

Answers to Policy 101 Webinar Questions

Q: Should schools have a code of ethics policy for employees? I did not see it listed in the model policies, just curious on your thoughts.

Answer: VSBA has a recommended policy entitled Prevention of Conflict of Interest in Procurement. Here is the link: <http://199.73.12.194/NPolicies/f24.html>

Q: What can a Board member do when a policy, specifically dress code, is being enforced against students but not with staff?

Answer: First, read the policy to see whether or not it applies to staff. Next, determine if the issue you have identified is a board issue or a personal issue. If it is a personal issue, it should be addressed as an individual through the board's complaint policy. If it is a Board issue, speak with your Board chair about adding it to the agenda in an appropriate manner.

Q: Is it okay to work on policy development in a Google Doc?

Answer: A quorum of the Board or a quorum of a Board committee working on policy development in a Google Doc could be interpreted as a "meeting" under the Open Meeting Law, 1 VSA Section 310. Since the Google Doc would not be open to the public, it could be considered a violation of the Open Meeting Law.

Q: Can you offer guidelines for when a board might consider something other than the model policy?

Answer: Boards operating under the policy governance will likely consider some policies that differ from model policies. Additionally, the model policies are a starting point for boards and can be modified to fit each board's particular circumstances. VSBA advises boards to have legal counsel review any such modifications.

Q: Please say the topics that are "Updates Anticipated"

Answer: Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace, Public Participation at Board Meetings, Student Conduct and Discipline, Student Self-Expression and Distribution of Literature, Student Assessment, Educational Support System, and Title I Parental Involvement.

Q: Can you give some examples of when this was done well/appropriately? Going beyond the model?

Answer: The best way to look at examples is to look at the websites of districts throughout Vermont. Policies are on the websites and you can compare VSBA's model policies to those of different districts to see variations. As stated above, VSBA advises districts to consult with an attorney when modifying the model policy language.

Q: How can/should policies be used to pursue mission of a district, for example if a district is interested in environmental education as a priority how can policies be used to help achieve that goal?

Answer: Policy can be used to set the mission or vision of a district. This type of policy is sometimes referred to as an ends policy. Along with an ends policy, a board should have a strategic plan with measurable goals to reach the desired results. The Board monitors the strategic plan regularly in order to determine whether the goals are being met. For instance if environmental education is a priority, the board would include in its ends policy the end result it is aiming for regarding its students and environmental education. The strategic plan would include the goals to achieve that end result and specific steps the board will take in order to reach the goals. These steps could include, for example, professional development for teachers regarding environmental education, allocation of funds in the budget for environmental education supplies or field trips, allocation of funds in the budget for a school garden or nature trails, etc.