

**Columbia Board of Education Policy Committee
Meeting Minutes**

January 26, 2015 - APPROVED

Members Present:

Board:	Mr. Jonathan Sessions (Chair) Ms. Jan Mees Mr. James Whitt
CPS:	Dr. Peter Stiepleman Ms. Melinda Adams
Community Member: Ex-Officio:	Mr. Ben Trachtenberg Ms. Susan McClintic/CMNEA Ms. Kari Schuster/CMSTA
Guests:	Ms. Linda Quinley Ms. Nickie Smith

Opening

The meeting was called to order by Mr. James Whitt and he requested a motion to approve past meeting minutes. Ms. Mees moved that the minutes be approved and Ben Trachtenberg seconded. All voted in favor of approval.

Policy GBCC – Staff Use of Communication Devices

Ms. Adams opened discussion on Policy GBCC that was recommended by MSBA but had not been adopted previously. Mr. Whitt shared with the advancements of technology being what it is, this policy should be reviewed every couple of years.

The group had several questions about whether we had employees using “e-rate”, e-rate funding, and how many employees were using electronic devices. Ms. Quinley responded we have e-rate on all phones and staff using them are the ones who fill 24-hour call such as IT, Facilities & Construction, and a few administrators. Ms. Mees asked if our IT department had reviewed this policy and Ms. Quinley said both she and IT department should review. Other review considerations were discussed such as use/misuse for both district and personal devices, and concern of being asked to carry cell phone, but staff locking them away for safety reasons.

- **Action:** Mr. Whitt asked the committee for approval to forward GBCC to IT and Ms. Quinley for Review. All were in favor.

Policy GBCA – Staff Conflict of Interest

Ms. Mees directed the committee to item #6, page 2, regarding employee’s accepting gifts from vendors. Ms. Mr. Trachtenberg asked if proposed language under item #6 was committee’s suggestion and it was confirmed it was.

The board has adopted this policy in the past and Ms. Quinley relayed this came out of a growing level across the state regarding the lack of language to define the value and define the gift. This policy reflects what is typical to many districts. Ms. McClintic felt discussion focused more on whether teachers should be allowed to receive gifts from vendors. Ms. Quinley stated this was really directed at all employees, however families give teachers gifts often as well.

Additional discussion occurred regarding whether gifts to a coach could influence a student's ability to start on the team or not and how concerns may arise when some families can give a gift and others cannot.

The group discussed board concerns regarding gift amount, how some board members felt teachers shouldn't receive any gifts from vendors, and some who felt no employee should accept gifts.

Ms. Mees asked how this could be monitored and the group discussed optional gifts, typical amounts other school districts use, and MSBA's recommendation of \$50 - \$100, as well as the understanding that there had not been any inappropriate issues, but that we should review what State law, policy and auditor's say about it since we are a public entity. Ms. Quinley added that failure to indicate specific statutes may lead to misunderstanding and pointed out the statutes offered explanation and substantial value. She also said the auditor felt \$100 was an acceptable value.

- **Action:** Dr. Stiepleman moved to place policy GBCA on the agenda for next policy meeting. Motion was seconded and all were in favor.

Policies GCBA and GCBA-R – Professional Staff Salary Schedules

The committee continued discussion of this policy beginning with recognition of the inequity in hiring new teachers to the district with a higher rate than existing teachers in the district with the same level of experience. The focus is what this inequity does during periods when salary step advancement is frozen, and how we can revise this policy to avoid or improve this situation in frozen step years.

Ms. Adams wrote out a few scenarios to illustrate the discussion thus far: i.e. New hires with two years of experience would come in at Step 2 (instead of step 3), and those seven years of experience would come in at Step 7 (instead of step 8).

Questions were raised on how this affects take home pay and retirement, what happens the following year with the new hires, and if employees would come in one step lower in perpetuity.

Discussion occurred about contract deadlines and the possibility that two contracts would need to be issued: one with a potential frozen step, and then after board approves salaries, a second contract if no frozen step. Ms. Adams said under the current discussion, if we freeze two years, then the new hires would be held back two steps.

Ms. Quinley added that the estimated cost to "unfreeze" a frozen step, based on 2008/09 data, is \$542,000. This cost would increase under the current scenario being discussed due to an addition of 100 new teachers frozen. Operating on this plan will allow inequity to be resolved, but creates a bigger concern and ability to unfreeze steps.

Ms. Adams relayed that this discussion is about changing how we hire forever. Nickie Smith added that the district had contacted MSBA and several districts were looking at the same issue with no resolutions as of yet. Ms. Adams shared whatever we do for professional staff we should do same for all employees, and said we are hiring now so time is of essence. Mr. Sessions said even if this was sent to board next month, it would be well after Human Resources needs to hire.

Dr. Stiepleman summarized that what seemed most equitable was to move forward with exploring the idea of new hires coming in at less. Mr. Sessions added a further component is that when it is necessary to have frozen steps, there is not any funding to put into an escrow.

- **Action:** Ms. Mees motioned that we charge personnel to continue review of policy GCBA and draft potential language for committee's further review. Mr. Whitt seconded. All approved for discussions to continue.

The committee moved forward to discussion of upcoming Policy Committee meetings. The fourth Monday of the month was suggested, however, March 30th is the first day back after spring break. The April meeting will be April 27th. If May meeting is needed, the date will be determined later.

Mr. Sessions asked the committee for those in favor of adjournment. All voted in favor to adjourn and meeting was adjourned 4:49 pm.