

West Hartford Public School District

Agenda Item: Motion by Lib Brassil Spinella, Bruce Putterman, and Terry Schmitt to Accept the Revision of the Following Board Policies--**First Reading**

Meeting Date: October 18, 2011

From: Lib Brassil Spinella, Bruce Putterman, and Terry Schmitt

Through: Karen L. List, Superintendent of Schools

Recommendation:

THAT the Board of Education accept as a First Reading the following policies which were revised by the Board Policy Subcommittee:

- 6236 Instruction about Religion
- 6240 Extracurricular Activities
- 6260 Field Trips

Note: Words in (*italics*) within parentheses are being removed from the current policy and words in **Bold** are being added to the current policy.

Background:

Since these revisions constitute substantial change, they are being brought to the Board as a First Reading.

The Board is in the process of reviewing and revising, where appropriate, all of its policies, section by section. Board Policy Books are divided into 8 sections or series: 1000s Community Relations, 2000s Administration, 3000s Business, 4000s Personnel, 5000s Students, 6000s Instruction, 7000s Board Operations, 8000s Bylaws.

The Board has appointed a sub-committee comprised of Lib Brassil Spinella, Bruce Putterman, and Terry Schmitt to meet regularly with Kimberly Boneham, Assistant Corporation Counsel, and Tom Moore, Assistant Superintendent for Administration. The Policy Subcommittee has spent many hours considering its own recommendations, input from Corporation Counsel and the administration, and reviewing certain policies from other districts.

As reviewed and revised policies are approved by the full Board, they are put on the West Hartford Public Schools website.

Lib Brassil Spinella, Bruce Putterman, Terry Schmitt, Tom Moore, Eileen Howley, and Kimberly Boneham will be available to answer any questions.

**Agenda Item:
IV.B.**

WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

POLICY 6236

Instruction

(Recognition of Religious Holidays)

In accordance with the mandate of the Constitution of the United States prohibiting the establishment of religion, it is the policy of this Board that the West Hartford Public Schools shall, at all times and in all ways, be neutral in matters of religion. This means that the West Hartford Public Schools

- *Shall assume no role or responsibility for the religious training of any student; and*
- *Shall in no way become involved in the religious belief, disbelief or doubt of any student.*

*This requirement of neutrality need not preclude nor hinder the West Hartford Public Schools in fulfilling its responsibility to educate students to be tolerant of and to respect religious diversity. This responsibility is part of the larger expectation this Board has for its schools; namely, that they foster in all students “respect for the diversity of other peoples and societies.”**

The recognition of holidays of different religions presents a natural and convenient opportunity for providing learning experiences to develop understanding, appreciation, and respect for religious diversity. The Board directs the West Hartford Public Schools to take advantage of this opportunity. It does so with the following caveats:

1. *The holidays to be recognized must be representative of the diverse religions of the world, not just Christianity and Judaism, and must be of historical and cultural significance to the religions they represent.*
2. *All religions whose holidays are recognized must be afforded equal respect; none, as well as the right to disbelieve, shall be advanced or disparaged.*
3. *Recognition of religious holidays must be a secular educational experience. To be secular, the experience must be directed solely to enhancing tolerance of and respect for religious diversity. To be educational, the experience must fulfill the secular intent and must be developmentally and age-appropriate, accurate in content, and objective in presentation.*
4. *The recognition of religious holidays must involve only a minor portion of total school time and the school budget.*
5. *Only certified teachers and administrators, who are employees of the Board and who have been apprised of this policy and trained in its application, shall instruct students in recognizing religious holidays.*
6. *Guidelines shall be developed to assist teachers and school administrators in applying this policy and to assure that it is applied in a consistent manner among the schools.*
7. *The experience of recognizing religious holidays must enrich and not harm students. While every effort must be made to avoid students having to exclude themselves from such experiences, provision must be made to enable them to do so, and to do so without embarrassment or penalty.*

**West Hartford Public Schools Goal Statement, 1987.*

POLICY 6236

8. *Those students who hold no conventional religious beliefs or not religious beliefs whatsoever and recognize no religious holidays must be afforded the same opportunity enjoyed by believers to share their position if they so desire.*

The Board shall evaluate the sufficiency and the effectiveness of this policy within one year following its adoption, and at least every three years thereafter.)

Instruction about Religion

In accordance with the Constitution of the United States, the West Hartford Public Schools will be neutral in matters of religion. Because the district believes it is important for students to recognize and understand the role religion has played in the social, cultural, and historical development of civilization, we will provide neutral, objective, curriculum-related instruction regarding the development and influence of the major religions of the world.

(cf. Board minutes of May 8, 1989)

Adopted: June 12, 1989

Revised:

WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

POLICY 6240

Instruction

(Extra-Curricular Activities)

Extra-curricular activities are an integral part of school life. These activities should not take precedence over the subject matter areas, but remain in the position of supplementing the actual course of study.

Eligibility to Represent the School

All students elected to student offices, or who represent their schools in extra-curricular activities, shall have and maintain good citizenship records. Any student who does not maintain a good citizenship record shall not be allowed to represent fellow students nor the schools for a period of time recommended by the student's principal.

Supervision

When conducted under the name of the school or school system or any class or organization thereof, extra-curricular activities shall be under the general supervision of the school authorities.

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are an important supplement to academics, enable students to explore interests they might not otherwise explore, develop new skills across multiple intelligences, and enhance the cohesiveness of school communities. West Hartford Public Schools offers a wide range of and strongly encourages students to participate in extracurricular activities. Student participation and involvement in extracurricular activities will be contingent upon appropriate behavior as defined by school policies. All school-sponsored extracurricular activities will operate under the supervision of school authorities.

Adopted: May 16, 1988

Revised:

WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

POLICY 6260

Instruction

Field Trips

(Education excursions and trips shall be encouraged insofar as they contribute to the general development of the children. Trips within the community shall be approved in advance by the building administrator. Overnight trips and trips outside the Hartford metropolitan area shall be approved in advance by the superintendent of schools or designee. Signed approval of the parents concerned shall be obtained in advance of all trips. [For liability of teachers in such matters, see 4190.])

Educational field trips shall be encouraged insofar as they contribute to the general development of students and support or enhance curriculum and should be designed to maximize student involvement.

In addition, the Board recognizes the many benefits of enrichment trips, including overseas travel, that may be offered during vacation periods.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

P.A. 82-205 – An Act Concerning Use of Standard School Buses (This Act permits school districts to transport fifteen or fewer students in motor vehicles other than school buses.)

Adopted: June 6, 1988

Revised: