

Suffield Board of Education
Policy Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
3-21-18 at 7:30 am
Middle School Annex

Attendees: Maureen Sattan and Debra Dudack, Board members; Karen Berasi, Superintendent; Brian Hendrickson, Assistant Superintendent; Natalie Donais, Director of Special Services; Eric Senger, SHS Physical Education/Health Teacher; Julie Haefner, SHS Family Consumer Science Teacher; Anne Kelly, SMS Family Consumer Science Teacher; Judith Stafford, SHS School Nurse; Ben Gashi, Food Service Director; Bill Hoff, Business Manager; and Pamela Hardy, Parent.

Call to Order: 7:36 am

Policies for Review and Discussion: Policy #6142.101 -- Wellness Policy

Committee members started by discussing the vision the revised policy should take. Rather than meeting minimum standards, Wellness Committee members expressed a strong desire go beyond state standards to embrace and advocate for a community-wide culture of wellness. Members stated the Board policy should be consistently reviewed and adjusted, and be accompanied by a specific committee-generated action plan with objectives and measures that evolve over time. Members suggested starting with one objective for each category and progressing from there.

Next, discussion focused on the food and nutrition portion of the policy. Food service is already beginning to make adjustments to its meals, based on suggestions from the committee. For example, they are planning to begin serving meatless meals once a week starting next month. Other ideas regarding food services included having a dessert-free day, which would have a cost impact as 16 percent of sales are snacks and ice cream. Other options suggested would be to offer healthier dessert items, Greek yogurt, Kale chips, sampling of fruit or food in the cafeteria, offering a share table for unwanted food items, or even composting unwanted food in the future for use in the Ag-Sci program. Additional suggestions discussed included eliminating processed foods, offering more robust salad bars, and looking at districts that are doing innovative things with our food service company.

In regards to calories, members expressed support for adding calorie labels to district menus and also to the food items sold in the cafeteria so children learn to analyze their options in terms of calorie counts, carbs, sugars, fiber, etc. It was noted that consumption could be monitored before and after labeling to see if the labels prompt any change in purchasing patterns. Discussion turned to birthday treats and other snacks brought into schools for sharing with classmates. Committee members expressed support for eliminating homemade goods in general, due to allergy concerns. They also expressed support for treat-free birthday celebrations. Suggestions were made to survey teachers about preferred alternative options for celebrations, which could include bringing a favorite book in for the class, bringing in trinkets for classmates, ordering approved snacks from food services for classroom celebrations, etc. It was suggested to consider exceptions for festive celebrations a couple of times a year.

With regards to the physical activity portion of the policy, members expressed support for developing a way to give children credit for participating in physical activity outside of the school day. Ideas involved rewarding children for being involved in dance, karate, yoga, school sports, etc. Per state regulations, it was noted districts can't give credit for such activities in place of the one full credit needed at the high school level, however districts can go above and beyond that. These days there is so much going on that children have to make tough choices and sometimes that means not remaining physically active, so rewarding children for going above and beyond would be a huge opportunity, noted committee members. Also, the idea of utilizing capstone projects on fitness or well-being was discussed.

Additional ideas discussed involved increasing physical education time, offering open gym time during lunch for those who finish early, incorporating additional time for movement breaks throughout the school day, and utilizing a buddy system for athletes to encourage others embrace physical activity by exercising together.

Members expressed support for including staff wellness and promotion in the policy. Ideas for activities included having staff and students exercise together so staff can model appropriate activity for students, as well as offering yoga at schools for teachers, possibly through Parks and Rec. Members also expressed support for reaching out to Parks and Rec to see if they could hold nutrition classes for the community and parent/child cooking classes. Offering a healthy cooking competition was also discussed as well as holding a Wellness Day towards the end of the school year.

Members discussed the idea of soliciting input from parents, students, teachers and others about the policy change through focus groups and surveys. Members also discussed the importance of communicating the culture change to all stakeholders with messaging that highlights the opportunity for parents, students, teachers and staff to embrace a new culture of wellness to enhance health and academic outcomes. Additional messaging was suggested for rewarding students with healthy choices and exercise while also promoting food safety.

Action Steps:

- Board will work to draft language for policy and will share draft on Google Drive.
- Teachers will organize feedback groups for students at the Middle School and High School (Anne and Heather- likely held after April vacation)
- Surveys will be drafted to seek input from teachers and parents.
- We will share information regarding questions for focus groups and surveys, as well as any feedback received on Google Drive via new folder.
- Attend PTO and PTAC meetings to discuss pending policy revision and seek feedback.

Adjournment

The subcommittee meeting adjourned at 9:04 am. The committee plans to reconvene in May for additional discussion on feedback from stakeholders and draft language for the policy.