

Board of Education

Regional School District 13

August 20, 2025

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Policy Committee met in Regular Session on Wednesday, August 20, 2025, at 4:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Committee Members Present: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback

Committee Members Absent: Dr. Darcy

Board Members Present: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback

Administration Present: Dr. Leggett, Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Moore called the meeting to order at 4:19 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Mennone made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to approve the agenda.

In favor of approving the agenda: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes – May 21, 2025

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to approve the May 21, 2025, Policy Committee Meeting Minutes.

In favor of approving the May 21, 2025, Policy Committee Meeting Minutes: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

Policy Discussion and Review

A. Animals in Schools

Dr. Leggett explained that Shipman is reviewing the Animals in Schools policy. A service dog will be entering the district this year. The policy explains the difference between a service dog, therapy animal, classroom pets, and animals for instruction. Insurance for a service dog is arranged through the handler and the service dog organization; the school does not need additional insurance. Any other animal, like therapy dogs or animals brought in for instructional purposes, in the school will carry their own

insurance. This policy does not include search K-9s. A service dog's purpose is for an identified disability, such as blindness, deafness, seizures, etc. The policy states that there are no emotional support animals allowed in the schools. Mr. Moore noted that there are a series of permission requirements which will be regulations. The service animal request will be approved because of its status with the ADA but will also be reviewed for IEP and 504 plan alignment. The principal will be the one to permit or deny animals for instruction and classroom pets. The policy will be brought to the Board for approval pending legal changes from Shipman.

B. Bullying/District Climate and Culture

Dr. Leggett explained Connecticut's change in School Climate Policy. Connecticut is asking that all bullying policies get rescinded completely and a new policy called School District Climate and Culture will replace it. This will include the bullying language from past policies, but schools will now have bullying under the umbrella of a School Climate Policy. Dr. Leggett stated that the school district has to have a climate committee district-wide, and every other school has to have a school-building level climate committee. This is where the district or school would review bullying reports and discuss if any plans need to change. The current climate committee will dissolve into this District Climate and Culture Committee. Mr. Mennone pointed out that the SRO is not mentioned. Dr. Leggett noted that it will be discussed at the Board retreat when choosing members to be on the committees. The principal of each school will be the School Climate specialist for the school level. Dr. Leggett will be the district Climate Coordinator.

Mr. Moore stated that the policy seems a bit more generic than the previous Bullying Policy. That being said, it is built into a strong regulation. The state has an improvement plan template for the district to use. Dr. Leggett recommended using the suggested challenging behavior forms as regulations. She also highlighted the value of the planning template.

The recommendation to the Board would include rescinding and replacing the Bullying Policy with the adoption of the District Climate and Culture Policy.

Mrs. Petrella asked how this would affect the anonymous reporting. Dr. Leggett explained that Say Something will contain an app where students can anonymously report information. The Say Something system will feed into reports that will be reviewed. This will be rolled out during advisory for grades six through twelve. Dr. Leggett will check if it will affect fifth grade as well.

In regard to the Climate Survey, Dr. Leggett noted there is still an issue with concerns about anonymity among the survey takers. The district will be purchasing SurveyMonkey this year, which should address those concerns. SurveyMonkey will cost approximately \$1,000 per year. Dr. Leggett stated that she believes with SurveyMonkey the response will be larger and more honest regarding climate issues. Mr. Roraback noted that SurveyMonkey was used successfully in the past.

Mr. Moore expressed concerns about bullying not being at the forefront with the climate plan. Mrs. Dahlheimer explained that the bullying forms will be helpful, though it is important that parents and students know where to find them. Mr. Mennone suggested involving the PTO as well. Mr. Moore also

expressed concerns that the tiered response will delay activity, and restorative practices will not become implemented until escalation. Dr. Leggett stated that 80 percent of restorative practice will be proactive. Restorative practice will create consequences that meet the needs of the behavior and help the students feel they are a part of the school community. Dr. Leggett suggested putting together a one-page document explaining the tiered responses to be added to the handbook, distributed to the community, and added to the release of the complaint/resolution procedure.

Meaghan Onofrio, from Durham, stated that she did not know of the existence of a bullying form. She added that she appreciated the idea of a one-page document as the handbook is lengthy and difficult to read. She also noted that if students are held more accountable for their actions it will hold the parents more accountable as well. Ms. Onofrio also expressed that the students should feel as though there are specific adults to speak to if they are experiencing bullying. She supported the concept of the school maintaining more control as opposed to the State.

Mrs. Petrella expressed concern that certain people who review the policies will not easily find the Bullying Policy if it is placed under School Climate. She suggested a statement be added to help point those people in the right direction.

While discussing the length of the handbook, Mr. Mennone stated that ignorance of the law or a policy is not a defense. There are resources available. He noted that it should be easier to find these resources, however not being aware of a law or policy is not a defense. Dr. Leggett added that she would like to make the handbook more accessible and that this will be a future project for the Leadership Team.

The recommendation is to rescind Bullying Policy 5131.8 and replace it with 5131.911. All committee members agreed.

Dr. Leggett asked when the policies are presented to the Board if the forms are included to approve as regulations. Mrs. Dahlheimer answered that usually the policy is included along with regulations, forms, and attachments.

C. Sex Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace (Personnel)

Dr. Leggett noted that this policy is in need of updating from last year. The new version from Shipman was distributed and discussed. The policy outlines all of Title IX. The committee agreed to update the Sex Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace Policy.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Mr. Mennone made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to adjourn the meeting.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:51 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Scarrozzo