

Vantage Points

A Board Member's Guide to Update 115

Please note: *Vantage Points* is an executive summary, prepared specifically for board members, of the local policies included in the update. The topic-by-topic outline and brief descriptions focus on key issues to help local officials understand changes found in the policies.

The description of local policy changes in *Vantage Points* is highly summarized. Please pay careful attention to the more detailed, district-specific Explanatory Notes and the policies in your localized update packet.

For questions, contact Policy Service at policy.service@tasb.org, call us at 800-580-7529, or visit our website at policy.tasb.org.

This information is provided for educational purposes only to facilitate a general understanding of the law or other regulatory matter. This information is neither an exhaustive treatment on the subject nor is this intended to substitute for the advice of an attorney or other professional adviser. Consult with your attorney or professional adviser to apply these principles to specific fact situations.

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Update 115 focuses on updating and reorganizing several policies in the FFE series of the policy manual addressing student welfare. FFEA continues to focus on counseling, and a new code, FFEB, focuses on mental health provisions.

Several policies have been revised to incorporate the new Title IX regulations, effective August 14, 2020, which define sexual harassment under Title IX and establish detailed procedures for how districts must respond to notice or allegations of sexual harassment.

In addition to these changes, Update 115 includes several other policies affected by legislation from the 86th Legislative Session that were not included in Update 114 and incorporates numerous changes from revised Administrative Code rules.

We strongly encourage you to review the Explanatory Notes contained in your district's update packet for information specific to your local policies and background on changes to the legal policies. Please remember that (LEGAL) policies provide the legal framework for key areas of district operations; they are not adopted by the board.

Section B—Local Governance

Board Policy

A revision to **BF(LOCAL)** addressing board policy adoption clarifies that a district's legally referenced policies are not adopted by the board. The (LEGAL) policies provide information on current law and context for the district's (LOCAL) policies.

Section D—Personnel

Compensation and Benefits

For districts that provide paid vacation and holiday benefits, recommended revisions to **DED(LOCAL)** address the board's authorization of these programs, including which employees are eligible for the benefits. Administrative procedures are recommended to address the details of these programs to promote consistent, effective implementation and prevent conflict between policy and administrative procedures.

Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation

Revisions to **DIA(LOCAL)** incorporate the recent United States Supreme Court decision *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia*, which held that an adverse employment action against an employee on the basis of homosexuality or transgender status violates Title VII's prohibition on sex discrimination in employment. As a result, the policy clarifies that discrimination on the basis of sex includes discrimination on the basis of biological sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, gender stereotypes, or any other prohibited basis related to sex.

Other revisions address the new Title IX regulations and:

- Include sexual harassment as defined by Title IX in the definition of prohibited conduct and clarify employee reporting requirements;

- Indicate that the district will follow the district’s existing investigation process to address allegations of prohibited conduct that would not meet the Title IX definition of sexual harassment;
- Add specific provisions outlining the legally required district response when the district receives notice or an allegation of conduct that could meet the definition of sexual harassment under Title IX;
- Add a requirement for the superintendent to develop a Title IX formal complaint process that will apply following a formal complaint and that must comply with the elements in the new regulations; and
- Designate the preponderance of the evidence standard to determine responsibility in formal complaints of sexual harassment under Title IX. **If the board wishes to instead use the clear and convincing evidence standard, which is a higher standard of evidence, please contact the district’s policy consultant.** The district must use the same standard of evidence for investigation of all formal Title IX sexual harassment complaints, including complaints by employees.

**Section E—
Instruction**

**Academic
Achievement**

Revised Administrative Code rules prompted revisions to **EI(LOCAL)** on academic achievement. Provisions on partial credit reflect new terminology from the rules regarding awarding of credit proportionately when a student receives a passing grade in “half” of a course, rather than per “semester.”

To provide flexibility, Policy Service recommends deletion of the statement in most districts’ policies that a student shall be required to retake only the portion of the course with a failing grade. There are various methods for a student to earn credit for the failed part of a course, and board policy is not required to specify which particular method may be used.

For those districts that did not have existing provisions on awarding course credit proportionately to a student who successfully completes only half a course, provisions have been recommended for the district’s consideration. **This is optional text; contact the district’s policy consultant if the district does not wish to include it.**

Some districts’ local policies included provisions on late enrollment or withdrawal of mobile students. To avoid conflict with new Administrative Code rules addressing transition assistance for highly mobile students who are homeless or in substitute care, which are addressed in **FD(LOCAL)**, below, Policy Service recommends deleting these provisions from **EI(LOCAL)**. Any specific practices in this area will need to align with the new rules and could be included in administrative procedures.

Section F— Students

Admissions

As mentioned above, recommended changes to **FD(LOCAL)** on admissions are based on new Administrative Code rules addressing transition assistance for highly mobile students who are homeless or in substitute care. The rules require districts to adopt local policy to assist with awarding credit to these students for a course that was earned prior to the student enrolling in or transferring to the district.

Attendance Accounting

Recommended revisions to **FEB(LOCAL)** on attendance accounting are to address amended Administrative Code rules. The rules remove the reference to taking attendance during the second or fifth instructional hour and specify that attendance shall be determined at the official attendance-taking time during the campus's instructional day. The recommended policy text assigns to the superintendent the responsibility of designating the district's official attendance-taking time. Note that there is no requirement to include the official attendance-taking time in policy; it may be designated in district procedures.

Child Abuse and Neglect

FFG(LOCAL) on child abuse and neglect has been significantly revised to comply with amended Administrative Code rules.

Recommended text is included to provide the required policy addressing sexual abuse, trafficking, and other maltreatment of children that must be included in the district improvement plan and the student handbook.

The rules also revise the elements of the required child abuse and neglect reporting policy. To ensure all the policy elements are addressed in board-adopted local policy, we have revised and moved provisions from **FFG(EXHIBIT)** into the local policy and recommend deletion of the exhibit.

Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation

Revisions to **FFH(LOCAL)** address the new Title IX regulations and are similar to those made at **DIA(LOCAL)**, above. The **FFH(LOCAL)** revisions:

- Include sexual harassment as defined by Title IX in the definition of prohibited conduct and clarify employee reporting requirements;
- Indicate that the district will follow the district's existing investigation process to address allegations of prohibited conduct that would not meet the Title IX definition of sexual harassment;
- Add specific provisions outlining the legally required district response when the district receives notice or an allegation of conduct that could meet the definition of sexual harassment under Title IX;
- Add a requirement for the superintendent to develop a Title IX formal complaint process that will apply following a formal complaint and that must comply with the elements in the new regulations; and

- Designate the preponderance of the evidence standard to determine responsibility in formal complaints of sexual harassment under Title IX. **If the board wishes to instead use the clear and convincing evidence standard, which is a higher standard of evidence, please contact the district’s policy consultant.** The district must use the same standard of evidence for investigation of all formal Title IX sexual harassment complaints, including complaints by employees.

Provisions in **FB(LOCAL)** on the district’s Title IX coordinator for students have been updated to include required language from the new Title IX regulations. Corresponding wording changes were also made to the ADA/Section 504 coordinator text.

Student and Parent Complaints

FNG(LOCAL) on grievances by students and parents includes a recommended revision to specify that a person filing a complaint regarding refusal of entry to or ejection from property based on Education Code 37.105 shall be permitted to address the board within 90 “calendar” days unless the complaint is resolved at the administrative level. This is an exception to how other timelines are calculated in the policy, which are based on “business” days in accordance with how days are defined. In addition, we have reordered the list of protected characteristics at Other Complaint Processes, item 1, to align with revisions at FFH(LOCAL) above.

Section G—Community and Governmental Relations

Public Complaints

As with FNG(LOCAL), above, **GF(LOCAL)** on complaints by members of the public includes a recommended revision to specify that a person filing a complaint regarding refusal of entry to or ejection from property based on Education Code 37.105 shall be permitted to address the board within 90 “calendar” days unless the complaint is resolved at the administrative level. This is an exception to how other timelines are calculated in the policy, which are based on “business” days in accordance with how days are defined.

Miscellaneous Deletions

Several local policies focusing on administrative details are recommended for deletion for those districts that had them. Board-adopted policy is not required on these topics.

- BDF(LOCAL)—citizen advisory committees
- DMD(LOCAL)—professional meetings
- FMF(LOCAL)—student contests and competitions

A message from TASB Governmental Relations

TASB Advocates for Public Schools

It's a given that state and federal legislation influences school district policy and practice. But did you know that school board members can influence legislation?

- As a private citizen who serves the public, [your voice has weight with legislators](#).¹
- By [engaging with TASB](#)² you can influence the TASB Advocacy Agenda by participating in our grassroots meetings, attending Delegate Assembly, serving on the TASB Legislative Advisory Council, and more.

If you have questions about TASB's advocacy efforts and programs, contact [TASB Governmental Relations](#)³ at 800-580-4885 or Dax.Gonzalez@tasb.org.

¹ Working with Legislators: <https://www.tasb.org/trustees/champion-your-district/working-with-legislators.aspx>

² Engage with TASB: <https://www.tasb.org/trustees/champion-your-district/engage-with-tasb.aspx>

³ TASB Governmental Relations: <https://gr.tasb.org>