

## January 5, 2023 Policy Committee Meeting Questions and Answers

### **Agenda IV. B, page 28**

Why did the administrative position change from Chief of Human Resources to Chief Information & Strategy Officer? Is the Assistant Director of School Schedule Design & Support Systems a new position? What is the salary for this position?

### **Agenda IV B, page 28 Response**

- Response: The administrative position changed from Chief of Human Resources to Chief Information and Strategy Officer because in 2020, the responsibility for convening and supporting the calendar committee shifted from a staff member in the Human Resources department to a staff member in the Student Information Systems department.
- Response: The Assistant Director position is graded as a DSE12 (\$65,851.05) and is not a new position. The position was regraded from a manager in 2020 when the additional duties were added. In addition to the calendar committee, the position is responsible for supporting the staff-facing portion of our SIS, scheduling our elementary schools, leading the scheduling of all schools, training and serving as the final resolution point for our school registrars, and a number of other duties.

### **Agenda IV. E, page 36**

As APS staff is to be respectful of student's stance in matters involving religion, what guides the teacher in deciding what is of secular importance (bullet 3)? And does a student's "freedom of conscience" include prayer, invocations, benedictions etc. at school and at other district sponsored activities (bullet 4)? Students can pray and talk freely about religious/spiritual issues at school? Referencing the additional language in IH, for what reason and what that means in a practical way in the classroom. "Every Albuquerque Public Schools employee shall foster respect for the educational process and environment and to provide for the right of every public school student to exercise his/her/their freedom of conscience on public school grounds without pressure from the state, any public school, teacher, school personnel or other student."

### **Agenda IV. E, page 36 Response**

- Response: Teachers may not provide religious instruction; however, teachers may teach about "religion" in general. For example: the history of religion, comparative religion, the role of religion in history, and religious influences on art, music, literature, philosophy, etc. Students have greater First Amendment rights than staff when it comes to religion. They may partake in prayer, etc. as long as it is not during instructional time where it may disrupt the educational setting.

### **Agenda IV. E. 1, page 39 #5**

I understand schools are supposed to be "religion neutral" but using the words "as to ensure the comfort of all students." Do you feel that is possible or should "comfort of all students" be removed as it is not possible? There are schools that don't allow any 'holiday' practices and other schools that do. Parents with children attending different schools don't understand why their child at one school can celebrate a holiday like 'Christmas', but their child at a different school cannot. It does cause confusion so what can be done about this? #8. p. 39 Accommodations related to religious inquiry are very dependent on what the teacher is willing to provide so how does APS make this better for its students as our students' feelings should always come before what an adult feels?

### **Agenda IV. E. 1, page 39 #5 Response**

- Response: We can remove the sentence that includes "comfort of all students."
- Response: The variation of "holiday" practices at different schools is based on the guideline that "holiday activities are permissible, but should have a strong instructional/curriculum tie and should not be drawn out over excessive periods of time." School principals, educators, and staff have permission to follow this guideline, but may also choose to not partake.

### **Agenda IV. F. p. 41**

Can you explain why students in distance learning programs have to "demonstrate academic progress for participating students equivalent or better than their peers participating in in-person learning, as measured by state assessments?" Why are these students held to a higher standard? Is this required or should you remove this wording?

### **Agenda IV. F. p. 41 Response**

- Response: They are not held to a higher standard than in-person learning peers. This is a confusing statement and we can agree to remove it.

### **Agenda IV. G, page 4, Graduation Requirement**

Does state statute say students are required to complete the FAFSA? If it isn't statutorily required can we mandate it? If not, perhaps we should remove the word "require" and perhaps say 'encourage'?

### **Agenda IV. G, page 4, Graduation Requirement Response**

- Response: State law does not require students to complete the FAFSA.
- Response: We need to reword it to state, "Albuquerque Public Schools will encourage and provide the opportunity for all seniors to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to ensure they have access to financial aid opportunities for postsecondary education."

## **Agenda #1, page 45**

Under Procedures #2-It says the following items are needed to process the request: #4. Parent/Guardian and Students (I don't believe parents, guardians and students should be referred to as items, so please rewrite.

### **Agenda #1, page 45 Response**

- Response: It should state Parent/Guardian and/or Student signature.

## **Agenda IV. I. 1, page 57**

I see the term Junior High used instead of Middle School-Do we use the term Junior High or should we use Middle School?

### **Agenda IV. I. 1, page 57 Response**

- Response: Some schools/districts still have Jr High 7-9 grades, APS does not. This should read:(refer to google doc to see “tracked changes”

## **Transfers from a Junior High School (7th-9th grades)**

Ninth grade student transfer credits for a ninth grade student enrolled in a Junior High serving students in 7th-9th grade junior high students will be placed in a graduation cohort based on the year they entered 9th grade. on a three-year pro-rated graduation plan. Courses taken in a junior high school will be listed on the transcript, including grades which should be identified with an asterisk in Semester II column as junior high. No credits will be granted; however, graduation requirements will be satisfied.

## **page 58, #4, Question 1**

Why are transfer students from non-accredited or home schools not allowed to be ranked with their graduating class unless they have completed their final four semesters in an APS high school?

### **page 58, #4 Question 1 Response**

- In practice it has been the final two semesters (senior year) excluding summer school. The recommendation is to change to “enrolled in an APS High School for two consecutive semesters (excluding summer school)” to align with the Registrar's Handbook and current practice. This has been in practice because non-accredited schools and some home-schooling programs do not have to follow the same requirements of the NMPED and therefore may not have been held to the same standard.

### **page 58, #4, Question 2**

Is this required by rule, regulation, statute or just an APS decision? If it is solely an APS decision can we rethink this? Why should children be penalized for not attending an APS high school for 4 semesters?

### **page 58, #4 Question 2 Response**

- As a school district, we want to make sure that we are giving a New Mexico Diploma of Excellence to students who have earned credits from an accredited program. Specifically to #4, if a student transfers from a non-accredited program, we want to require at least four semesters (50% of their education) be from an accredited APS high school for the student to be eligible for academic honors and ranking at graduation so they do not bump a student who has been at the school with proper accreditation. We can discuss further.

### **page 59 #5**

Who made the decision that students have to earn a minimum of 5 credits as a senior in order to receive a diploma from that high school? Can this be changed?

### **page 59 #5 Response**

- The recommendation is to change 5 credits to a "minimum four core and one elective credit". There is no way to determine if the requirements of the non-accredited school meets the requirements of the NMPED which APS students are held to. Requiring four core and one elective credit will provide enough evidence to determine whether the student had sufficient education and proficiency in core classes to graduate and obtain an NMHS Diploma.

### **page 66 #3**

I believe that "three (3)" was mistakenly struck.

### **page 66 #3 Response**

- This was a mistake.

### **Agenda IV. L. 1, page 96**

As teachers have to get their principal's approval of guest speakers, are parents asked if they approve of the guest speakers? Are parents and students informed of guest speakers ahead of time so they have time to opt out if they object "as a matter of principle"? Are parents and students informed that they can object to participating in an activity or listening to a controversial speaker that they may find goes against their principles? If they are informed how is this information disseminated to families? I've been told on many occasions that parents didn't know their children were allowed to opt out of curriculum, activities etc. they fundamentally disagreed with and that their child must be provided an alternative. How can we do better about letting this be known?

#### **Agenda IV. L. 1, page 96 Response**

- Response: Guest speakers, just like movies in the classroom, need to have a parent/guardian permission form signed and returned with the understanding that their student will be provided with an alternative experience. We can continue the conversation with Principals to ensure their teachers are following this expectation.

#### **Agenda IV. L. 2, page 99**

Does HIV/AIDS instruction have to be provided to all elementary students beginning at the kindergarten level? Is this mandated by NM Administrative Code to begin at the earliest grades as it used to be at 5th grade. This seems very inappropriate if this instruction will begin with our 5 year olds!!!!

#### **Agenda IV. L. 2, page 99 Response**

- Response: The language in the NMAC might be causing confusion. According to the NMAC, each school district shall provide instruction about HIV and related issues in the curriculum of the required health education content area to all students in the elementary grades, in the middle/junior high school grades, and in the senior high school grades.
- Response: APS does not require a health education class in elementary school but all students should receive instruction in alignment to the NMPED K-4 Health Education Standards and Benchmarks. NMPED K-4 health standards do not require HIV specific lessons, however age appropriate lessons to build skills for healthy lifestyles, including preventing the spread of germs, healthy decision making and identifying resources/trusted adults.
- Response: APS designates 5th grade for age appropriate/medically accurate instruction about HIV/AIDS/Growth and Development.

#### **Agenda IV. L. 3, page 103**

As stated in Selection of Library-Media Print/Non-Print Material if, "It is difficult to legally remove materials once they have been placed into the library collection" how then are parents able as is stated in the Parental Concerns About Instructional Materials Procedural Directive, to have library-media materials reconsidered if they are already housed in the library collection and it's legally difficult to remove them?

#### **Agenda IV. L. 3, page 103 Response**

- Response: This part of the procedural directive predates our current Director of Library Services, and agrees it is not written clearly. I believe we should revise it to make the intent clearer. The intent of this particular sentence is to make it clear to teacher-librarians that library materials can't be removed without properly following the appropriate laws and procedural directives ... but we could just say that directly, and link to the relevant procedural directives.

Perhaps something like:

Materials shall be current and comprehensive, reflective of the student body, representative of current trends in youth and children's literature, and available in a variety of formats, thus creating a balanced collection. Once library materials have been placed into the library collection, they may only be removed in accordance with the appropriate procedural directives. It is imperative that personnel conducting the selection process exercise quality judgment throughout the process.

The revision above would only make minimal changes to wording and keep the intent along with cross-references to the appropriate procedural directives (Discarding materials and Parental concerns), might be clearer? The language about following laws and state regulations were not included above because it's stated elsewhere.

### **Agenda IV. 7, page 120**

As New Mexico law requires that the Pledge of Allegiance is recited in public schools what happens to an educator if they violate this law? When I was teaching and still today parents tell me that the Pledge wasn't/isn't recited in many classrooms across our district so what recourse is there for these parents and their children?

### **Agenda IV. 7, page 120 Response**

- Response: The Pledge of Allegiance should be recited in the daily announcements each morning for the entire school to participate per New Mexico State statute Section 22-5-4.5. If it is not happening at specific schools, then we would like to know so that we may follow up with the Principal(s). Students may participate, but are not required to per their First Amendment rights.
- Response: "Local school boards shall provide that the Pledge of Allegiance shall be recited daily in each public school in the school district according to regulations adopted by the state board [department]."

### **Agenda IV. N, page 124**

Under Restraint or Seclusion Techniques first bullet change the word "impeded" to 'impedes' and take out the word "and ". It should read: 'Prone restraint, in which a student is held face down on the floor, wall, or another surface, in a restraint technique which impedes the ability to breathe or speak is not allowed.'

### **Agenda IV. N, page 124 Response**

- Response: This has been fixed.