

Ohio School Boards Association

Ohio Policy Service

Policy Manual Development Project Report

To

Eaton Community School District

307 N. Cherry Street
Eaton, Ohio 45320

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Ohio School Boards Association

8050 North High Street, Suite 100, Columbus, Ohio 43235-6482

(614) 540-4000 • (800) 589-OSBA • fax: (614) 540-4100

www.osba-ohio.org

TO: Eaton Community School District

FROM: Donna McGehean, Management Development Specialist

RE: Consulting Policy Specialist's Report
Eaton Community School District Policy Project

The policies of the Eaton Community School District have been compiled and codified according to the OSBA/EPS classification system. They are contained in the policy manual now being presented to the Board.

The manual contains board policies (white pages), regulations approved by the board (yellow pages) and selected exhibit documents (green pages).

The policy manual is now ready for official action by the Board. It is a well-organized collection of the Board's policies and should serve as a strong foundation for controlling the Board's own operations and for governing the schools. The manual may also serve as a solid base for improvement and further development of policies and regulations in the years to come.

I. Developing the Manual

Various documents incorporating policy and regulations were used in compiling this manual. Materials researched included the previous collection of Board policies, Board meeting minutes, negotiated agreements with employee units, handbooks and other materials.

Examination of these source documents enabled me to update policies, making them consistent with law, and to put into writing for the first time certain policies that seem to have been clearly established through practice.

References to negotiated agreements and references to the Ohio Revised Code, major State regulations and Federal laws and regulations, as appropriate, were added to many of your policies.

You also will find numerous cross references to related policies to help users of the policy manual locate important information related to a particular policy area.

A valuable source of information on current practices of the Board is an in-depth reading of meeting minutes and a search for consistent Board action in response to recurring situations. Such repeated action is in fact "policy" of the Board, even though it may never have been framed into a written statement. When I observed such practices, they were set down in writing, presented in the draft manual and scrutinized by the District policy team. Those found to be correct were approved by the team and included in the finished manual.

About Policies and Regulations

The role of the Board is to set policy, and the role of the administration is to implement it. Written policies are the chief means by which a school board governs the district, and regulations developed by the administration help to ensure that policy is being implemented. Definition of terms should help reduce confusion on the difference between policy and regulations.

Policies are principles adopted by the Board to chart courses of action. They are broad enough to indicate a line of action to be taken by the administration in meeting any number of day-to-day problems, wide enough to allow professional discretion and narrow enough to give the administration clear guidance. Think of policies as guidelines. A soundly constructed policy will have at least two major elements: (1) it will tell what the Board wants to happen and (2) it will explain why it should happen.

Regulations on the other hand are detailed directions usually developed by the administration to put policy into practice. They tell how, by whom, where and when things are to be done. Regulations flow from and are supported by policy. Another definition of regulations would be an administrative course of action which is specified in writing.

These definitions are serviceable most of the time and reflect sound theory of governance and administration. There will be times when policies and regulations will be closely related and merge with one another, making it difficult to see where one begins and the other leaves off. For example:

State and Federal governments require school boards to make or officially approve detailed regulations in certain areas.

A school board signs contracts and agreements that may contain and interweave policies and regulations in certain areas.

School board members may choose to establish specific regulations in certain sensitive areas.

It is the intermingling of policy and procedure in law, in contracts and in adopted statements which can cause trouble. Sometimes they are not easily separated. To assist school boards in identifying the difference between policies and regulations, certain "rules" have been established.

Rules concerning the Board's own organizational and operating regulations also appear as policy on white pages.

II. Review of Drafts

During the policy manual development project, I met with the members of the District policy team. During these meetings, a page-by-page review was conducted of sections of the manual that had been forwarded earlier to the team.

The purpose of these review sessions was to ensure ultimate customizing of each policy statement as well as accuracy and currency. No attempt was made to change the Board's position on a subject or to change the way in which the Board operates. However, changes may have been made in wording and content as agreed to by the District policy team and myself.

Sample Policies

In compiling the policy manual, certain policy areas were found to need revision or expansion. In some cases, I noted important policy areas where policy was lacking. For these areas, I presented carefully selected and prepared sample policies at the review session.

Many of the sample policies provided were found to represent actual Board practice and were found to be desirable and necessary additions to the policy manual by the District policy team. These statements were approved, after appropriate customizing, and inserted in the manual.

I then corrected the entire draft manual in accordance with the Eaton Community Schools policy team's instructions. The result is the policy manual being presented.

III. EPS/NSBA/OSBA Classification System

The EPS/NSBA/OSBA classification system is divided into 12 sections. They are:

- A. FOUNDATIONS AND BASIC COMMITMENTS
- B. BOARD GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS
- C. GENERAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION
- D. FISCAL MANAGEMENT
- E. SUPPORT SERVICES
- F. FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT
- G. PERSONNEL
- H. NEGOTIATIONS
- I. INSTRUCTION
- J. STUDENTS
- K. SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS
- L. EDUCATION AGENCY RELATIONS

The classification system uses the alphabet to provide a logical, enduring and expandable framework for classifying policies and regulations under standard terms and letter codes. The first letter of a code designates the section it is in; the second letter is a major category; the third letter is a subcategory in the major category; the fourth is a subsidiary category under the subcategory, and so forth.

The logic of this system and its expandability derive from the use of letters for coding: 26 letters can be used in coding a sequence of "parallel" terms under a category. (Numerical coding systems are limited to the use of 10 digits.)

The following examples will show the logic that was built into the system for dealing with categories and subcategories:

- BD School Board Meetings
- BDA Regular Board Meetings
- BDB Special Board Meetings
- BDC Executive Sessions
- BDD Board Meeting Procedures
- BDDA Notification of Board Meetings
- Bddb Agenda Format
- BDDC Agenda Preparation and Dissemination

Although the above sequence of terms offered under "School Board Meetings" is not complete, one can see that a logical outline is presented.

At the top of each page is the policy code. Some pages have two different codes. The dual coding at the top of the page means the policies in both areas are identical and essential to both sections. An example would be:

AFB (also CBG) "Evaluation of the Superintendent" is found in Section A
FOUNDATIONS AND BASIC COMMITMENTS and is also found in Section C
GENERAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION.

There will be pages in the manual with the code -R. This means that the page is a regulation to implement the policy with the same code. The procedure should be on yellow paper to further distinguish it from a policy. An example of a regulation would be: IKAB-R, which is a procedure to the policy "Student Progress Reports to Parents." The first letter "I" means it is in the instruction section, the -R means it is a regulation. It will also be on yellow paper.

Some of the codes will be followed by an -E. The E represents an exhibit. An exhibit is a form, an organizational chart, or a chart of the voting requirements for a board. This example would be coded BDDF-E. The exhibit will also be color-coded. Exhibits will be on green paper.

The system is connected by the Code-Finder Index at the back of the manual and was developed so anyone can use the manual. All an individual would have to know is the title of the policy desired; the index will then provide the user with the appropriate code.

At the front of each section is an index. If an individual needs to find a policy and knows which section it is in but does not know the exact code, he can look at the index at the front of the section.

An important feature of the system is its expandability. New descriptors and codes may be added to accommodate new laws and the additional policy needs of individual school districts. In the Code Finder Index, are examples of how new terms and codes may be added in logical locations in the classification system. Such added codes and terms are frequently called "break-outs"; the code letter is followed by an asterisk.

IV. References

Legal References. Many of the policies carry references to the Ohio Revised Code. These references are the major ones for the various codes. In some instances, major Federal legislation may also be cited. It is important to mention here that, while only the Ohio Revised Code and some Federal legislation are cited, these may not be the only legal references. There may be other laws and/or court decisions and regulations of State or Federal agencies that may also be applicable to a particular policy topic.

Contract References. Some of the policies carry references to the negotiated agreements. These have been retained to illustrate a way school districts may avoid conflict between the policy manual and the negotiated agreement.

Cross References. Some policies give cross references to other policy categories. It's useful to offer cross references in school manuals when policy content in two or more categories overlap.

V. Definition of Terms

To assist the District in the use of this manual, we have included definitions of some of the terms.

Professional staff-1: This term applies to the teaching staff.

Professional staff-2: This term applies to the administrators.

Support staff: This term refers to all those not covered in the professional staff title. Another definition would be those persons who are in positions which do not demand a professional certificate. Some examples include: bus drivers, secretaries, cafeteria personnel, maintenance staff and custodians.

Support services: This term is used to describe all the services outside the educational staff. Examples include transportation management and food service.

Exhibits: Exhibits are documents or forms that are used by the District. Some examples include: organizational charts, voting regulations of the Board, and forms used to record sick leave, or apply for vacation, or to use a school vehicle.

VI. Recommendation for Adoption of Manual

As you review your policies, please be assured that you now have a current and workable collection which can be of great service to the schools of the Eaton Community Schools. With the delivery of this manual, OSBA's work is complete. It is now the responsibility of the Board to distribute and implement this manual. (Appendix C gives a sample resolution for the adoption of the policy manual.) Once that is accomplished, it is the Board's task to keep the manual up to date as a viable, working document of the Eaton Community Schools.

VII. Utility of Manual

The following suggestions relate to the general usefulness of your manual, the implementation of your policies and regulations for keeping your policies and the manual current:

1. If your policies are to be effective, copies of the manual should be in the hands of the persons who need it most and available generally to the staff and others concerned with the affairs of the District.
2. To retain its utility, any manual must be kept current. A looseleaf form facilitates continued updating and maintenance. There should be no reason for the Eaton Community Schools manual to go out of date if a systematic procedure is established for its maintenance. Such a procedure should provide for:
 - A. Assigning one person to be responsible for accepting, appropriately coding and editing, and sending holders of the manual all new and revised pages, as well as directions for deleting pages when old policies have been revised or rescinded.

Note: During the development of policy, old policies covering the same area and those related to the area should be examined. Policies covering the same area should be formally rescinded--so that they can be removed from the manual; certain policies in related areas may need changes so that they will not conflict with the new policy. These are tasks that should go into administrative research on proposed policies before they are officially adopted.

- B. Regular review of Board minutes by the person assigned to administer the policy manual in order to locate and extract new policy and procedures. The Board (like most school boards) often takes action which actually sets policy or revises policy without recognizing that it is doing so. Sensitive review of the minutes by a person familiar with the contents of the policy manual will bring these situations to light so that the new policy can be recorded in the manual, or a policy can be revised if necessary.
 - C. Annual calling in of all manuals in circulation for a month during the summer so that they can be checked against a "master" copy for completeness.

APPENDIX A

Documents used in policy search:

1. Policies and Regulations
2. OPS POLICY MANUAL
3. Board meeting minutes
4. Board agreement with Eaton Community Schools teachers
5. Board agreement with classified staff employees
6. Student/Parent handbooks
7. Teachers' handbooks
8. Curriculum guides

APPENDIX B

On behalf of OSBA, the following tasks were performed in accordance with the project proposal:

Signing of Contract

1. Policy search and analysis. Existing District documents were thoroughly searched for both explicit and implied policies. This material was analyzed for appropriateness for inclusion in the new policy collection of the Board. The documents searched are identified in Appendix A of this report.
2. Codification and editing. All extracted statements were coded to the EPS/NSBA/OSBA codification system. The statements were edited as necessary for clarity, style and English usage and to eliminate redundancies. Citations to the Ohio Revised Code, State Board of Education Minimum Standards and major federal laws were provided where appropriate. Cross references to related policies in the manual were also provided.
3. Draft materials. A policy specialist met with the District policy team several times during the project. Prior to the meetings, several sections of draft policies were forwarded to the team members. At each of the meetings the specialist directed a page-by-page review of the drafts with the team. Corrections, additions and deletions were made so that statements in the manual would reflect policy as currently practiced. No revisions were made that would change the substance of the Board's policy statements.
4. In-service on manual. At the conclusion of the project, the OSBA Policy Specialist conducted an in-service on the new manual for all Board members and administrators.

APPENDIX C

Suggested resolution for Board consideration and action:

WHEREAS: the Board of Education of the Eaton Community Schools engaged the Ohio School Boards Association to conduct a thorough search of documents for existing policy, regulations and management information and to provide the Board a manual containing a new codification of current policies and regulations, and

WHEREAS: the search, codification and manual preparation tasks have been completed, and

WHEREAS: the manual has been reviewed by the Board, the Superintendent and school administrators and found to be current and accurate, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED: that the Eaton Community Schools Board of Education accept and adopt the manual prepared as the Policy Manual of the Eaton Community Schools. As of this date, this manual contains all of the policies of the Eaton Community Schools with the understanding that all of the policies and regulations contained therein are subject to continuing review and revision by the Board. All policies in effect prior to this date are hereby rescinded or superseded.

APPENDIX D

Suggested ideas for news release

(School District Letterhead)

The Eaton Community Schools Board of Education or the Superintendent may want to prepare a news release when the manual is formally adopted to inform the public of the time and effort you as a Board have spent on the manual. You may want to include some of the following ideas in your news release.

1. the people involved in developing the manual (Board, Superintendent, Treasurer and OSBA);
2. the amount of time the Board and Superintendent spent on the manual (long hours);
3. the codification system (why you chose the alphabetical system as opposed to the numerical system);
4. the manual covers 12 sections; you may want to list the sections;
5. each policy, on a separate sheet to make the reading of the policy easier and also to make the locating of policies easier.
6. regulations and exhibits are color-coded and
7. why the policies were developed the way they were: to improve District management and communication with local citizens, students and staff.