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Loudoun County Public Schools, Student Behavior and Accountability Committee, Monday, April 28, 2025

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[00:00:00] Good afternoon. It is now 4.04 and we are going to open the SBAC committee meeting for Monday, April 28th.

[00:00:29] With us here today is Dr. Dean and Dr. Rashid and I am Carrie LaBelle. And we are going to be looking for public comment, of which there is none, so we will move on.

[00:00:46] Have you all had a chance to look over the minutes from our last meeting? Yes. All right. Do I hear a motion to approve the minutes of the last meeting? Motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting. Thank you, Dr. Rasheed. Second? Second.

[00:01:02] And thank you, Dr. Dean. Minutes are approved officially. Next thing is an action item. We're going to be looking at policy number 8225, admission, exclusion, or reassignment of students previously expelled long-term suspended or reassigned to an alternative educational program this is a review of public feedback as we have

[00:01:36] not yet had an opportunity to hear from SEAC their meeting their group that meets were not able to meet due to the spring break they have asked if we could hold off on our action item until our next meeting any comments or discussions about that? Yes, I agree. I would like to hear their input, definitely. Thank you, Chair.

[00:01:59] Okay. Dr. Deans, are you okay with that? Yes, I agree. Okay. Since all of us agree that it needs to be heard, we are going to push that back to the next meeting in May. In May, yeah. That leaves us just an information item, and it is the revised policy 8655, and we're going to turn it over to Mr. Smith?

[00:02:24] Awesome. Well, thank you very much. Yes, we're here tonight to talk about revised policy 8655, which is student personal device use. This policy has been in place for about 10 or 11 months now at this point, so we're bringing it back after collecting some feedback.

[00:02:40] Really, structurally, nothing is really changing with the policy. We really just are looking to clarify language so it's clearer. Walking through the policy, in these changes, we did a thought exchange in December where we collected feedback from our community, basically seeing how it was going so far.

[00:02:59] It had significant, with 5,000 participants, with 4,000 thoughts and 74,000 ratings, so lots of feedback was gathered, and so these changes are based off of that feedback. If you, on the LCPS website, there's also a summary of that feedback, kind of highlighting what, the themes that were generated, obviously that's a lot of feedback, so we use the tool to generate those themes. Overall, the policy has been positively received, both by staff and students, and what parents do. So most of the feedback was that it's a more conducive learning

[00:03:38] environment. Students are more likely to have peer-to-peer face conversations in person, and they also like that there's a policy with having uniform, consistent application to say something to go back to and say that this is the lcps policy for how we're going to handle this some areas of confusion that were there were some consistent enforcement so i'll highlight where we've kind of tried to structure some language to make sure that there's there's consistent practices from classroom to classroom and school to school and then some of the language in elementary and middle school was confusing and then some of the language around smart watches

[00:04:15] were confusing so walking through the policy the first thing that we did was change the title so the recommended new title is student personal technology use we just got people couldn't find the policy sometimes because they weren't really looking for a device walking through to section two under technology use we moved basically all that buried language about smart watches and moved it up to be specific before we talk about the other technologies that smart watches are still allowed but students may be asked to remove their smartwatch for tests unless a specific documented

[00:04:54] accommodation exists the third change is if you go down to lines to line 32 previous policy had called out elementary middle and high and we really were doing the same thing where cell phones are not allowed bell to bell in elementary and middle so we combined those together to just say k through eight so that language there was a little confusing because it really was the same thing so we combine that there and then for high school students walking through the policy

[00:05:30] the next substantive change is if you look at line 68 basically this language allowed it up to teachers to get approval of administrators in their building to use cell phones after some conversation that really was some consistency anecdotally talking with students and with the feedback they really wanted it to be to know when they could use it and when they couldn't use it to have a little bit better definition so this language was added in courses

[00:06:06] as outlined by the appropriate content office where there are specific activities where a cell phone may be beneficial these could be things like a journalism class or yearbook or photography art

those type of actions that are easier done on a cell phone so Mr. Slevenstein is working on some guidance that will be provided to schools that'll say which courses and classes and that'll help everyone know really when you walk in is it an acceptable use or is it not an acceptable use in that area and those are pretty much the substantive changes so I'm happy to take any questions again this policy will be posted for feedback after this meeting so I'm sure we'll get

[00:06:44] more feedback on some of these changes and then we plan on bringing it back to the board at the or to to this committee at the may meeting and then to the full board for as information in june and then action at the second meeting in june for the similar timeline to last year so we can have the policy ready to go when students return in august so happy to take any questions overall do you feel like the policy was approved by the school and the community at large most every so from talking to teachers talking to students with the feedback it has been very

[00:07:24] positively received I think at the beginning of school there was a little bit of a you know it was different so there was an adjustment period but even talking to students one of my favorite anecdotal stories is a student saying that they're learning ways to kind of self-regulate the use of the cell phone so even when they're at home and they're doing homework they're putting their phone aside where before they just had it with them all the time so the how they're using it in school is directly translating to how they're using it when they're outside of school so I thought that was a really cool story from a student that just kind of highlights I think the biggest concern from students is just consistency from class to class

[00:08:02] especially if the discipline action is involved that you don't want one teacher saying you're allowed to use it in the next one you get discipline for it so it's just making sure we have some consistent practices there is this policy also clear when we have substitutes in the policy is I think one of the other items that we will be doing is another round of professional development around this policy to ensure that schools know what the expectations are, what the practices are going to be, and then include making sure that that is a part of substitute onboarding could be another avenue where we just make sure we did open houses

[00:08:39] and we did drop-ins where principals could come ask questions and we developed a frequently asked questions document. Communications team developed a fact sheet about it that we could disseminate to schools, but I think that we'll be leaning into that a little bit more to ensure that there's consistency of practice.

[00:08:57] Okay, thank you. Dr. Rashid. Thank you, Chair. This sounds very promising. I'm really excited to tighten up any loose ends from, I believe we always go over some sort of technology when it comes to policy.

[00:09:14] One of the ones I had a question on, maybe this falls under another category, but in line three in the red line copy when it says earbuds, is earbuds crossed out because it falls under like some other category that I missed? Because sometimes what happens is middle schoolers, well, you know, they'll have it, like, Bluetoothed to their phone when their phone or something of the sort is put away, and they're listening to music.

[00:09:37] So maybe I'm just not up to date with the technology. Is that somewhere else? Or is there a reason why it was canceled or removed? Part of the confusion was when things are allowed. Students do use AirPods and earbuds with their Chromebooks.

[00:09:53] They're Bluetooth connected. They're using them for instruction. So we had a lot of feedback from kids that it's even hard to buy headphones that have a cord on them anymore. And so it really is, the goal of that is to allow them to use it for those instructional reasons when that is their primary way of interacting with their Chromebook or watching a video or listening to instructional content.

[00:10:15] Yeah, I just worry about the smart alecks that are out there. They're like, oh, yeah, I'm on my Chromebook, but I'm listening to music instead. That's all. But I understand where that's coming home. There's always going to be a loophole somewhere. Also, the part about smartwatches, there are some kids that use not necessarily a smartwatch, but it's like an angel sense of some sort as a tracker, but it's not really defined as a smartwatch.

[00:10:43] Is there some sort of clause here or something where that wouldn't fall under so that the kid would not have to have that removed because there's a tendency for them to run away from when they're outside of school just for that reason? I think the language for smartwatches is intended to say that they are allowed specifically because we have so many parents that are using them as GPS tracking devices.

[00:11:08] But we have, there are a lot of health monitoring that goes on through smartwatches, even students being like, I'm recording steps and competing in how many steps a day you take challenges. And there really wasn't a way to still provide all that feature functionality and then remove those devices.

[00:11:25] So the goal is to have students use smartwatches as long as they're using them responsibly. But there may be those times where they have to take them off if there's a test or those type of things. Yeah, I think it says it here too. If asked, they would have to remove it. It says it here somewhere, okay. Thank you, appreciate it.

[00:11:41] That would mean that those that need it for medical issues could keep it on during the tests? Correct. As long as it's in their IEP? Correct, or whatever accommodation they need. For example, my daughter has an accommodation to wear smartwatch to monitor heart rate levels, and that is even through, like, College Board.

[00:11:59] We had to get an accommodation to allow it for, like, SAT. So it's different. As long as you have an accommodation, it's allowed. Thank you. Thank you. Anything else, Dr. Dean? Okay. As this is here, as an information item, do we, as a group, feel like we need to send it forward or could send it forward?

[00:12:25] Are we not waiting for more input? Yes, we would first need to post it for public comment. Okay, that's what I meant, send it forward. I didn't say where. And we would do that. That's kind of the standard process, so I'm not sure that we need a vote in order to do that.

[00:12:42] So we would just go ahead probably tomorrow and go ahead and post it for the two-week public feedback period, and then we would bring all of that SEAC, MSAC, LEAF to the next SBAC meeting. All right, thank you. Is there any other, having gone through both our action item and our information item, Is there anything that we would like to bring up as new business?

[00:13:14] If not, I have something I'd like to bring up. Okay. As we learned at our last meeting, L&P want to create rotating committees on our SBAC appeals hearings.

[00:13:36] And we have, as a group, expressed that there are some issues with that. and I'd like to have you take a look at what's here and then in the yellow highlighting, which is what they're planning to use on their meeting.

[00:13:58] What day is it? Tomorrow? Yes, their next meeting is tomorrow. Okay. And so if we have anything we'd like to bring up or add to what we have here, I think we need to talk about this.

[00:14:15] I think having... Yes, ma'am. I think having rotating school board members on SBAC would be a contradiction for having SBAC.

[00:14:36] I think that it would give inconsistent responses to the general public, where there would be some that would be rescinded. And I don't mean this uncirly, but especially with school board members who live in the county, And if it's a family in their district, for an example, they may go more favorable toward that kid than another kid.

[00:15:07] And I just think it's inconsistent to rotate. I don't think that that is appropriate. Okay, Ma'am. Thank you, Chair. I think that us as SBAC members, how we rotate as being chair suffices, addition to when we fill in other school board members when we fill in to one that is absent suffices for a means of rotation and giving each of us experience

[00:15:40] in the appeals hearing is enough thank you okay one of the things that Miss Chandler and I spoke one of the things that had come up as a suggestion for a compromise is that two of us will always serve on the appeals meeting and the third seat would be rotated to other members how do you feel about something like that that would ensure that at least two members on the committee know the rules know what's right what's not right and use that

[00:16:16] information to enlighten uh teach the third person on on the committee yep that still serves as an inconsistency um on a more often basis again i worry about i just worry about the lack of consistency having each of us as chair gives that gives that i guess leadership if you may

[00:16:52] how we rotate that in an appeals hearing whereas we're just rotating someone out if they're absent is enough isn't that almost the same thing except it's not as often yeah yeah um having the way we're doing it now is if one of us is missing, we rotate in someone else from the board and we go through them and it's always different people so that they get the feel for it. So far we have had two people who have not been able to rotate in because of work schedules. I think the same thing

[00:17:25] would happen if we rotated the entire board in and out, which was their original proposal, you'd have people coming in who didn't know what they were doing, and you would still have people who couldn't come in because they were working.

[00:17:42] I strongly feel that we need to maintain three people consistently throughout the year on the SBAT Appeals Committee. I fear, though, that because LNP is the one that makes policy, this might not be happening.

[00:18:04] And I'd rather see it as a compromise than to lose control entirely and they're going to say, okay, you guys are out, you know, starting tomorrow or, you know, next month or whenever. I'd also like to see if this goes through that this change, whatever the change is going to be, doesn't happen or doesn't start until the new school year.

[00:18:29] Just to be consistent for the whole year. Now, what are your thoughts about those two thoughts? Can I add my two cents again? Sure. And won't this serve as a little bit of a hardship, you may have already mentioned this, to LCPS administration to fit the schedule? Because now they have to, I mean, Ms. Scanlon

and Ms. Gettleman already have bared the difficulties of bearing my schedule, you poor souls, of how like it is to, you know, if I'm not available, but let it be it alone with the rest of the board members.

[00:19:03] Isn't that more difficult for the administration to create that type of a schedule, or would this be a consistent rotating schedule? I don't know how they do it, but I would guess, just like that when we do special permissions, they tell us these are your three months, you know, that kind of thing.

[00:19:22] But that means that Ms. Scanlon and her assistant-to-be, sorry, Marna, would have to retrain everybody every three months. And, of course, we always have our meetings at a set time.

[00:19:45] Everybody that has to come in would have to rearrange their schedules. And most likely, some of them wouldn't be able to make it for their assigned month. Then we're back to, well, they're going to have to choose one of the three of us. So, you know, there are a lot of inconsistencies in the system.

[00:20:03] And if it were just the committee and not the appeals, all right, so let them come in and learn what we're doing here on a forum like this. But let the appeals committee remain the same for the school year because we want to be consistent to all the children that come up for us.

[00:20:25] Is there a reason why this came up? I'm just curious. Nope. That was something Ms. Donahue brought forward. So do we make a motion as to what it is that we would prefer as a committee?

[00:20:44] I don't know. Where are we in terms of having any control? Right, of having our own committee. Because it would be my unwavering position that the committee remains constant, except for one of us being ill or out of town or whatever.

[00:21:08] What were you going to say, Ms. Scanlon? I was just going to say that you certainly could make a motion if you want to formalize your thoughts. That's certainly something you could opt to do. Mr. Daniel and I are appealing, we are appearing at LA&P's meeting tomorrow because they do have this scheduled as an action item tomorrow.

[00:21:34] And so we were asked to come by Ms. Chandler to answer any questions that they might have. And I am taking notes, so I'm also prepared to share with them in that forum, if you would like me to, the feedback that I heard tonight.

[00:21:51] Of course, you may also reach out individually to LANP members to express your thoughts, and you could come to their meeting as well. That would be another option. I do want to clarify, simply because I don't know, but when I went, I went to board docs today, and I pulled the documents for LANP's meeting tomorrow, and this newly revised amendment was

[00:22:23] posted on board docs, and the original revision was still posted on board docs. So I don't know. I would imagine that I don't know if the intention of LA&P is to disregard the first proposed revision, and they're as a group inclined now to look at the updated revised amendment.

[00:22:54] I don't know where they are with that, so I don't want you to think that they've all kind of, perhaps by posting this newly revised amendment, that that is an indication that as a whole that's where LA&P is on this issue because I don't know well how do we feel as a group going and being supportive well let's decide what we're going to do first what do you think of going as a committee and speaking I don't have the time to go to that committee I may come

[00:23:34] I'll have to see how I'll have to check with my secretary over there see if I'm scheduled to do anything what time is their meeting Yeah, what time is their meeting? Let me check my calendar. I believe

it's five o'clock. We're done at five right here. Okay Sure, yes, five five to six here in this building Thank you chair. Um, but doesn't our voice here suffice?

[00:24:07] I mean, I'm I think it's great going to the meeting, but I'm just saying doesn't our voice especially if we formalize it Here doesn't that suffice or rather replace us even going there? Isn't that good enough of how we are as a committee? Or is it a must that we have to go there?

[00:24:26] And are we going there for the sake of listening to them or going for the sake of giving our input? Well, I'm not sure. I think we're allowed to go. I mean, obviously, we have had other board members come and sit on our committee and listen to what we have to say.

[00:24:43] I just think our presence shows support, puts a period behind what Ms. Scanlon and Mr. Daniels will be expressing. Would that be something that you think would help?

[00:25:01] Well, to answer Dr. Rasheed's question, you're not required to go. I was just trying to give you options, different avenues for ensuring that your opinions are heard. One is to make a formal motion. one is to one or more of you to appear in person one is to leave it to me to summarize your thoughts on your behalf um i will say i wasn't able to be here last month you may recall but last month i did attend the lanp meeting and it was miss chandler who specifically asked um to ensure that

[00:25:38] sbac's feedback was collected um which is why it was brought to you last month as a as a request from Ms. Chandler, so I am going tomorrow with Mr. Daniel to review with them the summary of your feedback as it was expressed last month that has been provided to them in writing, but I was going to review that. I was also going to let them know that you had discussed that you were aware of the new revisions to the policy, that you had discussed it, and what your feedback is related to that newest revision.

[00:26:14] Dr. Dean. I would like to make it formal. I make a motion that the SBAC committee stay static, as we are now, for both the SBAC meetings and the appeals for the purpose of consistency.

[00:26:36] Chair, could I second? You certainly may. I second. We have a motion on the floor that the committee, the SBAC committee, would like to keep the SBAC committee makeup the same as it is now for both the committee meetings and the SBAC appeals meetings for the sake of consistency.

[00:27:00] All those in favor, say aye. Aye. Opposed? Seeing no opposition, the motion is passed. Thank you, Dr. Deans and Dr. Rochelle. Are there any other new business that we need to bring up?

[00:27:21] Seeing none, the meeting's adjourned. at 3.30, 4.30. All right, I'm glad you keep me on track, Dr. Rasheed. You're so good at that. It's the time change.

[00:27:37] No, it's just how busy we've been lately. But thank you, and the meeting is adjourned.

