

The Regional District 13 Board of Education Policy Committee met in regular session on Wednesday, June 17, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Policy Committee Members present: Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Moore, and Mr. Konstantino
Policy Committee Members absent: Mr. Roraback, Mr. Simmons, and Mr. DelVecchio
Board Members Present: Mrs. Petrella
Administration Present: Dr. Leggett, Superintendent of Schools

Mrs. Cowan called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mr. Konstantino, to approve the agenda as presented.

*All in favor of approving the agenda as presented: Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Moore, and Mr. Konstantino.
Motion passed.*

Approval of Minutes – April 8, 2026 and May 21, 2026

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mr. Konstantino, to approve the April 8, 2026 and May 21, 2026 Meeting Minutes as presented.

All in favor of approving the April 8, 2026 and May 21, 2026 Meeting Minutes as presented: Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Moore, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.

Review Policies

A. Recording Meetings Without Consent (new)

The Policy Committee reviewed a proposed policy regarding the recording of meetings without consent, a recommendation developed jointly by Shipman & Goodwin and CABA in response to increasing concerns in schools. Dr. Leggett expressed strong support for the policy, noting that it clearly outlines when recording is permitted and when consent is required. Dr. Leggett noted the policy addressed how

unauthorized recordings can negatively affect workplace culture, trust, and privacy, particularly when staff or students are unsure whether conversations are being secretly recorded. The policy does not apply to public meetings subject to FOIA requirements, where recording is already permitted, and it acknowledges that special rules apply to IEP meetings.

The committee discussed how the policy would function in practice, distinguishing between public settings and private educational or workplace environments. Examples included classrooms, where recording could raise student privacy concerns, and private meetings between staff members or team meetings, where participants should not record conversations without the knowledge and consent of others. Members agreed that the policy would help reinforce expectations around privacy and professional conduct while reducing uncertainty among staff.

Mrs. Cowan also addressed the policy language related to recording IEP meetings. The draft policy required “reasonable advance notice” before recording, but Mrs. Cowan questioned whether the term “reasonable” was too subjective and could lead to disagreements over its interpretation. While Dr. Leggett felt the language was acceptable, she noted that parents often request to record at the start of an IEP meeting and that denying a recording over notice requirements is often practical. To avoid ambiguity, the committee members agreed to remove the word “reasonable” and simply require that anyone wishing to record provide advance notice to all participants.

The committee also discussed how staff are informed when policies are revised or new policies are adopted. Mrs. Cowan questioned whether specific communication goes out to employees regarding significant policy changes, particularly for a new policy such as the recording policy. Dr. Leggett responded that updated policies are typically incorporated into employee handbooks, and staff are informed of handbook changes at the beginning of each school year. Mrs. Cowan emphasized the importance of ensuring that employees understand their rights and responsibilities under new policies, recognizing that the large number of policy revisions in recent years can make it difficult for staff to track changes. Mrs. Petrella noted that several policies had been revised and questioned if there was a way staff could be best informed. Dr. Leggett established that rather than expecting employees to review every policy in full, the district typically highlights the specific policies that have been updated and summarizes the changes during annual handbook review sessions.

With no additional concerns raised, the committee supported advancing the policy to a first reading before the Board of Education.

**B. Non-Discrimination – Community 1118, Non-Discrimination – Personnel 4118 and
Non-Discrimination – Students 5146**

The committee reviewed three non-discrimination policy updates affecting students, employees, and the broader school community. Mrs. Cowan noted that the revisions were lengthy but largely consisted of legal and language updates required by changes in federal and state law. Dr. Leggett addressed that the most significant additions were the inclusion of sexual assault and human trafficking within the protected categories covered by the policies. These changes were applied consistently across all three policies and their accompanying regulations. Dr. Leggett noted that protections related to gender identity, pregnancy, and sexual orientation are now all addressed under Title IX. Additional updates included revisions to

complaint procedures, such as adding the word “alleged” in references to complaints, and updates to federal agency contact information following the consolidation of regional Office for Civil Rights offices, which shifted the district’s designated office from Boston to Washington, D.C.

The committee also reviewed optional language related to biased conduct in the student non-discrimination policy. The proposed addition acknowledges that certain conduct or communications may demonstrate bias toward individuals in protected classes even when they do not rise to the legal threshold of discrimination or harassment. The language directs district administration to address such behavior in a manner consistent with legal obligations, board policy, and free speech protections, while promoting a safe and welcoming school environment. Dr. Leggett recommended including the provision, noting that it provides a formal framework for addressing concerning behavior before it escalates into more serious incidents. Committee members agreed that the language was sensible and would strengthen the district’s ability to respond proactively to bias-related concerns.

The committee supported advancing the policy to a first reading before the Board of Education.

C. Field Trips 6153

The Policy Committee conducted a detailed review of the district's field trip policy and identified numerous areas for revision to better reflect current practices, student safety considerations, and legal requirements. Dr. Leggett suggested that the policy should clearly distinguish between field trips, athletic events, and extracurricular activities, recognizing that each has different expectations, procedures, and supervision requirements. Dr. Leggett also discussed adding language emphasizing that field trips are an important extension of classroom instruction and should be directly connected to the district curriculum. Additional recommendations included confirming that all trips are reviewed for adequate insurance coverage through either the district or an external trip provider. Mrs. Cowan questioned whether proposed insurance language for field trips was already addressed elsewhere in district procedures and whether trip organizers currently consult with the Director of Finance regarding insurance coverage and budget considerations during the approval process. Dr. Leggett clarified that these requirements are already included in the field trip regulations and that staff currently seek budgetary approval before planning the field trip.

Dr. Leggett recommended that chaperone selection aligns with existing volunteer background check requirements.

Dr. Leggett advised establishing minimum adult-to-student supervision ratios by grade level and trip type, while adding specific provisions for trips involving water activities.

The committee also reviewed health and medical considerations for field trips. Dr. Leggett discussed establishing criteria for when a nurse should accompany a trip and when trained staff could appropriately manage student medical needs. Mrs. Cowan questioned whether the policy addresses staff who can provide medical assistance when a nurse is not present on a field trip. Dr. Leggett replied that while existing procedures already require nurses to review trip rosters and develop care plans for students with health concerns, it’s multi-day and overnight trips that often present additional challenges, particularly regarding medication administration. Trained school personnel, including teachers, principals, and other

staff members, may administer certain medications under specific circumstances. However, some medications and medical procedures require the involvement of a licensed nurse. Examples were discussed involving students who require daily medication, emergency seizure medication, or other specialized health supports. Mr. Moore considered a hypothetical situation involving a student who wished to participate in an international trip to France but required daily medication. Rather than automatically excluding a student from participation, Dr. Leggett emphasized the need to evaluate each situation individually by reviewing the student's medical needs, care plan, and available options for safely administering medication while traveling. The goal is to ensure that all students can participate whenever possible while maintaining compliance with medical and legal requirements.

Behavior expectations and student participation were another area targeted for revision. Dr. Leggett recommended language allowing administrators to deny participation in overnight field trips when significant safety concerns exist due to documented behavioral issues or poor attendance patterns. Dr. Leggett emphasized that such decisions would be made sparingly and only after efforts had been made to identify accommodations or supports that would allow students to participate safely. Examples included arranging alternative transportation, providing additional adult supervision, or working collaboratively with families to address concerns. Mrs. Cowan also noted the success of collaborating with parents and making accommodations so students could attend field trips. Dr. Leggett identified that because field trips are often tied to curriculum and educational experiences, exclusion should be considered only when necessary for safety.

Transportation procedures were also discussed. Proposed revisions would require school-sponsored field trips to use district-approved transportation providers unless an alternative arrangement has been approved through the field trip authorization process. Students generally would not be permitted to transport themselves to or from field trips, though exceptions could be approved for transportation by a parent/guardian by building administrators in special circumstances. Committee members discussed examples such as airport transportation for international travel, day-only participation in overnight programs like Camp Jewell, and other situations where parental transportation may be appropriate. The committee members agreed that field trips should generally begin and end at school whenever possible to maintain consistency and accountability.

Additional recommendations included clarifying that the district is not responsible for trips organized by outside groups, businesses, or community organizations that are not school-sponsored activities. Dr. Leggett also proposed language informing families that refunds cannot be guaranteed if trips are canceled or plans change and encouraged parents to purchase trip insurance when available through travel providers. Dr. Leggett emphasized the importance of maintaining flexibility to provide alternative transportation, accommodations, or activities to meet individual student needs and ensuring that all participants remain subject to district policies and student handbooks while attending school-sponsored trips.

The committee also recommended language requiring coordination with food service staff to ensure students eligible for free or reduced-price meals continue to receive meal access during field trips.

Finally, Dr. Leggett suggested that the policy should explicitly reserve the district's authority to cancel trips when circumstances warrant.

The committee returned to the topic of supervision for field trips, as Mr. Moore questioned how the ratio of students-to-chaperones would be developed. Dr. Leggett presented the CAFE suggestions, which include a minimum ratio of one adult for every five elementary students, one adult for every ten secondary students, and approximately one adult for every eight to ten students on overnight trips, and there would be a certain amount of lifeguards required pending the number of attendees. Dr. Leggett stated these recommendations would need further review with school principals before being finalized but supported establishing baseline supervision standards within the policy.

Mrs. Cowan questioned whether field trip approval procedures should require verification that appropriate lifeguard coverage is available whenever students are swimming, kayaking, or participating in other water-based activities. Using Camp Jewell as an example, Mrs. Cowan questioned whether existing staff, counselors, or facility personnel provide certified lifeguard services or whether the district would need to arrange additional coverage.

Recent incidents involving water-related tragedies reinforced concerns about student safety. Dr. Leggett noted that drowning remains one of the leading causes of accidental death among children and that risks can develop very quickly, even in seemingly controlled environments. As a result, the committee supported adding specific water-safety language to the policy or approval process, including consideration of lifeguard availability, life jackets, and other safety measures. Committee members suggested that trip approval forms could include questions requiring organizers to identify whether water activities are involved, whether lifeguards are provided by the facility, and whether additional safety personnel are needed.

Mr. Konstantino also recognized that these considerations extend beyond local trips and may apply to national and international travel programs. Examples such as Costa Rica, Iceland, boating excursions, beaches, and lakes were discussed, with members noting that safety expectations may vary depending on the itinerary and location. Rather than creating rigid requirements for every circumstance, the committee favored developing flexible guidelines that require administrators to evaluate water-related risks in advance and ensure appropriate safeguards are in place before approving a trip.

Mr. Moore questioned if parents informed the district of student allergies before field trips. Dr. Leggett replied that student medical information, allergies, and other health concerns are already collected and reviewed through existing nursing procedures. Mr. Konstantino then considered whether permission forms for trips involving water activities should include questions about a student's swimming ability. While such information may not be necessary for every field trip, the committee felt it could be valuable when swimming, kayaking, boating, or other water-based activities are planned. Members suggested that parents could be given the opportunity to indicate whether their child can swim confidently, is a beginner, or should not participate in water activities. They also discussed the possibility of allowing parents to opt their child out of specific water-related portions of a trip when appropriate.

The committee also reviewed timelines and approval requirements for field trips. Mrs. Cowan asked whether the policy should specify advance notice requirements for trip proposals. Dr. Leggett clarified that current procedures already require principals to receive requests approximately ten days in advance, while Board of Education approval is required at least forty-five days before overnight or out-of-state trips and ninety days before trips involving air travel. Members agreed that these timelines are

appropriate, particularly for large international trips that often require planning a year or more in advance. The upcoming France and Spain trip, which already has more than fifty students registered, was cited as an example of the level of planning necessary for major travel experiences.

As the discussion concluded, members agreed that the field trip policy would require substantial revisions incorporating the many topics discussed, including supervision ratios, water safety, medical requirements, transportation, behavior expectations, and approval timelines. Because of the scope of the proposed changes, the committee favored reviewing a revised draft at a future policy meeting before forwarding it to the Board for a first reading. Members expressed appreciation for the comprehensive review and agreed that the policy was overdue for modernization.

Dr. Leggett discussed the district's broader policy update process, noting that recent legislative changes have generated numerous legal updates and that the district remains in relatively good shape compared to many school systems because of its ongoing efforts to keep policies current.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment

Mr. Konstantino made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to adjourn the meeting.

*All in favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Moore, and Mr. Konstantino.
Motion passed and the meeting adjourned.*

Respectfully submitted by Meghan Shortell-Fratantonio