



Certified Staff Handbook Committee

Aug. 20 Meeting Summary

The following is a summary of what was discussed and considered at the Certified Staff Handbook Committee meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 20. The meeting was held in the MHS Upper Library Media Center.

Background

Superintendent Don Johnson updated the committee on what category each of the nearly 80 items reviewed was going in. He said 64 items were in Category 1, which means there was consensus on the language. There were 8 items in Category 2, which means committee members wanted more time to review or think about the item, while 3 items were in Category 3, which means there was disagreement over the item.

He proposed that a meeting be held before Sept. 30 to deal with MEA building use. The committee will make further suggestions to the Board of Education no later than Oct. 30 on items that aren't time sensitive and fall in Categories 2 and 3. A process will be established that allows for year-to-year handbook revisions to be made by March 15.

Each committee member received a historical document with the previous contract. Director of Employee Services Tabatha Gundrum and Cheryl Janssen spent 4 hours in the morning cleaning up the historical document. Johnson suggested posting it on the website for at least the next year.

The handbook language still needs cleaning up. The Board will receive the historical document, items for the handbook and process information at its regular meeting on Monday night.

Johnson then proposed splitting into three groups with each group going through approximately 40 pages of the old contract. The groups spent about an hour doing that.

Historical Document Discussion

Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services George Mavroulis was part of the group that reviewed pages 1-40. He said small group would like contract language put back in so people can see what it was before.

They also suggested adding something in the front of the handbook saying the Board agrees not to unilaterally change the language but reconvene the handbook committee along with adding a grid that lists the names and titles of committee members.

Board member Diane Hornung was part of the group that reviewed pages 41-80. Her group wondered why the IEP rate was \$22 but recess and homework club were paid \$28 an hour. Gundrum explained the \$22 rate was a meeting rate. Johnson said the IEP fund is capped at \$10,000 so just may not be able to pay as many hours if go to a higher rate but that he would check with Director of Student Services Jerry Nicholson on this.

There was a question and lengthy discussion about why rewrite the reimbursable leave section. Another committee member said it feels like those items where language is being changed are areas where something is being taken away from teachers. Johnson pointed out a number of areas where pay rates have increased and said he believes this is an enhancement.

Johnson said the idea of capping reimbursable personal leave at 5 percent of staff members at the start or end of a semester improves general working conditions for the majority because the current practices forces entire schools to scramble when 5-7 decide to take reimbursable time.

Johnson said another way of looking at it is instead of reducing the amount of personal leave each teacher gets, the District is going to reduce during the times when we struggle to get subs. In fact, the District pays extra on Fridays during certain times of the year to try and improve the chances of getting more sub coverage.

Another committee member asked if the 5 percent reimbursable leave policy could be across the district rather than 5 percent at each school. Gundrum said she can only remember two times in her eight years here when she has had to deny a request.

The committee asked that this be reviewed in March to see how the process is working and if changes should be made. Also suggested because some staff will see this as not their problem that more communications go out about this.

Gundrum went through the impact of 5 vs. 10 percent. An elementary school could allow 1 person to take it rather than 3. A middle school would only get 3-4 compared with 6-8 previously, while the high school would be capped at about 7 at 5 percent. Gundrum said she heard from principals twice last year when they were at 10 percent but knew another request was coming. She wasn't sure how many principals were at 10 percent but didn't contact her.

Johnson asked teachers on the committee if they supported keeping it at 10 percent or dropping it to 5 in case the Board asks him Monday. The vast majority preferred 10 percent and also have submitted language to maintain it at 10 percent.

Johnson was a part of the group that reviewed pages 81-120. They wanted a clarification that a leave of absence guarantees a staff member a position when they return but not always the same position and asked that language be added saying a staffer would know this before they leave.

There was some confusion about the language on page 99. Johnson also said being non-renewed for cause is the higher standard and has been retained. Paul Kinne said a statement to that effect was agreed to be added but wasn't in yet. Johnson reminded the committee the unsatisfactory classification comes from Educator Effectiveness and a teacher would need to fall in that domain to be put on a plan for improvement.

The group want examples added in what had been Section 13.2. They suggested changing the language to say other offenses not enumerated in this document that are also egregious and at a similar level.

The group had no problems with the Resolution of Differences language but wanted it integrated. They wanted language included to the table that says if a student services staff member is doing more work or caseloads they can get a larger stipend. They also wanted a link to dental coverage in the planned document. They also pointed out that additional language was needed for 4K.

Finally, Kinne also suggested that the document include language that says it will be posted online and that it will be searchable.