



Certified Staff Handbook Committee

Aug. 18 Meeting Summary

The following is a summary of what was discussed and considered at the Certified Staff Handbook Committee meeting on Monday, Aug. 18.

Background

Board of Education president Bob Green addressed the committee about the process. He suggested to the group that if they have concerns to talk about them during the meeting. He also encouraged committee members to contact individual Board members. ... Near the end of the meeting, it was suggested a communication go out to all special education staff so they better understand the changes that have been proposed and why.

The committee unanimously approved the minutes from the meeting on Aug. 12.

Review and Discussion of New Items

Normal Work Day: Director of Student Services Jerry Nicholson said he tried to honor the language and history special education in the District. He believes there aren't many changes in the language to the normal work day, although case management has been added for all special education teachers.

A chart was shared with the committee showing the breakdown of workday time currently and under the proposed handbook for special education teachers. There were no changes proposed to the middle and high school staff. Elementary special education staff currently have 35 additional minutes outside of student contact time than other levels. He is proposing removing 30 minutes.

“What we don't want to do is get rid of case management time,” he said. “And I have a hard time arguing that one level deserves more time than the other.”

Nicholson said he didn't compare special education to regular classrooms, instead focusing on what they are supposed to have and the length of the work day. A committee member asked if about why more time wasn't just added to the middle and high school staffs' allotment. Nicholson said it was mainly because it was tough to keep 65 minutes in a 6-hour, 30-minute

elementary student day, while the secondary student day is almost an hour longer. He also pointed out our case management time is among the most highest in Dane County.

Later in the meeting, a committee member questioned why the time discrepancy wasn't addressed years ago? Superintendent Don Johnson suggested the changes in bus schedules have made the student day look much different than the teacher work day. He thinks it makes more sense to look at things based on the teacher 7.5-hour day because student day is so different at the levels. Nicholson said he thought it was a stretch to say it is tougher at the elementary level, therefore, they need more time than the others.

Special Education: Nicholson made few changes to the special education language. He clarified language about preparation time. He also added language about 3 hours of evaluation time for speech and language pathology therapy, pointing out that isn't a change just where it is located in the handbook. He noted that is 30 minutes less than allotments for others but said it is because they typically do less travel.

Individual Education Program (IEP) Programming Conferences: Nicholson wants staff to be paid a stipend for paperwork completion, Medicaid billing and attendance at IEP meetings. He made this work by adding additional revenue from Medicaid billing and rolling that money into the stipend. He included a table that shows stipends will go up in all categories except specially designed PE, who have fewer meetings. Teachers will automatically get the stipend.

A committee member asked how the Medicaid money has been use in the past and he said since he arrived those dollars have also been used for professional development and technology. He pointed that services that are medically based can be recouped on a small basis through Medicaid billing and districts can also get back a percentage of transportation costs.

Johnson asked why special education staff gets special stipends while other groups don't. Nicholson said most districts don't pay for Medicaid billing. He said he also worked in a district previously where staff didn't get paid for IEP time. However, he said in our District is isn't unusual to have multiple 2-hour IEP meetings. By paying stipend, reduces the amount of paperwork for staff and the District. Also believes this perk may result in better candidates applying for these positions.

Otherwise, Nicholson said there were virtually no changes to IEP item and the changes that were made to **Own Child's PT Conference and Attendance at Intervention Meetings** don't have an impact on special education. Director of Employee Services Tabatha Gundrum same it is the same language in the contract. There was a question if a teacher can decline to attend a meeting during their prep, and Gundrum said that could happen.

Diagnostic Requirements for Staff: Language was updated to reflect the current practices for diagnosticians and definition of work load related to evaluations and structure of the team, he said. The payment option was removed, but he said the District hasn't had to pay these during his time here because teams have enough time to complete evaluations.

Autism Shadow MOU: Nicholson suggested removing this item but the District practice will continue. What is a shadow? He said it happens 1-2 times a year when someone comes in, usually a parent. The shadow gets a background check and has to sign a form that clearly states what they can and can't do. There was a concern that autism shadow has come into regular classroom without any advance notice, which isn't supposed to happen.

Specialized Physical Health Care Services: Gundrum said the language has been removed and new language is what is in the state statute and is the legal requirement.

Other items

There was a discussion about what is the appropriate number of special needs students in a classroom. Nicholson said it would be excessive to put 5-6 special needs students in a classroom of 15 but if 10-15 percent of a classroom is special needs students that that is appropriate. A committee member said what has happened is one classroom in a particular grade is getting all of the special education students, however, Nicholson pointed out the other classrooms in that grade might have ELL and other students who have special needs.

Gundrum said there are 10-12 items that haven't been reviewed and Johnson said they are on the agenda for Tuesday. Johnson said many of those items have the same language as in the contract.

He suggested lumping items into one of three categories. One area would be items where there isn't consensus. Another area is items where the committee needs more time to process or more information. The third category would be all the other items where committee agrees we can move forward with the language.

Bob Green reminded the committee if there isn't consensus on an item to let the Board know the concern. Johnson said if there are items that can be deferred because it isn't time-sensitive the committee can postpone moving that ahead. Nicholson pointed out there are deadlines for Medicaid billing that if the District misses that will also impact the stipends.

A committee member suggested there hasn't been enough time to process the information. Johnson suggested trying to find the items everyone is comfortable with and moving forward with at least those items.

"I wish we had this in place by May 30, but we weren't allowed to do so," he said. "It doesn't mean we can't have disagreement and we may. But we should try to find as much agreement as we can."

Paul Kinne suggested that the process reflect that the Board wants items to be revisited where consensus wasn't reached or not enough time was spent on the item. A committee member thought that would put teachers at ease. Johnson said the compressed schedule wasn't established to limit input but because the District wasn't allowed to begin the process before July 1.

Gundrum said the 12 items for Tuesday are the only items that haven't been covered in the prior contract. "I never expected to get through these many items in five meetings," she said.

An audience member also suggested using Integration Days where a special education and regular classroom teacher can find a sub and work on modifying curriculum. The audience member also suggested changing the 12 days per school requirement to a pool that every school can draw from. Gundrum pointed out no school has ever used all 12 during her eight years in the District but there was agreement that it was a good idea.