

\Prepared Notes for Board Meeting
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Two committee updates to close out the year.

First, Charlie and I (aka “The Policy Committee”) met with George to figure out how to best accomplish the administrative goal of updating our policy manual. We quickly determined that the difficult part of the task is not the selection of a vendor to supply model policies, the difficult part of the task is to make sure that our policies match current practice, or, policies are modified to reflect current practice or current practice is modified to reflect the policy. To put this another way, at the end of this process, our policy manual must be a reflection of what the Board of Education believes should be happening in Worthington Schools. Obvious, no?

This is unfortunately harder than it sounds. While George has done a great job these last few years keeping up with policy changes, there was a period a while back where policy updates fell through a hole. Consequently, the safe thing to do is to start from scratch with either our current vendor or a new vendor. The hard part is that our current policy manual represents a decade of customization which would be lost if we simply went back to model policies. There is also a question of how to do a flash cut, which is a software term denoting a sudden change from one operating system or component to another, rather than a staged implementation. In 2002, the Board of Education did a flash cut to OSBA’s policies and passed hundreds of them on one day. A district that prides itself on transparency and community engagement can’t reasonably expect the community (or its board members) to read and opine on hundreds of policies at one sitting. Merely changing from what we have now to either OSBA’s or NEOLA’s samples would essentially mean changing dozens of BOE policies in unpredictable ways all at the same time. Consequently, we decided to try and determine the extent to which our current policy manual is deficient and we’ll continue that work in the new year assuming status quo appointments to the committee.

My second committee update is from our evaluation team which held a midyear review discussion to see how things were going. Given the complexity of the evaluation process, our district is doing remarkably well, all be it at the cost of exhausting our instructional leaders in each building. Administrators report that the teacher performance rubric is working well. Fairness is always going to be an issue because it’s difficult to apply a one size fits all methodology to disparate teaching positions. For example, there is a portion of the rubric that says this:

The teacher matches strategies, materials, and/or pacing to students’ individual needs, to make learning accessible and challenging for all students in the classroom

Which is arguably harder for a higher school teacher with a student load of 125 kids than an elementary school classroom teacher with a student load of 25 kids.

As a result, there are some teachers whose jobs make it almost impossible to reach the “Accomplished” level of the rubric while other jobs make it a little easier. Fortunately, as has been noted in previous Board Meetings, it makes no difference whether a teacher is evaluated as “skilled” or “accomplished” using the performance rubric in terms of the ultimate final evaluation. Bottom line is that the system is every bit as complicated as we thought it would be and that our administrators and teachers are, for the most part, adhering to both the letter and the spirit of the law.