Improving Student Outcomes with Board Policy-Making?

Yes, You Can!

Presented by Greenville County Schools Trustees Crystal Ball O'Connor & Lisa Wells
South Carolina School Boards Association Annual Conference | February 17, 2018
Focus on Board Policies?

WHY?

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WHY?

Clear vision & mission for board, administration, and staff

Clarity of expectations: When policies don’t exist or practices don’t align to policies, mixed messages and inconsistencies result.

Consistency over time: Boards and superintendents turn over often – policies remain.
GCS Board Instructional Policies

Where we were……..

- 51 instructional policies….as old as 1980

My 1985 Ford Escort:
Slow, clunky
No GPS or technology
Old materials and design
Missing innovation

ANYONE STILL DRIVE ONE OF THESE?
WHO?

➢ Board led effort

Committee of Board members
Supported by Superintendent’s Designee

Additional support of district instructional staff based on topic
HOW?

Steps to be repeated on scheduled basis

Structured Repeatable Process

- Initial Policy Review
- Research: Districts “Like Ours”
- Common Themes
- Stakeholder Input
- Policy Writing
- Feedback on Final Drafts
- Board Review/Approval
Step 1: Initial Policy Review

51 instructional policies

- PRIORITY TO UPDATE
- NEED UPDATE, NOT URGENT
- CONSIDER ELIMINATION
- New Policy Needs
Step 2: Policy Research

- Districts “Like Ours”
  - Innovative practices
  - Diverse population
  - 'Whole child’ approach
  - Size/Services
- Looking for
  - Content
  - Format/Structure
  - Specific topics based on our policy review
Common Themes

Step 3: Common Themes

- Alignment with guiding documents
  - GCS Strategic Education Plan
  - SC Standards for Learning
  - Advanc-ED Standards for Accreditation
  - Profile of the South Carolina Graduate
- Education of the whole child (academic, emotional, social)
- Rigorous standards/expectations
- Student-centered teaching/learning based on research-based, innovative practices
- Personalized learning for all students
Step 4: Process Input

COLLABORATION

- Engage all stakeholder groups
  - Principals
  - District Executive Team
  - Academics Division Professionals
  - Teachers
  - Students

Most valuable step. Come back to it often!

Board policy without staff support, belief and buy-in is ineffective at best, counterproductive at worst.
Step 4: Process Input

COLLABORATION

- Tips for effective input
  - Educational philosophy first – don’t dive right into the weeds
  - Initial input structured around broad themes, not specific policy language
  - Ask for teacher input & show that you value it
  - Ensure all student groups are represented in feedback
  - Use multiple tools: Regular meetings, focus groups, optional ‘drop-in’ day, surveys
Step 5: Policy Writing

- Drive vision and mission
- Align policies with research-based best practices (maybe current practice but not always)
- Incorporate the common themes to create threads across policies
- Incorporate stakeholder input to ensure comprehensive and collaborative result
- Work for committee consensus by allowing deep, rich conversations
Step 5: Policy Writing Format

- Purpose (philosophy, Board’s commitment)
- Policy language
- Desired Outcomes (if applicable)
- Evaluation Expectations

……..and now for some policies!
Building a Better GRADUATE
Creating Career and College Ready Students

Policy IEB: Instructional Organization
Policy IEB: Instructional Organization

Purpose

The Board of Trustees is committed to ensuring that each school is optimally organized for the following purposes:

– To provide meaningful and challenging experiences for all students that promote academic excellence through student-centered, personalized learning.

– To create small learning communities or other structures within the school that support student interests, foster strong relationships among students and staff, and encourage a sense of belonging for all students.

– To promote a culture of integrity, self-direction, positive interpersonal skills, a strong work ethic, and productive citizenship within the school.
Policy IEB: Instructional Organization

Policy Statement

The instructional day for each school shall promote student-centered learning through opportunities for experiential, project-based, student-directed, and collaborative learning, as well as for focused academic enrichment and support. The schedule may support such learning through varied numbers and lengths of classes.
Policy IEB: Instructional Organization

Policy Statement

Students shall have the opportunity for focused academic enrichment and support during the school day through individual or supervised learning time. Extended opportunities for academic enrichment and support may also be offered before school and after school.
Each school shall provide opportunities through which each student can be known well by multiple adults in the school.
Policy IDB:
Health & Wellness Education
Policy IDB: Health & Wellness Education

Policy Statement

Curriculum Dimensions

• Physical Education
• Nutrition Education
• Mental/Emotional Health Education
• Sexuality Education
Policy IDB: Health & Wellness Education

Policy Statement

Comprehensive Plan of Instruction

• Reflect current research, evidence, and best practice
• Enhance students’ problem-solving, coping, and decision-making skills
• Stress the benefits of living a healthy lifestyle
• Accommodate the needs of special students
• Promote students’ understanding of
  – Consequences of using unlawful drugs, alcohol, tobacco
  – Causes and lasting effects of violence, bullying and suicide
Policy IDB: Health & Wellness Education

Policy Statement

Standards-based Curriculum

- Alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
- Human growth/development and sexual health and responsibility
- Injury prevention/safety
- Mental, emotional, and social health
- Personal and community health
- Physical activity and nutrition
Policy IDB: Health & Wellness Education

Policy Statement

Mental/Emotional Health Education

- Provide age-appropriate, standards-based instruction on the effects of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs on the human system
- Promote connectedness among students and staff to help reduce the risk of suicide, violence, bullying, and substance abuse
- Help students understand warning signs of depression and self-destructive behaviors
- Help students develop level of trust necessary to confide in adults when confronted with problems
Policy IDBA:
Sexuality Education
Policy IDB: Sexuality Education

Policy Statement

Instructional Goals

• Promote the home as the primary information source.
• Promote abstinence for school-age youth.
• Provide accurate, age-appropriate knowledge about reproductive health.
• Promote the development of responsible personal values and behaviors.
• Teach students to make responsible, respectful, and healthy decisions.
• Prevent sexual misconduct, exploitation, harassment, and abuse of students.

❖ Provide professional development/training for all appropriate personnel.
Policy IDB: Sexuality Education

Policy Statement

Comprehensive Plan of Instruction

• Reflect current research, evidence, and best practice.
• Teach that no form of sexual expression or behavior is acceptable when harmful to one’s self or others.
• Teach the definitions, legal requirements and implications of consent (included Erin’s Law).
• Teach skills to recognize sexual misconduct and grooming; to resist peer & adult pressure; to report such behaviors; to encourage safe bystander behavior.
• Teach how to identify attitudes/behaviors that violate sexual boundaries.
Step 6: Feedback

- Final draft review, as appropriate
  - Principals
  - District Executive Team
  - Academics Division Professionals
  - Teachers
  - Students
- Dialogue with Administration
Step 7: Board/Review/Approval

- Committee of the Whole monthly meeting
  - Presentation of Final Drafts
  - Board questions/dialogue/discussion
  - Committee recommendation
Almost There!

• 32 policies updated/approved by Board
• 13 policies eliminated (some content subsumed in other policies, where appropriate)
• 2 moved elsewhere in policy manual
• 4 in progress

• 2 new policies added
  • Credit/Content Recovery
  • Non-Traditional Learning Programs
Policy Non-negotiables!

- Quality research
- Extensive, focused input/collaboration
- Allegiance to common themes
- Quality committee discussions
- Broad concepts/language
Contact Us

To contact our Board or find our policies, go to www.greenville.k12.sc.us and select Board of Trustees page.