent and upfront manner. Staff and Directors discussed the difference between service schools and option schools and the process currently in place for families. Directors identified concerns and made suggestions on how to improve on inter-communication in the decision-making process. They provided feedback on concerns addressed by their community members. Directors and staff considered potential resolutions to these concerns.

Stephen Nielsen led the conversation on revisions to the policies made by staff as a result of the work session on March 23rd. Mr. Nielsen also noted the student assignment plan as a major piece in these policies and processes. He further discussed the staff’s understanding of the definition of a site to mean a place where learning happens. He noted that is the definition used when using the term in the revisions provided by staff. Mr. Nielsen concurred that the need for clear definitions is imperative to the successful implementation of these policies. He further noted that the revisions provided by staff tried to parallel the revisions provided by Dir. Peters. Mr. Nielsen referred to definitions within a matrix drafted by staff that provides definitions and examples of the process when Board approval is pursued. Mr. Nielsen added that the timing of this process will vary depending on the situation but indicated the importance of determining how these decisions affect the students prior to initiating them. He further highlighted that community engagement in the decision-making process will vary depending on the specific implications of the decision. He further noted the most important part in terms of transparency is that there is communication and understanding so that Directors are not blindsided.

Directors asked for further information on Special Education student placement and programs and services that involve this population. Staff provided information on the turnaround time restrictions and needs when considering services for students with special needs. Wyeth Jessee discussed the complexities to providing services to students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) and the staffing and building considerations that need to be made to fill these needs. There was discussion on understanding the role of IEPs in the definition of services within the scope of this policy. It was further noted the Board would not have authority over the approval of the specific needs within an IEP as they are driven by legal parameters. Mr. Jessee provided clarification on the assignment process of Special Education students and addressed the feeder pattern of students transitioning from one school level to another. Directors suggested that language be placed within the student assignment documents that provide definitions of services available. Staff discussed the need to update student assignment material and noted the need to maintain the purpose of providing the most information for parents to make an informed decision without creating a word intensive

document.

Directors and staff continued to discuss definitions, language and consistency throughout departments in the District and the documents they provide to the public. They further discussed what services encompass and when the creation or termination of services would be presented to the Board. Directors and staff discussed the different processes when dealing with services for Highly Capable students versus Special Education students.

Directors suggested continued work on the matrix of definitions provided by staff and noted they would like it to be available to the public. Mr. Nielsen provided more information on what oversight would look like and that the process would provide authority but would not slow down the decision-making. Directors and staff noted that notice of changes to services and programs across the District would be provided to the Board, however when the notice is provided within the decision making process, it would be determined upon the situation, as some cases require quicker responses and may not realistically be provided for Board approval prior to action, such as is seen in Special Education IEPs.

Directors and staff discussed how this new framework would have affected certain decisions by using examples of past closures. Mr. Nielsen provided detail in how this process would encourage conversation between staff and the Board in the process of program and service closure. They further discussed when the Board would be notified and what the level of input would be from the Board.

Directors discussed the term “community engagement” and the various levels of what the process for involving the community in these types of decisions would be. Erinn Bennett noted the June Board Retreat agenda is focused on community engagement and would be an opportunity to discuss what this word entails and what the framework would be around District policies with engagement.

Directors and staff discussed the process of when information would be provided to the Board when a site is moving locations. Mr. Nielsen identified the notification would be to the appropriate committee and that it would then be moved to the full Board, as is standard procedure. They further discussed the clarification of language in both policies and procedures across the District and the need to clearly define a process for notification to the Board and the community. Directors requested clarification when these decisions are considered to affect student assignment and when they are not. Directors and staff discussed considerations regarding notification, timing, and the process and implications of various closures in regards to protecting the student’s civil rights and maintaining safety.

Ms. Bennett noted that the revisions reflected within the staff version of the policies was based off of the original policy and not from the document provided by Director Peters. She further noted that staff aimed to maintain consistency throughout the policies and to align the intent of both documents to best fit the needs of both the Board and staff. Directors addressed some language concerns within the staff revised documents. Ms. Bennett provided clarification regarding closure and placement. Staff further provided information on the revisions seen in the documents they provided.

Staff and Directors discussed the timeline of the BAR. Staff and Director Peters will continue to provide revisions to the documents and proposed placing it on the May 18 regular Board agenda. They further discussed the need to provide thoughtful analysis on the changes to the

policies and the implications to the process already in place. Directors asked if this process would change any of the timelines for items coming to the Board in the near future. Staff indicated there were currently no foreseen items that would be affected by the implementation of this process. Directors and staff further noted the expected time and information needed to allow for a completed version of these policies to be presented to the Board for consideration.

Director Geary left the meeting at 6:36pm. Directors and staff concluded the conversation with an understanding of the timeline of presenting these policies to the full Board and noted that the drafting was heading in the right direction.

The meeting adjourned at 6:40pm.