The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Policy Committee met in regular session on Wednesday, December 17, 2025 at 4:00 p.m. in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Policy Committee Members present: Mrs. Cowan, Mr. Konstantino, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Petrella, and Mr. Moore
Administration Present: Dr. Leggett, Superintendent of Schools and Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance

Mrs. Cowan called the meeting to order at 4:02 P.M.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

Amanda Betty, Durham, requested clarification on board policy 5325 regarding PTO run online fundraising and the prohibition of a parent to use a child's name and photo on a private, non-searchable PTO fundraising platform due to student data privacy. Mrs. Betty expressed concerns about the interpretation of this policy, noting that she believes the policy is inconsistent with the law and the district's current practices. Mrs. Betty respectfully requested explicit guidance on whether parent-managed PTO online fundraisers that are not district sponsored and do not involve staff fall within policy 5325.

Approval of Agenda

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

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

 Approval of Minutes – October 15, 2025

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the October 15, 2025 meeting minutes as presented.

All in favor of approving the October 15, 2025 meeting minutes as presented: Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Petrella, and Mr. Moore.

Mrs. Cowan and Mr. Konstantino abstained. Motion passed by majority vote.

Policy Review: Fundraising Activities 5325

Dr. Leggett reviewed the Fundraising Activities 5325 policy, discussing the current document while also proposing updates to policy. The district is proposing updates to its fundraising policy to allow limited, regulated peer-to-peer fundraising while prioritizing student safety and data privacy. Key changes include adding a non-discrimination requirement so fundraising opportunities are accessible to all students, clarifying that fundraisers should be community-building and not solely requests for donations, and maintaining a district-approved list of fundraising partners. The proposal replaces a blanket ban on crowdfunding – open public platforms like GoFundMe or DonorsChoose – but will permit approved applications for peer-to-peer platforms for school-sponsored activities. All peer-to-peer fundraisers would require prior administrative approval, detailed review of content, and parental consent if students are involved. The district would not provide student information to platforms, funds must be handled through appropriate accounts, and approved platforms must limit advertising, data collection, and fees. Student images may only be used at parent or guardian discretion in approved contexts, with strong discouragement of sharing images online, balancing parental rights with student data privacy laws.

Before reviewing the current policy's regulations and FAQ's, there was discussion regarding the policy and proposed changes. The members generally agree with allowing peer-to-peer fundraising while keeping the handling of funds consistent with existing law, especially the distinction between independent 501(c)(3) organizations and school activity funds. Concerns were raised about setting a hard cap on platform fees, with a preference for requiring full transparency about how much of each donation goes to students versus platform costs. There was broad agreement on prohibiting general public crowdfunding platforms for school-sponsored activities, while allowing approved peer-to-peer platforms, including state-approved sites, with a maintained approval list which is accessible on the technology page on the district website. The Committee also discussed data privacy safeguards, including limiting platform data use, clarifying that violations by platforms—not parents' individual actions—would trigger fundraiser termination, and emphasizing parental choice and consent regarding student names or images. Additional discussion included whether to formalize exceptions for community-driven fundraising during traumatic events, the need for clear permission language around student likeness, and reinforcing that the district's role is to regulate school-sponsored activities while discouraging student personal information being posted online and also balancing this with parental 1st amendment rights.

Dr. Leggett also emphasized the distinction between events and fundraisers, where the determining factor is intent: activities meant primarily to cover costs or provide experiences (like movie nights) are events, while activities intended to raise money (like dances or car washes) are fundraisers. Dr. Leggett also clarified that service activities or charitable collections, where all proceeds are donated or students perform a service, do not fall under the fundraising policy.

Committee members supported better coordination and organization, including districtwide fundraising calendars, approved partner lists, and administrator checklists to prevent overlap, donor fatigue, and confusion. The proposed changes would allow approved peer-to-peer fundraising platforms (including state-approved sites) through an application process, while continuing to prohibit general public crowdfunding platforms such as GoFundMe for school-sponsored activities. Parents would be allowed, at their discretion, to share fundraising links or content online, though the district would continue to discourage posting student images for safety reasons.

Equity concerns were also discussed, noting that fundraising can unintentionally disadvantage students without broad networks and that peer-to-peer models should emphasize group or class goals over individual competition. Committee members discussed that the proposed policy changes aim to balance modernization and safety, recognizing peer-to-peer fundraising as a growing reality while maintaining safeguards around student data and privacy.

Mrs. Cowan then welcomed questions from the public before public comment so committee members would be able to clarify or address questions.

Mrs. Viens, Middlefield, questioned if a student run group, like student council, could promote a community sponsored fundraiser online. Dr. Leggett clarified that under the new policy, groups will be able to share that information as long as it does not have student image and likeness. Students must be at least 13 years of age to use any social media so sharing should be monitored closely.

Mrs. Stephan, Durham, stated she thought that PTO groups do not need 501(c)(3) status and can still purchase their own insurance. Mrs. Stephan also stated that fundraising proceeds fully donated to charity are not considered fundraisers under the policy. Overall, the revisions are intended to provide clearer definitions, consistent guidance, and a lawful pathway for safe, school-connected fundraising.

Amanda Betty, Durham, asked for clarification on two policy points. First, Mrs. Betty questioned language about prohibiting fundraising and advertising together. The clarification was that fundraisers may not be used to advertise for outside businesses or unrelated purposes within fundraising materials (such as flyers or messages), but this does not affect separate advertising policies like banner sponsorships at athletic fields. The intent is to prevent hidden or bundled advertising within a fundraiser.

Second, Mrs. Betty asked whether PTOs must now route funds through the school's student activity account. The clarification was that only groups that are not 501(c)(3) organizations must use the student activity fund to avoid money passing through personal accounts. PTOs with their own EINs and organizational accounts, especially those in the process of becoming a 501(c)(3), will follow the new policy. Once a PTO becomes a 501(c)(3), it simply needs to submit documentation (including EIN and contact information) to the district for recordkeeping as part of the approved community partners list.

Emma Quick, Durham, thanked the committee members for their review and proposed language updated to the policy. Mrs. Quick explained that fundraising platform contracts vary widely, including differences in services provided, fee structures, donor options to cover fees, and the ability to accept in-kind donations without fees. Because of these variations, such as sliding fee percentages based on funds raised, setting a fixed cap on fees is difficult. Mrs. Quick emphasized that groups want to protect student safety and data while also maximizing the amount of money that goes to students. Mrs. Quick also supported transparency about fees for donors but suggested that detailed handling of these nuances is better addressed through planning, experience, and communication rather than strict policy language, noting that volunteer groups refine their approach over time.

Public Comment

There was no additional public comment.

Adjournment

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

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

Respectfully submitted by Meghan Shortell-Fratantonio