

**Salem Public Schools
Salem School Committee
POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
April 15, 2021**

On April 15, 2021 the Policy Subcommittee held its regular meeting using the Zoom on-line meeting platform.

In Attendance: Ms. Ana Nuncio and Mr. Manny Cruz

Ex Officio Members Present: Mary Manning

Members Absent: Mr. James Fleming

Others in Attendance: Dr. Stephen Zrike and Dr. Jill Conrad

Call of Meeting to Order

Ms. Nuncio called the meeting to order at 8:40 am

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Cruz made a motion to approve the minutes of April 8, 2021. Ms. Nuncio seconded. A roll call vote was made.

Mr. Cruz Yes

Ms. Nuncio Yes

Motion carries 2-0

Mr. Cruz shared that he, Ms. Campbell and Ms. Marena had met with students of color regarding a microaggression policy regarding staff. These students were working on the equity statement, when the discussion started regarding staff to student relationships. They were asking the policy committee's procedures and policies. Mr. Cruz suggested connecting with them to help them better understand what their options are and to further discuss. Ms. Manning asked if there was a pattern that can identify staff members. Mr. Cruz responded that it is more veteran teachers, 20-30 yrs in teaching. The students are questioning how a teacher can be investigated and not be terminated. Mr. Cruz explained to them that there are processes in place to protect teachers. Mr. Cruz suggested maybe retraining teachers. Also, a recent investigation around some staff members showed there is confusion on language to use regarding racial and the staff is not on the same page when they are discussing race and equity. Mr. Cruz explained they need clear education on how to refer to it. Mr. Cruz said he would like the opportunity to engage with students regarding this. Dr. Conrad offered to meet with Duncan Mayer to explain the policy subcommittee and it was suggested that since Duncan is a senior they should include the other 2 students who are a junior and sophomore.

Dr. Zrike introduced Mr. Moriarty who was invited to speak to the committee regarding chronic absenteeism. Mr. Moriarty, the Executive Director of OneHolyoke CDC, explained he was appointed to the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in 2015.

Mr. Moriarty explained that chronic absenteeism needs to be looked at as city wide not just schools. He went on to say that he has been engaged for about a decade with Attendance Works, which monitors chronic absence to reduce educational inequities. Mr. Moriarty explained that there should be a chronic absence policy in addition to a truancy policy, since they are different. He said that chronic absenteeism does not look at excused or unexcused absences. In addition, there have also been data management issues and numbers are getting measured incorrectly. He added that COVID has also added to the attendance issues. He also spoke of the No Child Left Behind program which he felt did not work well.

Dr. Conrad suggested reviewing the chronic absenteeism policy, what the schools are doing and are there student support teams in place. She also recommends investigating if it is a transportation issue. Her opinion is that another problem in our schools is disengagement and depression. She has heard that schools are encountering this a lot.

There was additional discussion on how this policy worked in Holyoke and how it can be used in Salem. Dr. Zrike suggested launching a campaign regarding the chronic absenteeism issue in the district. Mr. Moriarty left the meeting at 10 am.

The Subcommittee made a decision to meet again on Thursday, April 22nd at 8:30 am.

Mr. Cruz made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:11 am. Ms. Nuncio seconded. A roll call vote was made.

Mr. Cruz Yes

Ms. Nuncio Yes

Motion carries 2-0

Respectfully submitted by,

Nancy A. Weiss

Executive Assistant to the School Committee

Approved April 22, 2021