

Policy Committee Meeting

Wednesday, January 6, 2021 10:00 AM

Via Zoom (US) +1 669-900-9128 Passcode: 763114, 24 School Road, Weston, CT
06883-1623

I. Call to Order

II. Approval of Minutes

III. Discussion of policies, regulations, and bylaws

A. COVID-19 - relevant policies to consider

B. Sustainability Discussion

C. Transportation

1. Student Discipline - 5114

D. Title IX Policy and Regulations

**IV. Discussion of policies, regulations, and bylaws
in future meetings**

V. Adjourn

Weston Public Schools Sustainability Policy

I) Narrative of Recent 'Sustainability' Accomplishments

- In addition to a preexisting Environmental Science course, students petitioned to add an AP Environmental Science course which launched in 2018. Since that time, **3 sections of Standard Environmental Science and 2 sections of AP Environmental Science** have been consistently running at the high school.
- Around this same time in the fall of 2018, a move was made to consolidate the numerous student clubs concerned with sustainability at the High School (Ecology Club, Garden Club, Green Leaf Club, Recycling Club, etc.) into a single club. The intention of this consolidation was to combine resources and manpower towards common goals while also avoiding competition or redundancies in the students' efforts. The outcome was the establishment of the **Weston High School Green Team**. To date, the club has helped manage the garden, done invasive plant removal, attempted to improve classroom recycling, and has led various fundraisers and awareness campaigns (led a climate change rally at the high school, etc.). It has also built important community relationships with organizations such as Lachat Town Farm and the Sustainable Weston Town Committee. One challenge the club has faced has been navigating the approval process to move forward on certain sustainability initiatives. At times it is unclear who is responsible for giving approval or who to coordinate with on certain projects.
- In early 2018, a few select students completed steps to **designate Weston High School as a Green Leaf School within the state of CT**.
 - o This designation involved a school-wide audit (conducted by students) of sustainability practices falling under 3 pillars: Reduced Environmental Impact & Costs, Improved Health & Wellness, and Effective Environmental & Sustainability Education
 - o Recognition is based on a school's *commitment* to seek improvements in these 3 pillars and is not based upon achievements in said areas.
- After receiving the Green Leaf School designation, and upon the encouragement from the state coordinator of the Green Leaf Schools program, **Weston High School applied for and received national recognition as a 2019 US Department of Education Green Ribbon School**.
 - o This designation was based upon accomplishments by the high school in the 3 'pillars' outlined above.
 - o Much of this proposal was both researched and developed by students and revealed obvious strengths in the areas of 'Improved Health & Wellness' and 'Effective Environmental & Sustainability Education.' However, the proposal also brought to light some weaknesses in the district in the area of 'Reduced Environmental Impact & Costs.' Regardless, the designation was a major accomplishment for the district as Weston High School was the only school in CT to receive such an honor among just a few dozen national recipients in 2019.
- Following the designation, many neighboring districts reached out to Weston for guidance about strategies to implement their own sustainability initiatives. Interestingly, what these requests revealed was the fact that Weston is actually lagging behind a number of districts

in some basic sustainability practices. This led to an exploration of ways to further improve sustainability practices within the district.

- The outcome of this exploration led to some key conclusions:
 - While there is an intent in our district and community to pursue sustainability initiatives (among students, teachers, administrators, and citizens) there is no clear 'body' to direct such initiatives within the district. For example, students or clubs will often come forth with an idea regarding some kind of sustainable action (e.g. composting in the cafeteria or uniform classroom recycling guidelines) but it is unclear who would need to approve such a practice or how to seek approval to move forward on such an initiative). There are also often lingering questions about who is responsible for funding and/or implementing certain projects.
 - There is some inconsistency among the four schools within the district in terms of sustainability practices.
 - There is no policy or set of guidelines that outline a process for converting ideas regarding initiatives into practice.
 - There is no policy or set of guidelines that outlines an intent by the district to pursue such initiatives.
- To try and resolve some of these shortcomings, a **district-wide 'Sustainability Committee' was created in the fall of 2019 which is now formally referred to as the Sustainable Weston School Committee (SWSC)**. The purpose of the committee was to bring together key sustainability stakeholders along with key district decision makers (administrators etc.) so that some of these shortcomings could be addressed. The committee consisted of the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, the Director of Facilities, the Food Service Coordinator, administrators from the 4 schools, teacher representatives from most of the schools, student representatives from the high school and middle school, and parent representatives from most of the 4 schools. The committee was developed as a pilot to serve in an advisory role to the superintendent.
- The committee met roughly once a month from September of 2019 through March of 2020. During this time, the committee identified and prioritized potential sustainability initiatives that could be implemented across the 4 district schools. After a few meetings, the committee chose to pursue a few preliminary initiatives in year 1 that seemed to represent common practices found in surrounding districts. These included:
 - Recycling bins in all classrooms with a 'Recycling Right' student decal contest to reinforce proper recycling protocols for students and teachers. (at this time, recycling bins are not present in a majority of high school classrooms etc.)
 - Including 'textile recycling' bins on campus to encourage this mode of recycling in our community while also creating a potential revenue stream for other sustainability initiatives in the district.
 - Piloting a cafeteria composting program in one or more of the schools. Such a program would be privately funded in year one to test feasibility but consistent funding would be required long term.
 - These initiatives were to be 'launched' in conjunction with Earthday 2020 on or around April 22nd 2020 (50th anniversary of the first Earthday) where each program would be promoted and advertised within each school and by Green Team leadership at the high school. Unfortunately, NONE of these

initiatives were realized as a result of the school closure in March 2020 due to Covid-19.

- Currently, the activities of the Sustainability Committee have been put on hold while the district contends with the ongoing challenges of Covid-19.

II) Value of a Sustainability Policy to Weston

- a. In the past few years, it has become evident that Weston is actually lagging behind other districts in certain basic sustainability practices (e.g. standardized classroom recycling procedures, composting programs, etc.). At a minimum, a sustainability policy will first move our district toward gaining pace with surrounding districts, allowing us to implement strategies and procedures that have almost become standard elsewhere. But more ambitiously, such a policy would be one of the first of its kind in Connecticut forcing Weston to do what it does best when it comes to education—act as leader for other districts to follow. Indeed, when it comes to the areas of academics, athletics, the arts, and student SEL, there is no question that Weston is one of THE models that other districts look to for guidance. Weston prides itself on preparing students to face the many economic and social challenges to come. But the evidence is mounting that some of the most dire future challenges are environmental in nature and these may very well supersede all other threats. To not prepare Weston’s students for such possibilities would be irresponsible and it should be the place of a talented and capable district like Weston to assume leadership in this effort. Formulating a district policy that solidifies Weston’s commitment to addressing sustainability is a revolutionary first step toward making this happen.
- b. At this time, it is unclear what such a policy should look like. How detailed should it actually be? Should it involve budgeting funds to implement new practices? Should it involve creating a formal process and committee by which sustainability practices are either approved or denied? Since precedent for such district policies are limited, we’d be taking on the burden of laying the groundwork for creating a fairly novel document. But regardless of what the policy does or does not ultimately include, to have a formal policy that includes sustainability as an additional facet of the decision making process would be revolutionary. Currently, factors such as cost, student well-being, safety, and educational value are the drivers of how district level decisions are made. Fortunately, including sustainability in this mix may actually provide more opportunities than set-backs as sustainable action often promotes cost savings, improved student health and well-being, and countless opportunities for student learning in the curriculum and community. More and more, it seems like the time has finally come for all districts to include sustainability in their decision making process, so why shouldn’t Weston be brave enough to take that first revolutionary step?

III) Comparison of Weston to other districts.

- When I came to this district in 2018, I was energized by the enthusiasm and interest of the community to pursue sustainable activities. But having worked on environmental issues in other districts, I was also surprised that there were many areas in Weston Public Schools in need of improvement. Steps were made in the past 2 years to try and address these shortcomings but the reality is that there has been more discussion than action. Perhaps a sustainability policy is the very catalyst needed to finally realize some of these efforts. Some

examples of practices that already exist in surrounding districts (these can be seen firsthand in Wilton, Westport, Fairfield, Milford) include:

- Standard classroom recycling in all rooms throughout the district (currently, there is inconsistent or no recycling of paper, cans/bottles, in many of the high school classes).
- Recycling of print cartridges, used electronics, batteries, etc. in each school.
- Collection of redeemable plastic bottles and metal cans in the high school (which could generate a revenue stream for other sustainability projects).
- Textile recycling bins (which could also generate some revenue for sustainability projects).
- A cafeteria composting program.
- A reduction in plastic use or waste in the cafeteria (use of reusable utensils, trays, etc.).
- Grounds/landscaping projects (pollinator gardens, edible gardens, planting of native plants and trees, removal of invasive plants).
- Serving produce grown in school gardens in the cafeteria.
- No-idling initiatives to improve local air quality.
- Clean transportation initiatives (EV charging stations for faculty/student vehicles, EV security vehicles, EV buses, etc.).
- School wide energy audits and efficiency upgrades (switch to led lighting etc.)
- Pursuit of renewable energy production on-site (photovoltaics on school rooftops and or carports in parking areas).
- Greater focus on awareness of sustainability practices in the school culture (hosting sustainability events, more inclusion of sustainability practices into the curriculum).

IV) **Possible Next Steps:**

- Initial attempts (thank you to Matt Filip and to identify existing district sustainability policies have produced limited results (links included below). However, the CT Green Leaf School program provides some resources that provide an outline of areas that may be worth considering in such a policy. Weston has a good working relationship with the head of the Green Leaf School program and access to many valuable resources and experts involved in their network. If needed, we can access these resources for input and recommendations going forward.
 - Miscellaneous School Policies
 - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CBdZHZlawFgZrXDvwP0-fHJz8yYuZmG-/view?usp=sharing>
 - <http://www.middlebury.edu/about/handbook/policies-for-all/genl-principles/envl-sustain-policy>
 - <https://www.helsbyhigh.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Sustainability-Policy.pdf>
 - NJ districts with sustainability policies:
 - https://www.pequannock.org/pages_inc/board_of_ed_policy_statements/forms/Property/7461%20District%20Sustainability%20Policy.pdf
 - http://www3.princetonk12.org/board/board_policies/property/7461%20District%20Sustainability.pdf
 - A New Haven School has a procurement policy proposal in their Green Ribbon application from 2013, page 20:

- <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/2013-schools/ct-common-ground.pdf>
- Given that Covid-19 has currently limited the activities of the Sustainable Weston Schools Committee, the committee could be used as a resource to do additional research and exploration into the development of a potential sustainability policy.
- Since some of the challenges involving implementation of certain practices involve budget and personnel restrictions, there may be an opportunity to pursue some of these activities through the development of a course or courses that address some of the sustainability goals. Such an approach would have the added benefit of improving student learning and engagement by using sustainability challenges in the district as problem based learning opportunities for students.

Shipman & Goodwin December 2020 Comparison Documents (Redlines)

Major changes/Comparison to WPS

[Child Sex Abuse or Assault Response/Report \(v3to2\)](#) (5141.45)

[Use of School Facilities \(v14 to 13\)](#) (1330 may be worth a revamp to S&G language - last updated 13)

Minor

[Athletic Coaches \(Evaluatn & Terminatn\) \(v12 to11\)](#) (4116)

[Volunteers \(v4 to 3\)](#) (simple - don't believe we have)

[Student Records \(FERPA\) \(v47 to 46\)](#) (5125 - minor changes to S&G, might be a bigger task comparing WPS to S&G)

[Purchasing \(v6 to 5\)](#) (3320)

[Non-discrimination \(Community\) \(v7 to 6\)](#) (1258)

[Non-discrimination \(Personnel\)\(v21 to 20\)](#) (4118.11)

[Non-discrimination \(Students\) \(v.22 to 21\)](#) (5145)

[Deadly Weapons or Firearms \(v8 to 7\)](#) (1252)

[Employee Use of District Computer \(v.13 to 12\)](#) 4118.35 (COVID 19 Updates) Dan DiVito

[Employment and Student Teacher Checks \(v.19 to 18\)](#) (Statutory references and FBI Notice. FBI notice does not need BOE approval) Jen Ryan

[Field Trips \(v3 to 2\)](#) (6153 - last update 2004 - should replace with S&G)

Need more information

[Code of Conduct Federal Procurements \(v9 to 8\)](#) (Updated to reflect Federal Law - do we have?)

[Health Assessments/Screenings \(v21 to 20\)](#) (Updated to align with statutory language - do we have?)

[Section 504/ADA \(Personnel\) \(v6 to 3\)](#) (We have something similar in 4118.13 - does need to be updated as has Brey's name)

[IDEA - Alternative Assessments \(v5 to 4\)](#) (Do not have - do we need? Tracy Edwards)

Completed

[Title IX Sex Discrimination/Sex Harass \(v20 to 19\)](#) January 2021

[Sex Discrim./Harassment Policy Personnel \(v14to13\)](#) January 2021

[Student Discipline \(v68 to 67\)](#) January 2021

[Student Use of the District Computer \(v13 to 12\)](#) (COVID related 10.2020)

[Use of Private Technological Devices Stud.\(v3 to2\)](#) (COVID related 10.2020)